

INSPECTION REPORT

ST LEONARD'S RC (VA) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Silksworth, Sunderland

LEA area: Sunderland

Unique reference number: 108846

Headteacher: Mr. M. Leckenby

Reporting inspector: Mrs R. Eaton
15173

Dates of inspection: 27th – 29th November 2000

Inspection number: 224540

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

© Crown copyright 2001

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and juniors
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	5 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Tunstall Village Road Silksworth SUNDERLAND
Postcode:	SR3 2BB
Telephone number:	0191 553 6288
Fax number:	0191 553 6290
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev. Fr. Brian Russell
Date of previous inspection:	07/10/1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs. R. Eaton Inspector No: 15173	Registered inspector	art and design design and technology history special educational needs English as an additional language	standards teaching leadership and management
Mr. S. Vincent Inspector No: 9327	Lay inspector		community links welfare partnership with parents staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Mr. J. Barley Inspector No: 4109	Team inspector	mathematics information and communication technology music	attitudes, values and personal development spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Mr. D. Earley Inspector No: 18344	Team inspector	English physical education	curriculum assessment
Mr. J. Taylor Inspector No: 11848	Team inspector	science geography areas of learning in the foundation stage equal opportunities	efficiency

The inspection contractor was:

Lincolnshire Education Associates

The Innovation Centre
Europarc
GRIMSBY
North East Lincolnshire
DN37 9TT

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

The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway

London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6 - 9
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10 - 12
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	12 - 13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	14 - 15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	15 - 16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	16
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	16 - 18
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	19
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	20 - 23
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	24 - 35

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Leonard's is a Roman Catholic, voluntary aided primary school. Currently, 190 pupils are on the school's roll, including 30 in the reception year. Only three pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and none of them is in the early stages of learning English. When they enter the school, children's attainments are broadly average. However, across the school, about one quarter of the pupils have special educational needs – generally related to the difficulties they have with literacy. The number of pupils with statements is below average. The school serves a large community and pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Leonard's is a good school. Pupils reach high standards, notably in English and mathematics, as a result of very good teaching. The school is well led and managed and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils reach high standards in literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers have very good relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils want to learn and they try very hard.
- Behaviour is very good. Pupils respect one another's feelings and values.
- The school provides very well for pupils with special educational needs. Consequently, these pupils make very good progress.
- The arrangements for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good.
- The school cares very well for all its pupils.

What could be improved

- The lack of suitable resources and facilities for children in the reception year hinders some aspects of their physical development.
- The plans for teaching design and technology and some aspects of information and communication technology are incomplete.
- The role of subject leaders is not sufficiently clear.
- The school's plans for formally checking the quality of teaching have not yet been put into practice.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was previously inspected in October 1996. Since then, it has made good progress. Throughout the school, standards in English, mathematics and information and communication technology have improved. For pupils up to the age of seven, standards in physical education and science are now better. The quality of teaching has improved considerably, and this has had a significant effect on standards. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development were previously described as good – they are now very good. Attendance was good in 1996. Although it is now judged to be satisfactory, the attendance rates have remained steady – it is the national benchmarks that have been increased.

The school has tackled conscientiously the issues that arose from the previous inspection, and improvements have taken place in each of them. Particularly significant are the developments in the

provision for pupils with special educational needs. From being an area of weakness, this is now very good. It is one reason why the school's standards have improved – because pupils with special educational needs now make very good progress. In 1996, St Leonard's was described as a good school. It remains good, but now has many very good features.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	C	B	B	B
mathematics	C	B	A	A
science	D	D	C	C

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

In the 2000 National Curriculum tests for seven year-olds, pupils' results were well above average in reading and mathematics. In writing, the school's performance was in the highest five per cent nationally. For both seven and eleven year-olds, the trends in their results are ones of improvement. The school sets challenging targets for the eleven year-olds to achieve in English and mathematics. These are surpassed consistently. During the inspection, the standards of seven year-olds were found to be above average in English, mathematics, science and physical education. Eleven year-olds are above average in English and mathematics and average in science. Pupils throughout the school reach high standards in information and communication technology. In other subjects, standards are satisfactory, although judgements could not be made in design and technology and, for the eleven year-olds, in physical education. Pupils achieve very well – they do much better than might be expected, because they are taught so well.

