

INSPECTION REPORT

BRUNSWICK SCHOOL

Penrith

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112117

Headteacher: Mrs Pam Bradshaw

Reporting inspector: Ian Knight
23031

Dates of inspection: 4 – 7 March 2002

Inspection number: 222855

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Nursery

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 7 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Brunswick Road

Penrith

Cumbria

Postcode: CA11 7LX

Telephone number: 01768 242156

Fax number: 01768 242158

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Kate Gambrill

Date of previous inspection: February 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|
| 23031 | Ian Knight | <i>Registered inspector</i> | Mathematics. Information and communication technology. | The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? |
| 9895 | Roger Williams | <i>Lay inspector</i> | | Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| 8316 | Jozefa O'Hare | <i>Team inspector</i> | The Foundation Stage. Special educational needs. Equal opportunities. Science. Art and design. Geography. History. | |
| 22990 | Christopher Furniss | <i>Team inspector</i> | English. Design and technology. Music. Physical education. Religious education. | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Brunswick School is an average sized nursery and infant school serving the centre of Penrith in Cumbria. It caters for 52 children who attend the nursery on a part-time basis and 145 pupils aged four to seven in the main school. Almost all the pupils are white. Fifty have been identified as having special educational needs, of whom five have statements of special need. These figures are about average. The Department for Education and Skills has recently awarded the school a School Achievement Award for substantially improved test results between 1998 and 2001. Attainment on entry to the nursery is below national expectations, although the intake comprises the full ability range.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good and improving school. Standards in national tests are rising, and inspection evidence indicates that standards are now within the average range for all subjects and above that in design and technology, a significant improvement since the last inspection. Pupils have very good attitudes, behave very well, and relationships in the school are outstanding. Teaching is now good across the school. The headteacher is providing strong personal leadership and the restructured senior management team is developing well. Very good use of monitoring and evaluation of the school's work has been a factor in the school's very good progress since the last inspection. The budget remains in deficit, but is on target to balance in 2003 as planned. Unit costs are high when compared to all primary schools. Nevertheless, the school is offering good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching; staff cherish children.
- Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good; provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning; they behave very well, and relationships in the school are outstanding.
- The school successfully makes good provision for all pupils, including the youngest, to be independent in their learning.
- There is very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
- The school maintains very good links with parents who, in turn, have a very positive impact on learning in the school.
- The headteacher provides strong personal leadership; her lead in monitoring and evaluating the school's work has been a major factor in the school's improvement.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

This effective school has no areas of significant weakness requiring urgent attention. Nevertheless, the governors should consider addressing the following minor points in its action plan.

- The budget, although improving, remains in deficit.
- New technology is not effectively used to support the school's administration.
- There is little provision for pupils to take part in activities outside the normal school curriculum.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 2000. Since then, standards have improved markedly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, to the extent that they are now within the average range. Teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory overall at the last inspection. It is now good, with an improved proportion of teaching observed being judged very good or excellent, and there were no observations of unsatisfactory teaching. The key issues have been thoroughly addressed. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is now well established, and effective, the school development plan is more focused on school improvement and the senior management team has been restructured and is developing its role. Schemes of work are now in place throughout the school, with continuity assured between the Nursery and Reception classes, and between reception and Years 1 and 2. Together these judgements show that the school has made very good progress since the last inspection, only two years ago.

STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

| Performance in: | compared with | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | all schools | | | similar schools |
| | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2001 |
| Reading | E | E | C | D |
| Writing | E | E | D | D |
| mathematics | E | E | E | E |

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

These comparisons are now several months old and refer to pupils who have left the school. Recent trends have shown an improving picture. Inspection evidence is better again. Children enter the nursery with overall attainment that is below that expected nationally. They achieve very well, so that they are on line to meet all of the Early Learning Goals and to exceed the expectations of the goals relating to personal, social and emotional development by the time they begin the National Curriculum in Year 1. Pupils in Year 2 did not start Year 1 with such high attainment; they have achieved well, as their performance is within the expected range in all subjects, and above it in design and technology. Standards in literacy and numeracy are within the average range. The area of investigative and experimental science is now a strength, having been criticised in the last report. Pupils with special educational needs, and those who are gifted and talented, make good progress. The school

has set challenging targets for its future performance and is making good progress towards meeting them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Very good. Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and show high levels of interest and involvement in activities. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Very good. Pupils have a very clear understanding of the impact of their actions on others. |
| Personal development and relationships | Very good. Pupils show very good levels of respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. There are very good levels of initiative and personal responsibility in school. Relationships throughout the school are outstanding. |
| Attendance | Satisfactory overall. |

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils in: | Nursery and Reception | Years 1 – 2 |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Quality of teaching | 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.

The teaching of English and mathematics is good. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well through the national strategies and through other subjects. In the nursery and reception classes, all opportunities are seized to enhance learning and all activities support the stated objectives for learning, so that every moment is a learning moment. Throughout the school, the management of pupils is a particular strength so that learning is accelerated. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of all, including pupils with a special educational need or those who are gifted and talented in some aspect of learning. Classroom support staff make a very good contribution to learning by paraphrasing teachers' words, acting as an audience for diffident children, making assessments of pupils and leading groups in close association with class teachers. However, little use was seen of information and communication technology to enhance learning in Years 1 and 2. As a result of this good and very good teaching, pupils swiftly acquire new knowledge and skills, make great efforts and work at a very brisk pace.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Good overall, and very good in the Nursery and Reception classes. The curriculum is well balanced and matches pupils' needs well. There is good provision for personal, social and health education. However, there is minimal provision for extra-curricular activities, even in the context of an infant school. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Good provision secures good progress for these pupils via well-targeted support and clearly written individual education plans. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, and good provision for pupils' cultural development. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | There are good procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. Good procedures for assessment are used well in planning. |

The school maintains a very good, two-way, partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Good. The headteacher offers strong personal leadership. The senior management team has recently been restructured, and is developing well. Subject co-ordinators operate effectively within the constraints, especially the budget deficit. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Sound. The governing body is effective in carrying out its responsibilities. Some members are very knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses through personal visits. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Very good. The headteacher has taken the lead in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance. This has been a major factor in the improvements in standards and teaching since the last inspection. |
| The strategic use of resources | Satisfactory. The school's priorities are reflected in its strategic planning, and specific grants are used well for their stated purpose. However, the school makes minimal use of new technology to support administration or monitoring and evaluation, for example, of assessments or attendance patterns. |

Teachers and other classroom staff are very well matched to the needs of the curriculum. The accommodation and the level of resourcing are both satisfactory. The school applies the principles of best value well, both in terms of its purchases, and in terms of evaluating the quality of the service it offers to pupils and parents.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like school and are making good progress.• Teaching is good; the school expects children to work hard and do their best.• They are comfortable in their dealings with the school, which works closely with parents.• The school is led and managed well.• The school is helping their children become mature and responsible. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is an insufficient range of interesting activities outside lessons. |

The inspection team agreed with parents' views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils at Brunswick School achieve well. From a low baseline they make good progress, so that they attain or exceed national expectations in all subjects when they leave. This good achievement follows from consistently good teaching and learning. These standards represent considerable improvement over those reported in the previous inspection report, when standards in English, mathematics and science were seriously adrift of national averages, and achievement was not satisfactory.

2. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests for seven year olds, overall standards were average in reading, below average in writing and well below average in mathematics. When the school is compared only to those with a similar intake, the picture is similar except that standards in reading are now below average. An analysis shows that, in writing more pupils than nationally gained the lower Level 1, and fewer than nationally gained the expected Level 2. In both reading and writing, healthy proportions gained the higher Level 3. However, the picture in mathematics was rather less bright. Although reasonable numbers gained the expected Level 2, too many attained only the lower Level 1 and too few attained the higher Level 3. This discrepancy is explained by the recent emphasis the school has placed on English, when it was found to be weak in tests, and on inspection by the previous inspection team. The emphasis has now moved to mathematics, as English results have improved. Standards in reading and writing have been improving over the last few years, most dramatically in writing. Whilst there has been a modest trend of improvement in mathematics, it does not yet constitute a secure trend. There are no tests in the other core subject, science, but teachers' assessments show that standards were similar to those in mathematics for the same reason.

3. However, test results do not tell the whole story. They are based on the performance of a group of pupils who left the school some eight months ago. They give no clue as to standards in the other subjects of the curriculum, and can shed no light on pupils' achievement, that is, how well they are doing when considered in the light of their prior attainment, progress and levels of challenge in lessons. Inspection evidence is more wide-ranging and can fill some of these gaps.

4. Although children enter the nursery with the full range of prior attainment, this is below national norms. They make very good progress throughout the Foundation Stage, and attain standards that are in line with those expected for their age in their areas of learning. In personal, social and emotional development, their attainment is above that expected for their age. This very good progress gives children a flying start to the National Curriculum in Year 1 and represents very good achievement.

5. In Years 1 and 2, continued good teaching leads to standards that are within the average range in all subjects by the end of Year 2. Standards exceed national expectations in design and technology. A particular strength in science is the area of investigational science: pupils are used to designing their own experiments to a brief, ensuring tests are fair. There are still relatively few pupils on track to achieve the higher Level 3 in the current Year 2. A significant factor in this is that there has been considerable staff turnover in these pupils' classes, inevitably affecting the continuity of their learning. The new emphasis on mathematics has begun to bear fruit in the form of improved, more confident, teaching and so standards here are also edging into the average range. Pupils in Year 1 are doing

comparatively better, because their time in school has been more settled. As the improved standards at the end of reception percolate through the rest of the school, it is well-placed to improve further. Again, when pupils' low starting points are taken into account, then it is clear that they are achieving well, with pupils in Year 1 achieving very well.