Children in the reception year make good progress and reach high standards in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Aspects of their physical development are unsatisfactory, because of the lack of suitable facilities.

Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to take part in lessons and activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well during lessons and at break and lunchtimes. Behaviour out of school is similarly very good.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are willing to accept responsibility – for example, carrying out jobs in the classroom.

Attendance	Satisfactory.
------------	---------------

The quality of relationships among pupils and with teachers is very good and a strength of the school. Pupils learn to work independently – for example, to carry out research. The oldest pupils take on significant tasks, such as helping to supervise younger pupils or running the tuck shop

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

During the inspection, teaching was very good or better in 62 per cent of lessons. In the remaining 38 per cent it was good. English and mathematics are taught very well. Teachers value each pupil's contribution and praise their efforts as well as the standards of their work. They plan interesting activities, so pupils want to learn. Support staff and parent helpers make significant contributions to pupils' achievements, because teachers make sure that they have clear roles to carry out. Teachers have high expectations for each pupil and they use their knowledge of their achievements very well, to set suitable work. Occasionally, the starting point for activities is too low for some pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are taught very well.

As a result of the very good teaching, pupils' learning and achievements are very good. Pupils work hard in lessons and are willing to tackle difficult tasks.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is well planned and suitably balanced, with a focus on literacy and numeracy.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. There are very good arrangements to support pupils, both during lessons and when they are withdrawn for extra help.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school works very hard to provide for all aspects of pupils' personal development. A high priority is given to this area.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Pupils' welfare is very important to the school. All staff are committed to making sure that they are looked after very well.

The school works well in partnership with parents. The curriculum is enriched by the use made of visits and visitors. There is a good range of interesting activities outside lessons. There are very effective strategies in place for teaching literacy and numeracy. Very good attention is paid to making sure that all pupils have equal opportunities to make progress. The local culture is recognised and celebrated – for example, through music, art and history. The procedures for ensuring pupils' health and safety and for child protection are very effective.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher has successfully built a staff team that works together very well. The recently appointed deputy headteacher is beginning to take on significant responsibilities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are strongly supportive and are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the school's work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school makes good use of the information it collects about pupils' attainments. Formal procedures to check the quality of teaching have not yet been put in place.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Spending on major projects, such as the information and communication technology room, is having a strong impact on standards.

The school is well staffed. The accommodation is good, except for the lack of outdoor facilities for the reception class and the use made of the grounds generally. Resources are satisfactory.

The values and principles that are important to the school are seen clearly in its work.

The role of subject leaders is not defined well enough.

The school's finances are managed very efficiently. Specific grants are spent very wisely. The school tries hard to apply the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children make good progress and achieve well. • They are well taught and expected to work hard and be responsible. • Children behave well. • The school is approachable. • Most think that the right amount of homework is provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some would like more information about how well their children are getting on. • A number think that the school is not well led and managed. • Some are unhappy about the range of activities provided outside lessons. • Some feel that the school does not work closely enough with them.

The inspectors support the parents' largely positive views about the school. They agree that parents need more frequent opportunities to discuss progress.