6. The pupils on the school's register of special needs have a wide range of needs. These pupils benefit from the specific help they receive and, as a result, they make good progress, successfully achieving their individual targets. Similarly, those pupils who have been identified as gifted or talented receive appropriately challenging work from their teachers and support in class so that they, too, make good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. Children in the nursery and reception classes achieve very well in this area. This is due to the very good teaching. Children soon learn what is fair by the staff providing consistently clear routines and procedures, which make sure that everyone has a turn. In addition, these children are remarkably independent, carrying out responsibilities that staff provide for them. The previous report judged that staff provided too much help. The school has addressed this issue very well since then.

8. In Years 1 and 2, pupils' attitudes to the school are very good. This is an improvement on the good attitudes found at the time of the last inspection. This is due to the school's success in achieving its declared aim to value its children and make them feel secure and confident. Pupils show a very good level of interest and involvement in classroom activities. Their concentration only flags occasionally, and inattention and loss of interest is infrequent. This only happens when behaviour is managed hesitantly, or when a lesson loses pace. Overall, pupils show considerable commitment to their work in class, including those with special educational needs. Good planning of lessons, and the wide range of activities on offer, together with encouragement for pupils to become independent, play a large part in the school's success in maintaining their interest and involvement in their learning.

9. The good behaviour witnessed at the time of the last inspection has also improved further, and it is now very good. Parents' positive views of their children's behaviour are amply justified. Pupils are usually polite to each other, and to adults, and are very well behaved, both in the classroom and the playground. They move quietly around the building with the minimum of fuss, and obey the school staff at all times.

10. A good feature of the school is the relative absence of bullying or oppressive behaviour. Although it does occur occasionally, it is infrequent, and is always dealt with speedily and fairly by school staff. Parents are involved in the process straight away, and appreciate the importance the school places on their participation in the solution. There have been no exclusions from the school; the school has made a very positive investment in financing its positive inclusion practice from its own budget, in order to prevent exclusion.

11. Pupils' personal development and relationships are very good, and have been maintained and built on since the last inspection, when they were found to be good. Pupils show a very good understanding of the effect their actions have on others. For example, in a numeracy lesson in a reception class, pupils willingly helped each other and shared their equipment and materials unselfishly. They respect the values and beliefs of others, and this respect is actively promoted by the school in a variety of ways. The pupils' contributions to a nursery in Peru, through 'happy jar' donations, is only one example of several charities they support.

12. Pupils in every class are encouraged to show initiative, personal responsibility and independence, and they are very good at this. The school cultivates these areas right from the start, in the nursery. Pupils gradually take on more responsibility as they become older and have extra responsibilities as senior monitors in Year 2. Pupils thoroughly enjoy helping others and taking on extra duties, and are keen to volunteer.

13. Relationships right across the school community are excellent; teamwork, sharing and caring are actively promoted and encouraged, and all school staff act as very good role models for pupils in this regard.

14. Pupils with special educational needs relate well to each other in their groups and in their classes. They contribute in lessons and enjoy being involved in activities with their peers. As this is an inclusive school, with a very strong sense of community, these pupils all benefit from the provision that the school makes for them.

15. Attendance is slightly above the national average, and is satisfactory overall. This has also improved since the last inspection. The school does much to encourage good attendance, through awards, dialogue with parents and liaison with the education welfare officer. The school's provision of a welcoming and secure environment does much to encourage good attendance by pupils.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. The quality of teaching in the school has improved remarkably since the last inspection, when teaching throughout the school was judged to be unsatisfactory. At that time, one lesson in six was unsatisfactory or poor, and less than one in three was good or very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed on this inspection; three-quarters was good or better, including 45 per cent that was very good or excellent. This represents very good progress and is the key factor in the improvements in learning and achievement that were also observed.

17. Teaching in the Foundation Stage, that is, in the Nursery and Reception classes, is very good, and gives these children a flying start. This is evident in the standards now being achieved in Year 1. Staff know and understand the needs of these young children very well, and make provision to meet them through carefully considered activities. The excellent relationships that exist, and the very close liaison with parents, contribute to the effective teaching and learning that takes place. This was seen in a very good lesson in the nursery focusing on communication, language and literacy. In this lesson, children were enthralled by the use of a pet rabbit. The teacher used very good questioning about the natural world and the seasons to draw out children's own ideas. The children were very careful in their movements so as not to scare the rabbit, and showed great concentration.

18. Independence in learning is a strong feature of the ethos of the Foundation Stage. In a number of sessions, children plan their own activities from a variety offered. This is carefully monitored by teachers to ensure that all areas of learning are experienced by all the children. This was observed in 'small group time'. Some children worked with the teacher to make observational drawings in pastels of the pet rabbit. Other activities were on the theme of the senses, especially related to looking, so children could choose to use flexible mirrors, to observe small items through magnifiers, or experiment with transparent coloured plastic sheets to see the effect of overlaying different colours. Again, children were engrossed in the activities and concentrated hard, learning well.

19. A very good mathematics lesson in a Reception class illustrates the close teamwork between teachers and classroom assistants. In this lesson, children were counting to 20 in a variety of ways. The teacher had excellent class management skills, including placing a child near her nursery nurse to help her concentrate. Any children who became inattentive were quickly brought back on stream with no loss of the lesson's pace. During a brisk introduction, children were keen to take part, being continually involved by the teacher and assistant working as a close-knit team.

20. When the teaching of these young children lacked the same sparkle, the pace was less brisk, as some activities went on for too long, with the effect that the children became restless. This inevitably slowed learning down.

21. This good start is consolidated by further good teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2. Particular strengths in the teaching here are the way that teachers maintain discipline almost invisibly through the high quality of relationships, and the use of time and support staff to ensure lessons are brisk and productive times. Notable in classes is the high level of care teachers show for their charges. In all of their dealings with children, they cherish them and show respect. In return, pupils are respectful and concentrate on their tasks with minimum fuss. This was clearly evident in an excellent religious education lesson in Year 2. The teacher led the pupils on an imaginary journey with Jesus and his donkey to Jerusalem, and asked how they felt when the crowd began to become excited. The atmosphere of mutual respect was such that pupils were able to give very mature responses. The lesson continued at a brisk pace as pupils concentrated hard on the various items they 'saw'.

22. Very good use of support staff was seen in a Year 1 mathematics lesson. As well as supporting a pupil with a special need particularly effectively, all adults led their groups very competently on the theme of number sequences. The classroom assistants were very well briefed, so they knew exactly what to do to maximise pupils' learning. This kept everyone working at a brisk pace. Of particular note are the feedback sheets assistants use to indicate to the teacher those pupils who achieved the lesson's objective, those who needed support and those who needed further extension; these are then used in future planning.

23. The school has identified a small number of pupils who are particularly talented in a subject. These pupils receive good support to allow them to make the best progress of which they are capable through skilful planning by their class teachers.

24. Of course, not all teaching can be this exciting. When teaching was satisfactory, the teacher did not manage the pupils' behaviour quite as well as just described with the effect that pupils were sometimes restless. This affected the pace of learning in some lessons. In one lesson, some pupils were not clear on the task they were expected to do as they went to their groups. This briefly held up learning, but the problem was overcome by the teacher visiting each group with further help and explanations.

25. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught throughout the curriculum. Indeed, teaching in all subjects was judged to be good except for art and design, and history, in which subjects it was not possible to make a secure judgement. However, little use of information and communication technology was seen to support learning. Teachers plan well to meet the needs of pupils with a special need. Work is appropriately modified to meet the particular needs of each pupil. The headteacher, who is the school's special educational needs co-ordinator, prepares the individual education plans and helps class teachers and support assistants to plan programmes of work to meet these pupils' needs. The majority of support teaching is in class with groups and individual pupils, but there is some withdrawal for intensive input. These pupils are frequently praised and show good levels of self-esteem.

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

26. The curriculum for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is very well constructed, and teachers provide the children with a wide range of activities, routines and experiences that are carefully chosen to match their needs. A strength of these arrangements is that every activity is a learning opportunity, where children work in such an encouraging atmosphere that they are inspired to learn.

27. The quality and range of opportunities for learning are good for pupils in Years 1 and 2. They are enriched by good links with the community, and with very good relationships with other schools and colleges. All statutory requirements are met, including the provision for religious education and a daily act of collective worship. The fostering of pupils' personal development is very good. Provision for personal, social and health education, including drugs awareness and sex education, is good. There is, however, a need to develop extra-curricular activities. The recommendations of the last inspection report in 2000 have been carried out. There are now schemes of work for all subjects, and the school day has been altered so that taught time is very high in relation to the recommended minimum. Planning is now done in year group teams and monitored by subject co-ordinators to ensure coverage and progression. The headteacher has a good overview of the whole curriculum. Progress in this area since the last inspection is good.

28. The National Literacy Strategy has been effectively introduced, and this is having a positive effect on raising standards of literacy. The numeracy strategy has not had the same priority for as long, but it has been satisfactorily introduced and there is evidence that it is beginning to improve standards. There is an emphasis on full inclusion and equality of access to learning in the documents and planning of the school, and this was evident during the inspection. The needs of all pupils are well met, including the gifted and talented and those with special educational needs. The school has full access for the disabled. Pupils with a special educational need are often taught in groups, within lessons. They are set appropriate challenges and enjoy learning. The teaching assistants, students and voluntary helpers are very effective in helping these pupils to access the curriculum, and provide the support to individuals and groups. As a result, there are no barriers to these pupils' learning or to any aspects of school life.

29. The curriculum is enriched by a number of visitors and visits. These include the visit during the inspection week to another school, when Year 1 pupils took part in a demonstration physical education lesson, and the visit to the local church being planned for the week after to learn about the Eucharist. Very good school productions, such as the Christmas presentation of 'The Sleepy Shepherd', involve all pupils. During playtimes and lunchtimes there are always several members of staff outside. Pupils are given a range of equipment, including skipping ropes, beanbags, hoops and balls and are encouraged in a variety of games. However, there are at present no extra-curricular clubs, and this is something about which some parents have expressed concern. The school is aware of this lack, and the documentation refers to the need to improve this provision. For example, the music co-ordinator is considering a recorder club for older pupils, and there are close links with the Penrith After Schools Club. The school encourages and celebrates pupil's successes in activities such as dance, gymnastics and drama in the celebration assemblies and circle times. The close family aspect of the school was felt during the inspection week, when staff achievements were also celebrated during the assembly.

30. The school makes good use of the community for pupils' learning. Nursery children visit the public library and a local supermarket, and pupils use the nearby church to celebrate

festivals. A major project for developing the playground is being sponsored through the Chartered Institute of Builders, with whom the school has links through a local firm. This excellent project is having a valuable input into the curriculum. Pupils have helped with the design stage, and are gaining an appreciation of what is entailed through their involvement in the project. Parents are also involved, and are making a significant financial contribution, too.

31. The school has very good, constructive relationships with a variety of partner institutions. It welcomes students from several schools and colleges, and there were three students in school during the inspection. They all made a good contribution to the children's education, and were fully involved in all lessons. Teachers are trained to monitor and mentor students at all levels of training. There are good links with the junior school to which most pupils transfer, and they sometimes share resources. The school and the junior school have recently adopted the same library coding system, to help pupils. There have been staff visits to and from other infant schools, in order to share best practice in skills such as phonics and spelling. The school's involvement with partner institutions has a good effect on its pupils' achievement, because of the variety of people who visit and the ideas that result.

32. The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual development. Well-planned school assemblies promote spiritual development, with an act of worship at their centre that includes joyful hymns and sincere prayers. Well-planned topics for assemblies involve pupils across the age range and give them much to think about. The moments of silence are significant and sensitively handled, giving pupils a clear focus for their thoughts so that they link their past experience and their new learning. During the inspection teachers used candles, an Easter tree and a hyacinth plant very effectively to make a special occasion and to act as foci for pupils. This appreciative and thoughtful approach to learning continues in lessons, where pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences and explore feelings and emotions. Teachers value pupils' ideas during lessons, whilst discussions in religious education lessons and circle-time are used well to develop knowledge and insight into other values and beliefs.

33. Moral concerns are very well integrated into the ethos of the school, with the physical and emotional well-being of others being an important part of school life. Adults promote values of honesty, fairness and truthfulness in their extremely caring relationships with pupils. Teachers control behaviour through encouragement, stressing principles of fairness and self-respect and encouraging pupils to think about the consequences of their actions. The use of school assemblies to celebrate pupils' achievements and experiences strongly reinforces pupils' moral development. There is a very strong sense that pupils know and care about right and wrong, and issues are dealt with sensitively in circle time.

34. Pupils develop very good social skills in the positive working atmosphere in lessons, where they learn to work alongside each other and in collaboration. All pupils take turns in helping with routine classroom tasks, and initiatives such as the playground project are of great value in helping pupils become aware of shared responsibilities. The well-planned personal and social education programme helps pupils think about social issues and the school is one of three involved in the Cumbrian Global Citizens scheme. Pupils develop wider understanding of citizenship through taking part in charitable fund-raising and in particular the strong links that have been forged with the Westnell Nursery in Peru. The 'happy jars' promote very good social and citizenship skills, as pupils are encouraged to put

money in to support the Westnell Nursery. This makes the giving a celebration of thanks, and raises the giving to a spiritual experience as well as a social one. Pupils love to bring money, and are encouraged to realise that even small amounts are important, as they give it to say 'thank you' for a treat, a visit, or the birth of a baby brother or sister, for example.

35. The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' understanding of British and other cultures. The study of the principles and practices of other faiths in religious education, and the inclusion of major festivals in the programme for assemblies, all help to develop pupils' wider cultural awareness. In English, pupils look at a range of texts that reflect different cultures, such as 'Handa's Surprise' in Year 1. In music and physical education pupils are encouraged to listen to music from different cultures and to look at different traditional dances.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. Since the last inspection, the school has improved its procedures for child protection and for pupils' welfare, and health and safety; they are now good. All the staff know their pupils well and cherish them.

37. The headteacher is designated as the school's child protection officer, and she is responsible for contacts with support agencies and for meeting the requirements of the area child protection committee. She shares information from training effectively with all her staff, so that they know exactly what is required for children's safety and protection. Pupils' welfare and safety are given a high priority by the school, and as a result, it is a safe and secure environment for them.

38. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance have also improved since the last inspection, and they are now good. Manual records are meticulously kept, and are checked by class teachers and the school secretary. There is good liaison with the education welfare officer, and the end of the school day is timed to fit in with the junior school, in order to help parents. Good attendance is celebrated with the presentation of certificates, and parents are discouraged from removing pupils during term time.

39. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. They have improved since the last time the school was inspected. The improvement in pupils' behaviour is directly attributable to the school's success in introducing effective new systems, such as including details of its policy on behaviour in the form of a behaviour curriculum in individual pupils' target booklets. This booklet is sent home for parents' information and comment, and is a valuable way of involving parents in many aspects of their children's education, including behaviour. Each year, pupils are involved in drawing up class rules.

40. Bullying is not tolerated. There is a policy against bullying, which is specific to the school. All pupils are made aware, immediately they join the school, that violence and other forms of oppressive behaviour are treated very seriously. An incident book is kept by the headteacher, and parents are immediately involved if their child bullies or is bullied. Such instances are rare, and are immediately addressed and dealt with in accordance with the school's policy. Good use is made of circle time to help pupils understand the need for good behaviour.

41. Good arrangements for supporting and monitoring pupils' personal development influence the provision made for individual pupils. Teachers know their pupils well, and use this information to give them the support and guidance they need to develop confidence and

self-esteem. Records of pupils' personal development are used effectively to report their children's personal growth to parents. Pupils are encouraged to consider others less fortunate than themselves, and are expected to seek more responsibility and to learn independently by finding out for themselves.

42. The school's procedures for early identification of pupils' special needs start in the nursery, and occasionally, prior to them being admitted. Analyses from baseline assessment are used to adjust provision for them. Individual education plans are appropriately reviewed each term, and statements of special educational needs are reviewed annually.

43. Assessment procedures and the use of assessment information are very good in the Foundation Stage. Teachers and support assistants, and the very well prepared students, keep records of children's activities and evaluate these to plan the next step of children's learning.

44. The overall quality of assessment of pupils' achievements and the monitoring of pupils' academic progress in Years 1 and 2 have improved since the last inspection, and are now good. All pupils have booklets, which contain learning targets, based on National Curriculum expectations. As pupils achieve these targets they are marked as having done so. This provides a simple but effective way of helping staff, pupils and parents know how well pupils are doing. Pupils are tracked through the baseline assessments and regular tests, so that a prediction of likely achievement can be made and targets set both to keep them on track and to motivate them. In English, pupils have a portfolio of work that has been graded on the basis of National Curriculum Levels. This helps staff to ensure that all pupils, including the higher attainers, are on target. Since all staff are involved in the standardising of the work, it ensures that all have similar expectations. This still has to be extended to other areas of the curriculum.

45. The curricular planning is now very closely linked to assessment, and they are developed side by side. Weekly planning sheets include evaluations, and there are regular meetings of year group staff to discuss how to help any pupils who have not achieved the objectives set. This whole process is still developing, but has already led to a much greater emphasis upon work targeted to the needs of individual pupils and groups of pupils, and has helped to raise standards.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. The school has very good links with its parents, and they have a very positive view of the school. Again, due to the school's hard work, links with parents have improved since the previous inspection.

47. Parental links throughout the school are very effective. Pre-school visits to nursery children's homes are mutually beneficial to parents and the school. Parents are actively encouraged, indeed expected, to come into school, in all classes, each morning and afternoon. Parents of children in the Foundation Stage are encouraged to talk about the activities chosen by the children and to help to ensure that their children's choices are balanced between the areas of learning. In Years 1 and 2, some parents stay and help with reading and changing books, which the parents record themselves. Parents and pupils have been consulted about the home school agreement, re-naming the school, 'Better Ways to School', and the ongoing playground project. The school has hosted 'helping in schools' courses, and actively supports parents who follow these up with other certificated courses, by providing placements.

48. Because of the genuine welcome extended to parents, they have a very good impact on the life of the school, through their commitment and involvement. There is an enthusiastic home-school association, which organises social and fund raising events, and they raise substantial sums of money each year for books and equipment, as well as subsidising school trips and other extras. Several parents attend regularly to help in class with reading, and generally supporting teaching staff; others help, when asked, with school trips and events. There is no shortage of volunteers.

49. Good quality information is provided for parents by the school. Annual reports on children's progress are informative, and give targets for achievement. National Curriculum Levels are also given at the appropriate stage, in reports. There is good liaison with parents on their children's reading progress through their diaries, and target booklets give further information on progress, including their personal development, particularly behaviour. However, the practice of informing parents, in advance, of topics for the term ahead is not always applied consistently across the school.

50. Parents of pupils with a special need are regularly informed of their children's progress. As there are very close relationships with the parents, there are frequent informal meetings after school to ensure that parents are aware of progress towards reaching the targets set for their children.

51. Because of the school's very good and effective links, and the good quality information parents get, their contribution to their children's learning is very good.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. The headteacher provides strong personal leadership of a good and improving management team. This represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection, when members of the team were found not to be effective or to have clear roles. The governing body carries out its duties effectively. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's work was criticised at the last inspection and formed part of a key issue on which the school was obliged to take action. Very good progress has been made on this issue, and the very good quality of monitoring and evaluation by the headteacher has been a significant factor in the improved teaching and standards now observed. A further improvement has been in the area of best value. This process was not applied satisfactorily at the time of the last inspection, but is now done very well, both in terms of purchases, and in evaluating the service the school itself provides.