The leadership of the governing body and the headteacher is providing a clear sense of direction for the school and is improving many aspects of the school's performance. The quality of the curriculum is good and this includes a good range of after-school clubs and activities, as well as a broad range of visits, both locally and further afield. The school tries hard to involve parents in its life and many are regular visitors or support its work in other ways.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. When they enter the reception class, children's achievements are broadly average for their age. They make good progress in most areas of learning and by the end of the year, the majority are achieving good standards in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Their achievement in knowledge and understanding of the world and creative learning is satisfactory, but it is unsatisfactory in some aspects of physical development, because of the lack of suitable outdoor facilities. As a result of the good start they make, children are very well equipped to begin National Curriculum work in Year 1.
2. The results of the 2000 National Curriculum tests for seven year-olds in reading and mathematics show that pupils' attainment is well above that expected for their age. When compared with those of similar schools, results are also well above average. In writing, attainment is very high and is ranked alongside the results of the top five per cent of schools nationally and also those of similar schools. In reading and writing, the percentage of pupils reaching the higher levels was above average, but it was about average in mathematics. The Teacher Assessments for science show that more pupils achieve the expected level than in the majority of schools, but the percentage reaching the higher levels is below average. In all subjects, the trend is one of improvement.
3. The findings of this inspection show that the standards of the current seven year-olds in reading and writing, mathematics and science are above average. These are not as good as the 2000 results, other than in science. The reason is that these pupils are generally not as able as last year's seven year-olds. In fact, they are achieving very well, as a result of very good teaching which gets the utmost out of each one. Pupils also attain well in speaking and listening, information and communication technology and physical education. In art and design, geography, history and music, standards are satisfactory. It was not possible to judge standards in design and technology. In all subjects, standards have either improved or been maintained since the previous inspection.
4. In 2000, the National Curriculum tests for eleven year-olds show that attainment is above average in English, well above average in mathematics, and average in science. These comparisons relate both to national results and those of similar schools. Standards in English have been maintained since 1999 and in mathematics they have improved. 2000 was the first year when science results reached national average levels. The school carefully analysed why pupils appeared to be under-performing and set about remedying the situation, with success. The percentage reaching higher levels was close to the national average in English and science, but well above average in mathematics. As at Key Stage 1, the overall trend is one of improvement.
5. In English and science, the 2000 National Curriculum test results are reflected in the standards seen during the inspection. In mathematics, attainment is above average, rather than well above average, because the current Year 6 pupils are not quite such able mathematicians. Like the seven year-olds, pupils attain well in speaking and listening, information and communication technology and physical education and satisfactorily in other subjects. Again, it was not possible to make a judgement about design and technology, and the same applies to physical education.

In some subjects – for example, information and communication technology and physical education – pupils now perform better than at the time of the previous inspection. In other subjects, standards have been maintained.

6. In the main, pupils achieve very well – they do much better than might be expected from their ability when they enter the school. The principal reason for the trend of improvement and the very high achievement is the very good quality teaching. Additionally, the school makes good use of the data it collects about its own pupils' performance and those of other schools, in order to ask questions and devise ways of raising standards – for example, in science. The school's high expectations are evident in the targets it sets for the eleven year-olds to achieve in English and mathematics. These are very challenging but are consistently surpassed. A further important factor is the provision made for pupils with special educational needs, which results in these pupils making very good progress. Nearly all pupils reach at least the lowest expected levels for pupils of their age in the National Curriculum tests. This is in spite of the numbers who are on the school's register of special educational needs – currently, about 25 per cent of pupils. The effectiveness of the school's arrangements can be seen in the movement of pupils off the register, as they make progress and no longer need additional support. For example, when the current eleven year-olds were aged five, 15 of them were identified as having special educational needs. Only three remain on the school's register, although a larger number benefit from having work set at rather lower levels than the average in the class.
7. The school is very aware of the imbalance in the number of boys and girls in some classes. Teachers make every effort to take this into account when planning work and methods of teaching, offering a range of activities, to suit different styles of learning. As a consequence, although there are slight variations in the results of boys and girls, these are not significant.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils have very good attitudes to their learning and this is an improvement since the previous inspection, when attitudes were described as good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn. Their enthusiasm is an important factor in the high standards they attain. Parents are very pleased with their children's attitudes. In lessons, pupils respond with interest to the challenges the teachers set. They are eager to answer questions and get on with their work quickly and efficiently, trying very hard, even when the work seems difficult. They work well together, discussing their activities and finding common solutions to their problems – for example, in mathematics. Pupils are also keen to take part in after-school activities, such as gymnastics or line dancing.
9. Behaviour is very good, both in lessons and around the school. During lessons, behaviour at times is exemplary. Even when not directly supervised by teachers, pupils continue to behave very well. Year 6 pupils showed the same respect to the instructor in an information and communication technology lesson as they would have done to their teacher, despite the cramped conditions in the specialist room. Around the school, pupils are polite and considerate to adults and each other. They talk easily with adults, displaying a maturity of language and understanding. During one wet lunchtime, the behaviour in all the classes was very good. Pupils occupied themselves usefully and Year 6 pupils helped supervise younger pupils in a very sensitive and sensible way. In large groups, such as assembly, pupils behave very well. As in lessons, they listen carefully to what teachers have to say. Pupils' very good behaviour enables them to benefit from visits out of school. For example, during the inspection, Year 6 pupils visited the church for a history lesson and conducted themselves very well. There were no exclusions during the past year.