53. The headteacher, through her personal example and the practical application of the school's aims, provides a powerful vision of how she believes a school should be. This has enabled her to manage change effectively as staff changes have occurred and the senior management team has been restructured. This, in turn, has led to a shared vision of improvement in the school, with all striving to improve pupils' experience. However, the restructured senior management team is new, and curricular co-ordinators have operated under considerable financial constraints as the budget deficit has been tackled. For example, some co-ordinators have not been able to control their own budget or to visit classes in action themselves because of lack of funds to pay for supply cover.

54. The headteacher and the staff work closely together for the provision of support for pupils with special educational needs. The headteacher provides valued support and guidance to teachers and assistants. The designated governor for this area is knowledgeable and keeps abreast of new developments. Plans are well in hand to update the policy to take account of the new Code of Practice. Governors are informed of the

school's progress in procedures. They carefully monitor the provision through the headteacher's reports.

55. All subject areas are at least soundly led: English, music, physical education and religious education are led well, whilst science is very well led. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is very good. Staff work very closely together, and the headteacher supports the staff conspicuously well in the work they do. They have all helped to create a very positive environment, in which governors, teachers, other members of staff, students and volunteer helpers work together effectively to promote the aims of the school.

56. The school's aims and values are highlighted in all its documentation and are familiar to parents, who praised the school's welcoming and caring ethos. These aims include the intention to create a warm and welcoming environment, teach the basic skills of learning and encourage communication, especially through creative means, instilling a respect for moral values and fostering a partnership between home and school. The preceding paragraphs show that the school is achieving these aims, which are clearly visible in its day-to-day work.

57. The governors carry out their duties effectively, although there are some statutory omissions from the governors' annual report to parents. Individuals on the governing body are very active, and have a clear understanding of their role. However, as a body, it is inexperienced, and its monitoring of the progress of the school development plan, for example, has been 'light-touch', with little evidence of discussion in the minutes of meetings. Nevertheless, as a body they have good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, as many are closely associated with it as staff, volunteers or parents.

58. The monitoring of teaching by the headteacher has been a key factor in the school's improvement. She has identified where further training and development were needed and ensured that it took place. Good practice in the school has been shared, and poor practice eliminated – witness the dramatic improvements in the quality of teaching and standards achieved after only two years. These evaluations have informed the school development plan, which is a good working document, clearly costed with sharp and measurable criteria by which its success can be measured. The implementation of this plan has been very effective in driving the progress made by the school to reach its targets.

59. The school has a good number of teachers who are well qualified and suitably experienced to teach the National Curriculum subjects and religious education. The priority given by the headteacher to maintaining staffing levels and ensuring the professional development of all staff has had a beneficial effect. Training courses, which are identified as part of performance management, are closely linked to the needs of the school. In addition, there are very good arrangements in place to share the expertise that exists among the staff to support colleagues with planning and in the classroom. Non-teaching members of staff and students are effectively deployed and they make a valuable contribution to the quality of educational provision. They are all involved in planning and evaluating pupils' progress. A particular strength of these arrangements is the close teamwork and the excellent relationships that exist among staff. As a result, they create a very positive and supportive environment in which all work effectively together to promote the aims of the school. The school secretary is efficient, and cheerfully and smoothly ensures the day-to-day administration of the school.

60. The accommodation is satisfactory and allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. The main shortcoming is the lack of corridors between the classrooms, which means that pupils have to walk through teaching areas to reach their destinations. However, pupils are careful to consider others at work, and have been very well taught that they must move around very quietly. In addition, there are no grassed areas for pupils to use for playtimes

and for outdoor activities. However, there are plans to improve the outdoor provision, with the help of the Chartered Institute of Builders. The accommodation is well maintained and kept clean by the caretaker, a long-standing and valued member of staff. The learning environment in the classrooms is of high quality. Attractive displays of pupils' work enhance this environment and celebrate their achievements.

61. The overall quality of resources is satisfactory. Children in the Foundation Stage have a good range of resources, which together with the newly developed discrete play area provide effective learning opportunities for them. Resources throughout the school are in good condition, neatly stored, accessible and well used.

62. The school's strategic use of resources, including specific grant and other funding, is satisfactory, overall. This has improved since the last inspection. However, the school still has a budget deficit. The deficit has been reduced since the last inspection, and the school's planned return to credit within the next two years is being followed and is, generally, on target.

63. The school monitors its budget carefully and effectively, despite not employing information technology for the purpose. Both the headteacher and secretary monitor expenditure closely, and good advice and expertise is received from the local authority. Governors play their part in ensuring financial planning is relevant, and some recent major economies have helped to keep financial targets on course, without adversely affecting pupils' education. The headteacher and governors keep a careful watch on pupil numbers and staffing, to ensure the school remains effective.

64. Financial administration is efficient and unobtrusive, and governors are kept fully informed. All the points raised by the most recent financial audit have been addressed by the school. Day to day administration is good, and allows the school to run efficiently and smoothly.

65. The last inspection found that the principles of best value were not being applied satisfactorily. This is no longer the case, and the principles of best value are now applied well. Through the financial package with the local authority, the selection of suppliers is carefully compared against strict guidelines for major purchases, and this procedure is also followed by the school for smaller orders and tenders. Comparisons are made with similar schools in the authority regarding provision and standards. Since the last inspection, the school has continually challenged itself on major aspects of its provision in all areas. This inspection found that, despite several significant difficulties arising during the relatively short period which has elapsed since then, the school has met most challenges successfully. The school's customers, its pupils and parents, are also consulted on important matters, and their views are considered when implementing solutions and making decisions. The school development plan now fully embraces best value principles.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66. This effective school has no areas of significant weakness requiring urgent attention; nevertheless, the governors, headteacher and staff should consider addressing the following minor developmental points:

- monitor closely the return of the budget into credit;
(Paragraphs: 62, 63)
- take steps to make use of new technology to support the school's administration and data handling;
(Paragraph: 63)
- seek to improve the range of activities on offer outside the taught curriculum.
(Paragraph: 29)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 36 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 27 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Number | 1 | 15 | 11 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 3 | 42 | 31 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

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

Information about the school's pupils

| Pupils on the school's roll | Nursery | YR – Y2 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils) | 26 | 145 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | N/A | 21 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

| Special educational needs | Nursery | YR– Y2 |
|---|---------|--------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 0 | 5 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 9 | 41 |

| 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 | 4 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 5 |

Attendance

| Authorised absence | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 5.9 |
| National comparative data | 5.4 |

| Unauthorised absence | % |
|---------------------------|------|
| School data | 0.04 |
| National comparative data | 0.2 |

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

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

| | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year: | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2001 | 26 | 22 | 48 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | Reading | Writing | Mathematics |
|--|----------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above | Boys | 23 | 23 | 22 |
| | Girls | 15 | 15 | 16 |
| | Total | 38 | 38 | 38 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above | School | 79 (58) | 79 (60) | 79 (69) |
| | National | 84 (83) | 86 (84) | 91 (90) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above | Boys | 20 | 21 | 19 |
| | Girls | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| | Total | 35 | 36 | 34 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above | School | 73 (55) | 75 (55) | 71 (56) |
| | National | 85 (84) | 89 (88) | 89 (88) |

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 | 100 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | * |

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

* Not all parents disclosed the ethnicity of their children.

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 – Y2

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 7 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 21.1 |
| Average class size | 24 |

Education support staff:

YR – Y2

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 11 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 167 |

Qualified teachers and support staff:

Nursery

| | |
|--|----|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 1 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 26 |
| Total number of education support staff | 1 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 30 |
| Number of pupils per FTE adult | 13 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|------------------|
| Financial year | 2000/2001 |
|----------------|------------------|

| | £ |
|--|-----------|
| Total income | 423996.00 |
| Total expenditure | 408694.00 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2523.00 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | -42574.00 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | -27271.00 |

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|-----|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 2.6 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 2.8 |

| | |
|--|---|
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) | 0 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE) | 1 |
| Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE) | 0 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out
Number of questionnaires returned

| |
|-----|
| 197 |
| 59 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| My child likes school. | 72 | 26 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 65 | 35 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 38 | 50 | 3 | 0 | 9 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 46 | 47 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| The teaching is good. | 64 | 34 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 48 | 47 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 72 | 28 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 57 | 41 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 48 | 45 | 2 | 0 | 5 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 54 | 40 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 60 | 38 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 18 | 44 | 14 | 2 | 23 |

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

67. Children enter the nursery in September before their fourth birthday, with below average knowledge, understanding and skills. They attend part-time, either every morning or every afternoon, and transfer into a Reception class in the following September. They make very good progress, so that, by the time they enter the Reception classes, baseline assessment shows that most of the children have attainment levels appropriate for their age. In their personal, social and emotional development, these children achieve very well, and exceed the expected levels. Children continue to make good progress in the Reception classes, and achieve well, so that, by the time they enter Year 1, they achieve appropriate levels for their age. This is very good achievement over time, and is a direct result of the consistently high quality of education provided by the teachers and the nursery nurses. The school is justly proud of being awarded the Cumbria 'Kite Mark' for the Foundation Stage.

68. The curriculum is very well constructed and teachers provide the children with a wide range of activities, routines and experiences that are carefully chosen to match the needs of the children. In particular, all staff consistently demonstrate a very high quality of teaching and close teamwork. A particularly strong feature in the Foundation Stage is the way that every activity is a learning opportunity, where children work in such an encouraging atmosphere that they are inspired to learn. Since the previous inspection, the curriculum has been broadened to take account of government recommendations. Assessment procedures have been refined and information used to plan what children need to learn next. Teachers plan activities so that the children make the maximum progress they can. The school has established a very good system of keeping parents and the next class teacher informed through a 'Learning Goals Booklet', in which staff record children's progress in language, literacy and mathematics. In addition, these contain helpful guidance as to how parents can help their children with their learning. This is just one example of the close liaison that exists between school and home. There is a very strong emphasis on valuing all children, and this helps them to feel included and to have a really positive start to their education.

69. Throughout the Foundation Stage, children with special educational needs are very well supported so that they can make maximum progress. They are provided with carefully considered opportunities to meet their specific needs. The sensitive teaching and intervention of all adults results in these children making very good progress towards their targets. Children feel secure and confident, because the staff cherish them. One reception child, for example, was perfectly happy to talk about what he was doing, but before engaging in the conversation, he said, 'My name is, What is yours?' He warmly shook the hand of the visitor. This is the result of the deliberate and carefully planned aims of the school, where all adults are very good role models for children to emulate. The outstanding relationships that exist contribute to these children's very good progress.

Personal, social and emotional development

70. Children achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development. This area of learning is very well taught and, as a result, the majority of children exceed the expectations of the early learning goals.

71. In the nursery, the children already understand what is expected of them, and play and co-operate with one another. For example, one child asked another to help him to make a

car park with a construction set, and they immediately became engrossed in the activity. The teacher encouraged the children to work together by telling them that they needed to discuss what they were going to make. They set about their project and when it was time to clear up, did so carefully and willingly. Children soon learn what is fair by the teacher providing clear routines and procedures for turn taking, which make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate. For example, children waited patiently to take their turn to use the scoop for measuring flour when making their cheese biscuits. They use the attractive range of outdoor toys, ensuring that they occupy spaces where they do not get in the way of others.

72. The previous report judged that children received too much help from adults and opportunities were missed for children to take personal responsibility. Since then, the school has made very good progress in this area. A particularly strong feature now of the provision for children's development is the way that the teachers encourage independent learning. When their parents bring them into the nursery, even the youngest children are able to choose an activity for the session by placing a card displaying their chosen activity against their name. Children play and concentrate on their activities for remarkably long periods of time, and are often absolutely engrossed in what they are doing. The staff monitor and evaluate children's choices to ensure they are balanced in the long term. The outstanding relationships that exist encourage the children to want to talk, to be confident and to take part in the activities provided for them.

73. In the Reception classes, teachers are always positive and praise the children often for what they do well. This makes the children feel valued and boosts their confidence so that they want to be involved and to learn. For example, during the final session of a lesson, the teacher invited the children to read out their labels for their special items, which they had brought into school. She showed these to the children, praising their efforts by commenting, 'Well done. Look! She's remembered to use capital letters and a full stop for her sentence'. Children were delighted at their own and others' successes, and they were very proud of their efforts.

Communication, language and literacy

74. Children make good progress in their communication, language and literacy skills over their time in the Foundation Stage. The very good teaching they receive helps them to develop their skills, so that, by the time they enter Year 1, most children attain the expected levels for this area of their learning.

75. In the Nursery, the teacher provides very good opportunities for children to play together, where they are encouraged to talk. For example, during the review time after each activity that children choose for themselves, the teachers and adults ask individual children to report back on what each has accomplished. They are effectively helped to express themselves by skilful questioning and the adults' encouraging manner. These encourage the children to say more and to explain their activities in some detail. For example, when recalling the story of 'The Sleeping Beauty', the teacher left gaps for the children to provide the missing word. During the regular story sessions, and other activities such as baking, the teacher enhanced children's language development by showing flash cards with pictures and words, which gave instructions on what children would need to make biscuits. These measures encourage the children to recognise words and to begin the process of reading. Children are helped with writing through well-planned activities that improve their fine co-

ordination skills as well as enabling them to see the purposes of writing. Analysis of their work indicates that children are provided with ample opportunities to write. There are examples of independent writing, such as writing under the title, 'We are going to France'. Letters are already clearly formed, words well spaced and spelling often correct or phonetically plausible.

76. In the Reception classes, these activities are extended further. In one class, the teacher effectively reinforced children's skills by carefully planned activities that combined the skills of oracy with those of reading and writing. She discussed the story, asking questions such as, 'Who is the author?' or, 'How do you know it is winter?' To help the children to read, the teacher covered and uncovered words so that they could use the clues, context and illustrations to read entire sentences. The children enjoyed a sense of achievement at being able to do this. When writing about their special things, the children used word mats and other prompts such as word banks to help them to recognise words and to try for themselves. In guided writing, the teachers and support staff, including the well-prepared students, help the children to recognise sounds of words by enunciating them clearly, repeating them if necessary and encouraging them 'to have a go' themselves. Teachers prepare the resources and activities carefully to help the children with their language development. During the inspection, the role-play area was set up as an Ice Cream parlour. Here, the children participated in imaginative play involving talking, reading and writing.

Mathematical development

77. Children achieve very well in their mathematical development and begin Year 1 with understanding and skills at levels appropriate for their age.

78. In the nursery, children confidently count the number of beakers they need to set the tables for their snack time. They work out that, for six children, they need one more beaker if there are only five, and that they need to take some away if there are nine. They match these numbers with the appropriate number of chairs for each table. When baking, the children initially used scoops to weigh their ingredients. The teacher planned to develop this learning through the use of weighing scales for the next baking activities. Children learn mathematical vocabulary through the teacher's clear explanations, such as 'we call two children like that, twins'. When tidying activities away, the teacher folded a piece of material into different shapes for the children to name; they confidently identified squares, rectangles and triangles.

79. In the Reception classes, children count numbers to 20. They look at patterns, using pegboards, or devise two and three colour repeating patterns on Mothers' Day cards. In a very good lesson in one class, the teacher effectively reinforced children's mathematical understanding by organising a range of number games. The class was organised into ability groups in order to meet individual children's needs, and the children explored symmetrical patterns and a variety of geometric shapes. The number line was used in order to reinforce the recognition of numerals to twenty. Scrutiny of work indicates that the children are also familiar with solid shapes such as pyramid, sphere, cone, cube and cuboid. They can find the number of faces on a cylinder, and count the squares and rectangles on cuboids.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

80. This area of learning is taught very well and by the time children enter Year 1, the majority have made good progress and show the levels of attainment expected for their age.

81. In the Nursery, children learn to use the computer, and can already move the mouse accurately to explore an art program to paint a picture, for example. Children talk, for example, about different kinds of fruit, and gave explanations when the teacher asked them why the pears are in a box and the clementines in a net-bag. She provided further information by showing them the hardness of the skin and by telling the children where these fruits came from, and explained that, 'These apples are from England. They don't need to travel in an aeroplane'. In another activity, the children explored their feelings and learned to express them in different situations. This is very good preparation for a healthy emotional life. In another very good lesson, the teacher brought in a pregnant rabbit and encouraged the children to talk about new life. Children were completely absorbed, and showed a very caring side when the teacher asked them not to move forward suddenly while the rabbit ran around the circle. They responded sensitively, and gently stroked the animal when it approached them. She asked questions such as, 'What season comes after autumn?' to reinforce their understanding of the seasons. The teacher widened children's learning further by using topical news, such as the incidence of foot and mouth disease that affected Cumbria last year, to explain why there are very few lambs as yet. Children learn about other cultures, when they celebrate the Chinese New Year and taste Chinese food. Through their active support of the Westnell Nursery in Peru, children learn about life in that country and to be sensitive to the needs of others.

82. In the Reception classes, the children continue to build on their knowledge. For example, children learn to extend their information technology skills by using the computers as they explore patterns. They learn, for example, how to break up large cubes into small ones and to use the cursor competently to drag cubes to the desired positions; they can print these out independently. In a class book about a walk around the adjoining streets, the children can be seen looking for shape and pattern in houses. They looked at pictures of penguins before making puppets, and used computers to draw their penguins, labelling these using their word-processing skills. In painting irises for their Mothers' Day cards, the children learned to mix colours before painting their flowers. They observed change, investigated and experimented. This is a very good basis for children's future learning in science.

Physical development

83. Children develop their physical skills well and make very good progress during their time in the Foundation Stage, so that they begin Year 1 with their development at the level expected for their age.

84. In the Nursery, the children enjoy playing outside with their cycles, cars and slides. They learn to pedal and to control their steering, and enjoy the activities provided by the teacher and other staff. Children use the space well, and control their movements to avoid bumping into each other. Indoor activities are carefully chosen, and the children learn quickly how to use scissors, pencils, crayons and other resources safely and with co-ordination.

85. In the Reception classes, children make good use of equipment such as hoops, and are aware of space when they practise a variety of movements in the hall. They improved these carefully and followed the teacher's challenges, such as 'taking their elbows and feet for a walk'. The children understand that they need to warm up and cool down for starting

and finishing any exercise. They learn to evaluate their own work sensitively, and that of others. The majority of children can change for the physical activities independently.

Creative development

86. Children achieve very well in their creative development. This area is very well taught and children enter Year 1 with the skills expected for their age.

87. In the Nursery, children draw and paint and use their skills to produce illustrations. A particular strength of the provision for creative development is the way that children are provided with carefully considered activities that engage their imaginations. The teacher feels passionately about the need to develop children's creativity in all areas of their development. This is evidenced in music and dance as observed during the inspection, when the children re-enacted the story of 'The Sleeping Beauty', and through role-play. When a child brought in her doll from home and showed the children the badly cut hair, they made magic spells to improve it. The teacher used a well-prepared theatre for their imaginative play, using toy rabbits. In another activity, the children were observed in collaborative play, building a house with wooden bricks. Children wore hard helmets for 'safety'. Outside, the children talked to the two live rabbits gently, one making up a story 'for her bedtime'. Children explore computers and are absolutely fascinated when producing pictures using the art program.

88. In the Reception classes, children continue to improve their painting and drawing skills, for example, by producing illustrations based on Elmer the Elephant, and are helped to engage their imaginations in the games they play indoors and outdoors. The teachers present the children with a variety of imaginative activities across all areas of Early Learning Goals. For example, in one class, during a literacy lesson, the children looked at the patterns on the 'special things' that they brought from home. Seeing unusual designs, one wrote, 'My toy has a web pattern'. Display around the classes, shows other examples, such as penguins made out of clay, which the children had painted carefully. This project led to children making penguin puppets, imaginatively using a variety of materials. The teachers seized this opportunity to reinforce literacy skills. Children listed the things they needed to make their puppets and sketched an outline, using a variety of drawing resources, including information technology.