10. Pupils' personal development is very good. Relationships throughout the school are also very good. Many pupils act as monitors in the classrooms, doing such jobs as taking the registers to the school office. They take on increasing responsibility as they move up the school. By the time they are in Year 6, all pupils will have had a turn at being a prefect, helping to supervise younger pupils during wet playtimes and lunchtimes and taking on tasks such as feeding the fish, running the tuck shop or keeping the library tidy. They enjoy this responsibility and take their duties seriously. They are mature and well prepared for secondary school.
11. Pupils learn to respect each other's feelings and values. During 'circle time' they listen well to each other and follow rules – for example, that there should be no interruptions while someone is speaking.
12. Attendance levels are very similar to those at the time of the previous inspection, but are now judged to be satisfactory.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

13. The quality of teaching is very good. During the inspection, the teaching was never less than good. In seven per cent of lessons it was excellent, in 55 per cent very good and in the remaining 38 per cent it was good. In the class for seven year-olds, the teaching is never less than very good – a remarkable achievement. Across the school, there has been considerable improvement since the previous inspection, when in only nine per cent of lessons was teaching very good or better and in three per cent it was less than satisfactory. Several weaknesses were identified in the previous report – ineffective organisation of the classroom, teachers' knowledge of music, and insufficient attention paid to the targets of pupils with special educational needs. All of these areas have developed very well. The school has adopted enthusiastically the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. Their introduction has focused teachers' attention on, for example, the way in which lessons are structured. As a result, they provide a variety of ways for pupils to learn – in all subjects, not just English and mathematics. Pupils learn very well and make very good progress in lessons because of the very high standards of teaching. The headteacher, local education authority advisers and a few subject co-ordinators have visited classes and looked at the work of teachers and pupils. Their observations have been shared with the staff, so that they are aware of which teaching methods work and where there is room for improvement. Rightly, the school has produced plans to make these checks more formal, to ensure that the very high standards of teaching are maintained.
14. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils are significant factors in the busy working atmosphere found in all classrooms. Teachers welcome the contribution made by each pupil. They praise them for their efforts as well as the standards they reach. This means that pupils are prepared to tackle work that may seem difficult; they feel secure with their teachers and classmates. For example, in an excellent Year 6 mathematics lesson, the teacher was able to challenge individual pupils during quick-fire tables sessions and games such as 'Division Bingo'. They were confident to have a go and joined in with enthusiasm. Teachers know the pupils extremely well and this enables them to give very specific praise and encouragement. For example, during a 'circle time' discussion with Year 2 pupils, about their feelings, the teacher praised those who spoke out when they are generally reluctant. Similarly, pupils in Year 5 were encouraged as the teacher held up examples of their science work. At the same time, this helped them to achieve well, because it clarified what was expected of them. Teachers are well aware that they have to make the best use of the time available for teaching and learning.

They are very skilled at balancing the need to encourage pupils to contribute with that of keeping up the momentum of lessons. For instance, in a science lesson, Year 1 pupils were discussing the abilities that babies and children develop as they grow older. The teacher quickly nipped in the bud any tendencies to stray into lengthy anecdotes. However, she did this in such a sensitive way that pupils felt not at all belittled and so were still eager to be involved.