ENGLISH

89. In the last report in 2000, standards in English at age seven were not high enough in speaking and listening and reading, and were well below average in writing. National Curriculum tests show that there has been an improving trend during the last five years, though in 2001 levels of attainment in both reading and writing were still below the average for similar schools. Local authority monitoring reports confirm these improvements, and the inspection findings indicate that this year results are likely to rise to be roughly in line with the national average. Next year standards are likely to rise again. Good progress is made and pupils achieve well, including gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs, who are well supported.

90. Pupils develop listening skills well. Speaking skills are less well developed, but good progress is made as they improve their vocabulary and are encouraged to express themselves. There is evidence of good development of key vocabulary across a wide range of subjects, and this has helped in the implementation of the literacy strategy in the school.

91. Standards of reading are improving, thanks to good teaching of basic skills. There is an emphasis upon learning the phonic sounds properly, and pupils are encouraged to read with expression. Pupils have a good knowledge of book skills that will help them to use books for research. They talk with understanding about contents pages, indices and glossaries and know how to use them. They read both fiction and non-fiction, and clearly know the difference between them. One Year 2 boy explained about illustrators and that his favourite illustrator is Quentin Blake, commenting 'He illustrates Roald Dahl books.' There is a real feeling that pupils enjoy reading, and they read often at school and at home. As one Year 2 girl put it, 'I read anywhere. If I'm at my Gran's, I read to her too.' The strong support parents give is very helpful in lifting standards. The reading record books are very good and are well used to inform teachers, pupils and parents. They include informative comments from staff and parents, as well as guidance to pupils.

92. Writing skills are improving, thanks to a much better focus upon skills. Pupils are learning to use well-formed handwriting, and there is more emphasis upon neatness and presentation, though there are still some inconsistencies here and work is not always dated. In Year 1, all pupils seen in one lesson were able to write a sentence with at least one adjective, using capital letters and full stops correctly. Some pupils were able to use 'and' to form more complex sentences. Year 2 talked sensibly about the story they had been looking at together. They show understanding of the setting, the development of the story and the characters, and they are able to write sentences about the main characters in the story. Some pupils are using words such as 'suddenly' and 'then' to join sentences. Others are able to write a whole paragraph.

93. Pupils have a very positive attitude and approach to learning. In several of the lessons seen, the approach to learning is quite remarkable. Pupils quite simply know what is expected of them, and they settle down and do it. In Year 2 lessons, for example, if pupils need to check something in a dictionary, there is no fuss or wasting of time: they simply get it, check it and put it back. Pupils work well independently or in groups, with or without an adult. This attitude is the result of extremely good relationships and high expectations of behaviour. All pupils are challenged and achieve well, including those with special educational needs and those who have been identified as gifted or talented.

94. There was no unsatisfactory teaching seen. Most teaching was either good or very good, so that teaching was good overall. Teachers have clear learning objectives and are well focused on what they want the pupils to learn. This clear focus is helping to raise the standards in the school because it means that everyone, including the pupils and the parents, knows what needs to be done to improve. Teachers plan well, and target work well to the needs of individual pupils. In the better lessons there is a good, brisk pace that keeps pupils motivated and makes good use of time. Teachers generally manage pupils well, and have high expectations of both behaviour and work that the pupils know and understand. The best teaching has a wide range of techniques to gain the pupils' attention effortlessly. In a Year 2 lesson the teacher simply began singing a well-known song, and within seconds all the pupils were involved in the song and the actions, sitting ready to move on. The standard of singing was good too. There were some examples of a rather less effective pace and where the teachers did not consistently insist upon high standards. In these lessons some time was lost and some pupils did not concentrate fully. Support staff are involved well in the lessons and give good guidance and help to pupils. The early literacy support is well focused, and is very useful in developing basic skills. Pupils are well taught and enjoy 'Paddy's Gang'. The use of hand puppets seen here and elsewhere in the school is an excellent way of involving the pupils. Little use of information and communication technology was seen in the lessons observed.

95. Spiritual, moral and social development are effectively supported through English lessons. For example, pupils are encouraged to think about people and characters. One girl actually took the part of Jamina, a character in the story. Simple but effective use of a scarf and a model elephant helped her to 'become' the character, as pupils asked her questions about why 'she' had done certain things and how she felt. The feelings of Jamina when she found a baby elephant whose mother had been shot by hunters were explored well, and pupils were encouraged to think about the effect of their actions upon others. A wide range of different texts helps cultural development and understanding.

96. Management of English is good. The subject co-ordinator is knowledgeable and well informed and leads well. She monitors planning, teaching and standards of work, and has been involved in demonstration lessons to show good practice. Resources are adequate to teach all elements of the literacy strategy, accommodation is good and a wide range of attractive displays make for a positive learning environment. Teaching and support staff are well matched to the needs of the curriculum. Assessment procedures are good, and some teachers have begun to set clear targets for pupils in their books. This is good practice, and should be extended so that all pupils have clear and specific ideas of what to do to improve. There has been good progress in this subject since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

97. Standards in mathematics are improving as teaching improves to a good level, based on the National Numeracy Strategy. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection, when standards were low and teaching was unsatisfactory.

98. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests for seven year olds, overall standards in mathematics were well below average when compared to all schools nationally, and when the comparison was restricted only to those schools with a similar intake. There had been no secure trend of improvement over the previous few years. An analysis of the levels actually awarded shows that the proportion of pupils who gained the higher Level 3 was less than half of that nationally, with higher numbers gaining the lower Level 1. The school has set challenging targets for its future performance. Current assessment data suggests that good progress is being made towards achieving them.

99. Inspection evidence, based on the standards seen in the school now, paints a brighter picture. Scrutiny of the work completed by pupils in Year 2, and observations in their lessons, show that standards are now significantly better and approach the normal range. However, there are still relatively few pupils on track to achieve the higher Level 3. Standards of work in Year 1 are better again, suggesting good future prospects. This improvement is quite dramatic, and has taken place because of improved teaching, with teachers more confident in the methods of the national strategy. Recent improvements in the provision for the youngest pupils in the nursery and reception are also having an effect in that infant teachers have a better raw material with which to work. Pupils in Year 2 are able to round numbers up to 100 to the nearest ten, even when the number ends in five. The lowest attainers need considerable help with this; higher attainers are able to do it competently even with numbers over a hundred. The higher attaining pupils can place approximately, on to a blank number line, numbers such as 76 or 19, having first marked useful signposts such as 0, 100, 25, 50, 75. The weakest pupils can complete a similar exercise when the numbers are restricted to the range 0 to 20. Pupils understand the sequence of numbers to 100 as a result, and have a good understanding of place value. Analysis of completed work shows an appropriate emphasis on number; however, there are some interesting challenges to make pupils think mathematically, for example, in trying to

find how many ways three eggs can be placed in an empty egg box with space for six. Given pupils' low attainment on entry to the school, and the levels of challenge seen in their work and lessons, it is clear that there are good levels of achievement for all pupils, including those with special needs, and those who have a particular talent for the subject.

100. Four lessons were observed in the infant classes, two of which were satisfactory and two very good in terms of teaching and learning. This limited evidence, together with evidence of planning, coverage, marking and the match of tasks to pupils' needs found in the analysis of work, indicates that mathematics teaching overall is good. This is the chief reason why standards are now rising. In all lessons observed, pupils enjoyed the work and behaved well because of the teachers' high expectations of their behaviour and attitudes. Relationships between staff and pupils are always very positive so that pupils want to please their teacher. This enables the teachers to concentrate on their main purpose: to teach. In the best lessons, lessons are carefully planned so that the tasks pupils are presented with represent a challenge, but are achievable. In all lessons, support staff are well deployed. In whole class sections they quietly paraphrase the teacher's words for those pupils who need it, and act as an audience for those lacking in confidence. When leading groups, they do so effectively, making useful notes on the attainment of each pupil in their group.

101. When classes are working together on the floor, the best lessons include several short activities, thus maintaining pupils' attention. This happened in a very good Year 1 lesson about counting in twos. The teacher used a variety of methods to show that counting in twos is a timesaving skill, and used good questioning to improve pupils' understanding. Through this, pupils eventually were able to say that when counting on in twos, 'Whether you land on an odd or even number depends on the number you start with'. In a very good lesson in Year 2, pupils were motivated by a team game to make the largest numbers they could, given two or three random digits. Another game, in which they had to move around the room to find the multiple of ten nearest to a given number broke up this session effectively and refreshed young minds.

102. When teaching, whilst still satisfactory, was more lacklustre, then the pace was not as brisk and pupils did not work with such concentration, producing smaller volumes of work.

103. The co-ordinator has only recently taken on the role, but she has a clear vision of the future of the subject. She has already identified areas for action and started to address them. For example, she has organised staff training on calculation to take place later this year. However, she has not had the opportunity to visit lessons as yet, although this is planned to take place shortly. The school's continuing budget deficit means that some resources are becoming shabby, and the co-ordinator does not control a budget for the subject. A levelled and moderated folio of work that is being developed has the potential to guide teachers' expectations further. The school has identified one pupil who is particularly talented in number work, and appropriately challenging work is available for him. The co-ordinator has noted that there is not enough software to enable teachers to use information and communication technology consistently to support pupils' learning in mathematics, although sound use was seen of a program to support pupils' understanding of the sequencing of numbers to a hundred.

SCIENCE

104. Pupils' attainment in science is average by the age of seven. They achieve well across all elements, and in the area of scientific enquiry their achievement is very good. This is evident across all ability ranges, including those pupils who have special educational needs. Since the previous inspection, which judged that standards were low, the school has made

very good progress. This is due to the very good management of the subject by the co-ordinator, who has systematically reorganised the teaching and learning in the subject, supported by all the staff. There are now well-established procedures, which support pupils' learning and their subsequent attainment. In addition, the curriculum has been carefully adapted to meet the needs of all pupils in the school. However, it is well rooted in the National Curriculum programmes of study and so does not lose the rigour of the subject. The scheme of work gives very good guidelines to teachers about what they need to teach the pupils next, and how they may achieve the learning objectives. In addition, there are very good assessment procedures in place, and information is used to plan the next step of pupils' learning. All these factors, identified as weaknesses in the previous report two years ago, have been successfully addressed by the school. As a result, standards have risen since then.

105. In Year 1, pupils handle a range of materials and make accurate observations. For example, they carefully evaluate the evidence from their experiments on which materials are waterproof, and make conclusions on the basis of their findings. The majority of pupils understand fair testing, through the carefully planned activities for investigative science. They demonstrate this understanding by giving explanations and examples, such as 'We need to leave the water on the surfaces for the same length of time', or 'We must pour the same number of teaspoons for each pot and over each material'.

106. In Year 2, the pupils build on their previous learning and use their enquiry skills to good effect. For example, they investigated how their class teacher could keep her drink cool on a hot sunny, day. They know and understand when a test or comparison is fair. They take the tests further, by fixing variables such as keeping size and number of ice cubes the same, but changing the container. The pupils successfully engage their developing skills in other subjects, notably, literacy and mathematics, when they draw conclusions on the basis of their findings, recording their experiments using block graphs.

107. During the inspection, pupils in Year 2 investigated life processes and living things. They recognise similarities and differences between humans and other animals. The pupils understand that animals move, make sounds, see and hear. In a discussion, the pupils made comments, such as, 'We have things in common'. Another pupil explained that 'mammals grow inside females and are fed by milk from their bodies'. This is a good example of the school's approach to growth and reproduction. This learning was reinforced by the teacher setting the pupils as homework the task of studying the way their parents, brothers and sisters have changed in appearance over time.

108. Science contributes to other areas of pupils' learning. For example, the pupils considered healthy eating when set a challenge by a biscuit company in conjunction with Tullie House Museum. The pupils had to make a 'healthy biscuit', investigating different criteria and adding or changing the basic recipe. The pupils put forward suggestions such as adding nuts or fibre. One of the pupils wrote, 'I am going to use wheat germ – it has fibre'. The biscuit company will now use the winning recipe for their products.

109. Pupils also learn about physical processes, including electricity. A particular strength of the science curriculum is the way that the school makes environmental links, so that the pupils can appreciate the practical applications. In Year 1, for example, they learn that they need waterproof materials for their garden shelters. They compare the climate in Penrith with that in Peru. They conclude that the main protection required in a sunny climate is against the sun. In Year 2, pupils solved the problem of streetlights not working, and what needed to be done to ensure that circuits are functioning. This investigation led to good links with art and design, design and technology and literacy. For example, one pupil

recorded that, 'When we tried to wire the bulbs in sequence, there was not sufficient power for lots of bulbs. We solved the problem by wiring three bulbs at the most together'. The photographic display shows the pupils working co-operatively in solving these problems. It is evident that they can work independently and use their initiative successfully.

110. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use imaginative activities to meet the learning objectives of the lessons. Teachers plan and prepare their lessons well, working co-operatively, thereby ensuring that parallel classes have equal opportunities for learning. They start lessons with a short revision of previous work, and this consolidates pupils' learning and helps them to prepare for the new work. For example, in Year 1, the teacher summarised pupils' previous learning about shelters against sun and rain, before moving the pupils on to new learning by giving them opportunities to set up experiments to test which materials would be waterproof. Teachers ask questions skilfully to ascertain understanding, and to take pupils' thinking further. The final session in lessons is well used to consolidate learning and key points.

111. Teachers are very aware of those pupils who have special educational needs in their classes. They make modifications for these pupils as appropriate, but, nevertheless, they make demands on them to give of their best. The support staff and students are carefully prepared for their work by the teachers, so that effective help with investigations can be given to these pupils. When working with small groups, the support staff interact very well with the pupils, challenging their thinking and giving good explanations to clarify pupils' understanding. These factors contribute well to the pupils' good learning.

ART AND DESIGN

112. It was not possible to observe teaching in art and design lessons. Secure judgements about teaching and learning, therefore, cannot be made. Other judgements are based on an analysis of completed work on display, and on discussions with staff and pupils.

113. Standards in art and design are in line with national expectations. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs, make good progress.

114. In Years 1 and 2, pupils develop good control over a wide range of media and techniques in art and design. They are able to mix and blend colours, and record from observation and imagination with appropriate regard to detail. In Year 1, the pupils used different media to draw some of the buildings they saw on their walk around Penrith. They used pencils, ink pens and chalk pastels to good effect. The pupils made a wall hanging using a variety of materials to portray mini-beasts in an imaginary environment. They considered colour, form, pattern, texture and different materials to communicate ideas. There was a very good link with science.

115. In Year 2, the pupils looked carefully at a forsythia plant, and used oil pastels to make observational drawings. These are particularly effective and artistically executed. The pupils explored the craft of tie and dye, using a range of natural dyes such as coffee, beetroot, orange juice, raspberries, onionskins and red cabbage. Pupils investigate a variety of fabrics used for clothes and consider the suitability of designs. These activities provide good opportunities for discussions and for engaging pupils' literacy skills. Little evidence of the use of information and communication technology to support learning was seen.

116. The newly appointed co-ordinator for the subject has good plans to develop teaching and learning. The particular emphasis will be on the development of skills, knowledge and understanding of art and design, but it will be firmly based in creativity, to engage pupils' imaginations. Having visited Reggio Emilia in Italy, the co-ordinator is particularly enthusiastic to enrich the pupils' curricular opportunities. The subject features on the school development plan.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

117. It was not possible to observe any design and technology lessons during this inspection, but a review of planning and of work done by pupils shows that the whole range of the curriculum is being covered effectively and that standards achieved are good. Pupils all make good progress. There is a scheme of work in place and this is being further developed. During the last inspection in 2000, standards were in line with those expected at age seven, even though there was no scheme of work in place at that time. Progress since then has been good.

118. Year 2 pupils are engaged in making puppets. They think about design, shape, size and the type of fabric they will use. They discuss and experiment with a range of different ways of joining, such as gluing, stapling and sewing, and have to evaluate which method is best and why. They make careful designs based upon their considerations, and they use a range of skills and tools, estimating, measuring, cutting, sticking and sewing to produce the finished puppet. At the end of the process they make an evaluation of the process and how they might improve it. Other recent work includes making movable Father Christmas figures, incorporated into an Advent Calendar, and links to the collective worship themes, such as the Hindu Divali and Christian Easter, when pupils made sweets and nests as part of food technology. Discussions with pupils show that they enjoy their design and technology lessons and they can describe the different processes they have learned. Information and communication technology was not observed in use to support learning.

119. The new design and technology co-ordinator has only been in post for two months, but has a clear vision of how the subject could develop and gives competent leadership. There is already an appropriate action plan for improvement. On-going assessment is part of the planning process, but there are also good links with another school and the procedure of designing, making, evaluating and assessing is being reviewed. Monitoring of teaching and of standards is still not in place, except through informal discussion. There is a satisfactory range of tools and materials for the teaching of design and technology, and these resources are well used.

GEOGRAPHY

120. Standards in geography are in line with national expectations. The pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. The previous inspection report did not make any judgements about standards because of insufficient evidence, but was critical of the planning which then did not ensure proper balance and progression. Since then, the school has successfully addressed these issues.

121. Pupils have a sound knowledge of their own area because teachers take them into the locality so that they can investigate for themselves. Pupils in Year 1 contrast the area of Penrith with other localities, such as Bolivia or Spain. They learn about the different homes

people inhabit in these countries. The pupils are helped to locate these on the world map or on a globe, and through these experiences, they learn to compare and contrast the materials used for these homes. The pupils are helped to understand the different types of houses around the world, such as skyscrapers, mud huts and reed houses.

122. In Year 2, the pupils know and understand what constitutes an island. They recognise Barra Island on the map and they can explain the transport used on it. They compare transport used to reach Barra with that used around Penrith. The pupils know, for example that they would travel by a ferry and not a ship from the mainland to Barra. Planning for the next term shows that pupils' learning will be extended to learning about similarities and differences between Penrith and other locations, using a variety of evidence such as photographs, visits and talks from visitors, such as the teacher from the Peruvian nursery.

123. The quality of teaching is good overall. Two lessons were observed, one in Year 1 and one in Year 2. Teachers plan in pairs to ensure consistency of learning for the pupils in classes. Good use is made of visits, locally and further afield, to places such as Sillioth and Mire House. These activities are carefully considered to ensure maximum learning for the pupils. The subject is soundly led by the co-ordinator.

HISTORY

124. No history was taught during the inspection because the subject is taught on an alternate basis with geography. This arrangement gives sufficient time for pupils to undertake historical enquiry at some depth. Judgements are made on the basis of planning, displays, scrutiny of pupils' work and records. Standards are in line with the national expectations. Since the previous inspection, the school has maintained its standards.

125. By the end of Year 2, the pupils are beginning to understand chronology and how changes occur over time. They know about Florence Nightingale and differences between the conditions in a Crimean hospital and those in modern times. They learn about other famous people, such as Marie Curie, Samuel Pepys and Helen Keller. The pupils know about the great Fire of London. Through educational visits to places such as Abbott House Museum, Tullie House and Mire House, pupils learn what life was like in different eras. Visitors to the school also extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of chronology. For example, grandparents explain to pupils about the games they used to play and the toys they played with, and about their school days.