15. The quality of relationships also contributes to the sense of enjoyment that is a feature of most lessons. A further factor is that teachers plan interesting activities, so that pupils want to learn. They go to great lengths to provide resources that stimulate pupils and give them opportunities to learn from first-hand experiences. Visits are often the starting point for projects in subjects such as history or geography. For example, pupils in Year 4 have developed a good depth of knowledge about life in Victorian times, from visits to museums, a study of their locality, dressing up and acting out roles as Victorian school children, and by investigating Victorian artefacts. Lessons are invariably very well organised, to make the most of the resources and time. During a Year 3 English lesson, the pupils were able to move smoothly from a discussion that took place on the carpeted area, to their tables, where they began work immediately. This was possible because the teacher had prepared the white board and work cards carefully. Pupils' concentration was sustained and no time was lost. Commercially recorded material, such as video and audio-tapes, is used very effectively in a number of subjects. Teachers judge accurately when to pause and give additional information or ask questions to check that pupils are following and understanding fully.
16. A particular strength is the effective way in which teachers manage support staff and parent helpers. As a result, these make a significant contribution to the standards pupils reach. Teachers ensure that each person is clear about his or her role and the purpose of the lesson, so that, for example, they ask relevant questions or use special vocabulary. The special educational needs support teacher is fully involved in literacy lessons when working alongside the class teacher. Her work is especially effective because of the flexible way in which the teaching is shared. For example, it may be the class teacher or the special educational needs teacher that leads a whole-class discussion, supports higher attaining pupils, or works with pupils with special educational needs. This means that the class teacher is fully aware of the current targets of these pupils and their work is similar to that of the rest of the class – but pitched at a suitable level. In addition to helping pupils make very good progress in their learning, it raises their self-esteem, because they are seen to be doing the same work as everyone else.
17. Teachers generally use their knowledge of each pupil to very good effect, to make sure that the tasks they set are in line with what they need to learn next. Frequently, expectations are high, and this is one reason why pupils attain well – seen, for example, in English. Teachers are also very particular about making sure that pupils appreciate not just what they are going to do, but why. This means that lessons run smoothly and pupils try very hard. Because their tasks are explained clearly and have been chosen carefully, pupils can often work independently when not under the direct supervision of the teacher. She is then able to move around, giving support to individuals and checking how well they are learning. Sometimes, all pupils in the class are given the same work, with opportunities for the more able pupils to tackle harder work afterwards. This is especially noticeable in mathematics lessons, and it means that some pupils go through steps that they really don't need to – they could enter the activity at a higher level and use their time more effectively.
18. Parents have a very good opinion of teaching in the school, which is supported by the inspection. A small number are concerned about the provision of homework, and feel that it is given out inconsistently. It is true that the amount of homework increases when pupils are approaching

the National Curriculum tests in Years 2 and 6, and parents are informed about this. During the inspection, the homework set was good, in terms of quantity and the way in which it related to the work that was taking place in class.

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

19. Overall, the school provides a broad range of well-planned and suitably balanced learning opportunities. These meet the needs and aptitudes of all pupils very effectively, including those with special educational needs. The school does all that it is required to do in teaching the subjects of the National Curriculum. It makes effective use of the guidance provided by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, although its planning for design and technology and some aspects of information and communication technology is not yet complete.
20. The school has in place very effective strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy. The National Strategies have been implemented very thoroughly and this is helping the school to achieve high standards in these areas. It makes good provision for pupils to use their numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology skills in other subjects of the curriculum, although there are fewer opportunities planned this term for pupils to develop numeracy in this way.
21. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and has improved enormously since the previous inspection. For example, a specialist support teacher is employed on a part-time basis to work with pupils, both in whole-class literacy lessons and in groups during withdrawal sessions. Occasionally, these groups are too large, and the pace of learning slows down while the teacher visits each pupil in turn, to check how each is getting on. What their class is learning about and the pupil's individual education plan determine the work planned for each pupil. The school is aware that the targets in these plans are of variable precision and usefulness, and is currently working to make their quality more consistent.
22. Many aspects of personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught, although not yet in a consistently planned way. The school has a clear policy on sex education. Pupils learn about the importance of relationships and caring for one another. They are taught about the uses and abuses of drugs in science and personal, social and health education lessons. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness of citizenship. For example, they can take on the duties involved in being prefects or librarians, answer the phone, care for younger pupils at lunchtime, and collect registers. They help with the maintenance of the school by being responsible for litter collection and take the initiative in helping those less fortunate than themselves by making collections for a range of charities.
23. Links with the local community are good and enrich the curriculum. Many local shops and small businesses give support to the fund-raising activities of the Parent Teacher Association. The parish church and priest make very significant contributions to religious education and to other subjects, such as history. Pupils visit the local library for storytelling and perform as a choir in various local venues. The school welcomes visitors, such as the police, fire brigade, school nurse and senior citizens, who talk to pupils about local history. A good range of interesting activities is provided outside lessons – for example, football, netball, athletics, computer club, and choir. In order to enrich the curriculum, visits are made to places of educational interest. These include residential visits to the Lake District and Cheshire, and outings to Beamish Museum and Hadrian's Wall. The school makes good use of the specialist skills of staff, in such areas as physical education, art, drama, music, and dance, and pupils in Year 6 are taught French.

24. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Prayer plays an important part in school life. Prayers are said at the beginning and end of sessions and are a strong feature of assemblies. Pupils are asked to think about others and to reflect on their own feelings and values. 'Circle time' is used effectively to develop respect for others' thoughts and feelings. The school has very clear guidelines, which help pupils to distinguish between right and wrong. Pupils are helped to develop a clear understanding of how they should behave – for example, to respect property and each other. Clear Christian values permeate the school and provide the bedrock on which pupils' moral development is founded.
25. Teachers provide very good role models for the pupils – for example, in the quality of their relationships with pupils and each other. From the earliest age, pupils are encouraged to work together, to respect one another and to think of others less fortunate than themselves. The school encourages pupils to use their initiative – for example, to raise money for good causes. A Year 6 pupil read about a girl in need of surgery and approached the headteacher about the possibility of organising a fund-raising event. He, in his usual way, agreed, and a non-uniform day has been arranged. This is typical of the school's approach – constantly seeking to help less fortunate groups or underprivileged people both locally and world-wide. Pupils are given opportunities to take on more responsibilities as they get older – for example, as prefects.
26. The local culture of the North East is recognised and celebrated through music, art and history. For example, the school badge has recently been changed, to incorporate a symbol of the coal mine that was so much of a feature of the local area. Pupils have taken part in a celebration of local music with other schools, singing traditional songs. The school welcomes visits from widely different cultural groups, such as South American panpipe players and a local brass band, and from authors, poets and theatre groups. Pupils' awareness of the diversity of the world's culture is developed through the religious education programme, their involvement in the many charitable events to raise money for Third World countries, and resources such as books have been purchased. This aspect of the school's work has improved since the previous inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

27. The school is a very caring community. The word 'family' is frequently used in its literature, and parents feel that family values are encouraged. All staff are committed to providing the best possible standards of welfare and care. The requirements for child protection and ensuring health and safety are all carried out very thoroughly, including arrangements for security, medicines and first aid. However, there are long-standing problems with the playground surface and the condition of the hall floor, which still need to be improved.
28. The school is a safe and happy environment. There is a very effective behaviour management policy, applied consistently by all adults. The pupils know exactly what standards are expected of them and on rare occasions when there are problems, parents are closely involved in working with the school towards a solution. Equally, the school places great emphasis on encouraging good behaviour and effort, by giving merits and certificates. These are greatly enjoyed by all. As a result, the school is an orderly, calm and pleasant community. The school's personal, social and health education curriculum is developing. It includes opportunities for pupils to share their feelings and concerns, to learn about the dangers of drugs and to stay safe in the wider world. In all of these matters the school promotes the importance of the family and their shared Christian beliefs.

29. There are good systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' performance, particularly in English and mathematics. Assessment information is well used to help to set individual and school targets and in grouping pupils according to their levels of attainment. This helps to ensure that work builds securely on what has gone before and to raise standards. Detailed information is kept about the attainment of each pupil and the school also keeps a close eye on their personal development. Assessment information is used very effectively to identify pupils with special educational needs and to establish the support they need in order to make progress. The specialist teacher and the special educational needs co-ordinator maintain useful records to check how well these pupils are making progress. Annual reviews of statements of special educational need are carried out conscientiously.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

30. Parents and carers have positive views about what the school achieves for their children and the way in which they are involved.
31. Generally, parents are given a good range of information about the school and its work. As their children join the school, parents are welcomed with a good range of literature about school routines and the curriculum and teachers make themselves available for informal contact at the start and end of the day, to deal with concerns and queries. There are many opportunities for parents to attend assemblies and there are additional meetings to explain important developments, such as the Numeracy Strategy, aspects of the curriculum and National Curriculum tests. Just recently, booklets giving an overview of the subjects of the National Curriculum have been sent to all parents. Day-to-day information about the work of the school is conveyed to parents in newsletters and they are encouraged to use the reading diaries and homework diaries as methods of communicating with the school and to make appointments at any time, to discuss their children's progress. There is a formal meeting for all parents at the end of September, but this is about general issues and plans and topics for the school year. Parents consider that the meeting held towards the end of the year is helpful, but too late. This is a fair point, and the school needs to review its arrangements in order to give parents more opportunities to talk to teachers. The pupils' annual reports give a satisfactory picture of their attainment and progress, but need to include precise guidance about how they might improve, particularly indicating where parents can help and encourage them. Parents of children with special educational needs are well informed about progress and contribute to reviews of individual education