126. As no lessons were observed during the inspection, it is not possible to judge the quality of teaching. Nevertheless, planning indicates that teachers use a variety of strategies to teach knowledge, skills and understanding of history. Emphasis is on the development of enquiry skills, using a variety of information sources. Pupils are encouraged to ask questions about the past, and teachers are adept at seizing opportunities for using other subjects to extend understanding and knowledge of history. For example, in science in Year 2 the teacher gave her pupils homework on changes in members of their families over the years. The subject is soundly led by its co-ordinator. Literacy, numeracy and information communication technology, are also used effectively to support learning in history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

127. The school has decided to teach information and communication technology through its applications to other subjects and consequently it was not possible to observe any lessons devoted solely to the subject. Judgements are based on observations of the use of information and communication technology in other lessons, an analysis of completed work and displays, and discussions with staff and pupils.

128. The school takes part in a certification scheme run by the local authority in which National Curriculum levels awarded are moderated so as to be reliable. In 2001, the majority of assessments for this school were at the expected Level 2 or the lower Level 1. There were very few units of work assessed at the higher Level 3. The current pupils in Year 2 are able to open and close software, save their work, use the keyboard and mouse to control the computer, use drawing programs to produce a variety of effects, use the word processor and mix text and graphics on the same page. Work on display, including the use of pictograms to illustrate data, and use e-mail to communicate with a former teacher now abroad. Observations of pupils using computers in lessons confirm these findings and contribute to the view that standards are just within the average range for pupils of this age. This shows that pupils have made good progress since starting the school and their achievement in information and communication technology is good.

129. It is not possible to make a secure judgement on teaching and learning from observations in lessons. Nevertheless, the evidence of the completed work and pupils' evident understanding of the subject show that teaching and learning are both at least good. When pupils use the computers independently, they take turns sensibly and treat the machinery with the appropriate respect. They are keen to use the computers, and other equipment such as listening stations, and work at a good pace when doing so. They concentrate hard and work collaboratively and effectively. This was seen as two pupils had to use clues given to work out, by trial and improvement, how the numbers were placed in an obscured hundred square. They discussed each move carefully before committing themselves.

130. The co-ordinator is currently absent from school due to ill-health and the headteacher is overseeing the subject's provision. Nationally recommended schemes of work are in use throughout the school. The school is aware that staff vary in their confidence in the teaching of the subject and is taking steps, including training and standardised interfaces, to build this. The headteacher does receive and examine teachers' planning to ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement to information and communication technology, but there is no clear overview on when it should be taught throughout the school, and monitoring of teaching has not taken place.

MUSIC

131. In the inspection in 2000 pupils were found to make satisfactory progress, with a particular strength in singing. Singing is still very strong in the school: pupils sing tunefully and with obvious enjoyment. There is a scheme of work in place and planning shows that all aspects of the National Curriculum for music are covered.

132. It was only possible to see one music lesson, but pupils were also observed listening to music and singing in assemblies. Pupils were expected to listen carefully and pick out the sound of birds. A very enjoyable 'singing together' session was observed; this is a regular occasion, when the school sings as a whole community. The pupils know a wide range of songs, and the quality of singing is good and, in some cases, very good. On this occasion

the music specialist was out of school on a visit, and pupils were singing unaccompanied, ably led by a teacher. Pupils from all year groups volunteered to accompany on tambourines, and five pupils from reception to Year 2 were chosen from a sea of volunteers to sing a verse of the song, 'All the Flowers are Waking'. They did this very well, and after their verse the rest joined in. Pupils have a good sense of rhythm and timing.

133. In the Year 1 music lesson observed, pupils are learning the importance of following a leader or (as they were able to point out) a conductor. They have a sound sense of rhythm, beat and pulse which the teacher developed as she clapped a series of beats, some long, some short, and some a mixture of both. Most pupils were able to reproduce the series accurately, though a few had some difficulty, especially with the timing of slow beats. Good, simple techniques of counting time in the head were taught. Pupils all had a percussion instrument and showed good listening skills, playing loud or soft, together or in different groups of instruments to the rhythm of 'Oki Tokki Unga'. Pupils are beginning to notice differences in pitch, and a few are able to recognise that an 'A' played on a chime bar is higher in pitch than a 'B'. Pupils sang well and, at their own request, sang one of the songs, 'I Can Sing a Rainbow', in French.

134. A video of the school's Christmas production, 'The Sleepy Shepherd' was reviewed, and once again the quality of singing through the whole school was good. A number of Year 2 pupils were also involved in accompanying competently on instruments such as glockenspiels, chime bars and tambourines.

135. The music lesson seen was very well taught. The teacher showed good subject knowledge and the lesson was well prepared. High expectations of behaviour and performance are clearly normal as could be seen by the attitude of the pupils. There was no snatching of instruments, and, although they obviously enjoyed the lesson, they were very well-focused, concentrating on what they were doing and on how to improve. This speaks well for the relationships and the positive attitudes in the class. The pace was brisk, with a variety of different activities packed into just half an hour, but there was no feeling of rush and the activities quite naturally blended together, with clear leadership from a teacher who never had to raise her voice above a very quiet tone. The concentration of the pupils was even more remarkable, given that they had just returned from a visit to another school, where they had been part of a physical education demonstration, and one might have expected them to be somewhat distracted.

136. Although only one lesson was observed, it is clear from the planning, the video and from observing and listening to pupils in assemblies that teaching and standards generally are at least satisfactory. Resources are good, with a range of tapes and CD's, including music from different cultures. There is a box of instruments available for each year group. Music supports spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, being an integral part of circle time, 'stilling' time, worship time and a variety of concerts and productions. The subject co-ordinator has only been at the school a short time but gives good leadership and has a clear vision for the future.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

137. It was only possible to observe one physical education lesson during the inspection. Standards attained in that lesson indicate that by the age of seven, pupils reach standards in line with those expected for their age. A well-developed scheme of work is in place and is being updated in the light of recent training initiatives. The subject is well planned to provide progression in skills in all areas of physical development. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

138. Year 1 pupils know that it is necessary to warm up before doing strenuous exercise so as, to quote the pupils, to 'get our muscles warm' and so that, 'we don't hurt ourselves.' They understand that heart rate increases with exercise. They behave very well and concentrate hard, being keen to improve, and they make good progress as they link together different types of movement. In a lesson, all pupils were able to perform a sequence containing a balance, a roll, travelling and a final balance. They experimented with different types of balances, rolls and ways of travelling across the mat. The better co-ordinated were able to think about posture, pointing and holding a position so as to have a smoother, better controlled sequence.

139. The teaching in the lesson seen was good, being well planned and with clear objectives. The teacher and pupils had a very good relationship, but it was clear that the teacher was in control and had high expectations of behaviour. The pupils responded to this and there was a real focus in the lesson. The pace was brisk, and the good subject knowledge of the teacher was evident in the clear explanations and the way she called on pupils to demonstrate good techniques. Having dressed appropriately, she was able to demonstrate good technique herself. As the pupils worked in their groups on the mats, the teacher and the classroom assistant both gave help, advice and encouragement. The assistant noted and corrected a poor, and possibly dangerous, forward roll technique, and made sure the boy understood the need to tuck the head in. In this lesson, pupils were not given the opportunity to assess and appraise their performance or those of the other pupils, but such self-evaluations are featured in planning.

140. The subject co-ordinator leads the subject well and has a good grasp of what is happening through the school. At the moment, pupils perform indoor physical education in pants and vests and with bare feet. Following discussions about the advisability of pupils walking through the school in bare feet, the co-ordinator felt that from the summer term pupils should be expected to wear full kit for all physical education lessons, indoors and outdoors. Several members of staff have been on physical education courses within the last year, and there was a whole staff session in January of this year. It has not been possible for the subject leader to monitor teaching yet, but the well thought out action plan includes the need to check more closely how the national curriculum for physical education is being covered. Accommodation and resources are adequate, but the lack of an outside grassed area and the limited amount of useful space in the playground are still somewhat restrictive.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

141. In the last report in 2000 standards at age seven were found to be in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, but there were some concerns about progression.

142. It was only possible to observe one religious education lesson during this inspection, but an analysis of pupils' work, the lesson seen and discussions with pupils during that lesson show that standards are still at least satisfactory and are sometimes better. Pupils are taught through a scheme of work based upon the local Agreed Syllabus. Progression is now secure across Years 1 and 2.

143. In the lesson seen there was excellent teaching and learning taking place. The Year 2 pupils were observed looking at the story of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. A very short but well focused introduction guided pupils into what to concentrate on as they made their way to the worship area to watch two short video extracts. The whole class session that followed was remarkable in its total focus and very mature discussion of the event. The

teacher expertly used a 'stilling' technique to guide the pupils into imagining themselves at the scene. The intense concentration of the pupils was a tribute to the excellent relationships that existed between teacher and pupils, and the teacher was able to recreate the bustling scene in pupils' minds as they sat in the quiet classroom and imagined themselves there. Well thought out questioning afterwards helped pupils to understand what it must have been like in the crowd, and pupils made perceptive comments, such as: 'I got puzzled at first because I didn't know what was happening.' 'I began to get a little bit nervous with all the people around me shouting', and 'I was excited when I saw Jesus.' The lesson was both an exploration of feelings and a learning experience, and as such it made a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. After the discussion, pupils split up into groups to prepare for a visit the following week to a local church where they were to learn about the Eucharist. Being carefully guided by the teacher and support staff, they came up with a range of good questions to ask during the visit; there was good development of the skills of research and enquiry. In this lesson, pupils showed a good knowledge of the events leading up to Easter.

144. Scrutiny of work, and work on display showed that pupils also look at a range of faiths. When looking at special books they look at the Bible and the Qu'ran, for instance, and festivals studied include the Hindu Festival of Lights, when good links are made with food technology in the making of sweets, and with art in the production of rangoli patterns. The worship centre remains a focal point for the school and is a delightful area. Resources are good and well used, and artefacts are even sometimes borrowed by another school. Although much of the work done in religious education is not written down, there is sufficient recorded to show steady progress, and that work is at least in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for the age of the pupils.

145. The subject co-ordinator is knowledgeable and leads the subject well. There is still no monitoring of the teaching of religious education, but planning and work are checked and the subject leader is keen to maintain and improve standards. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection.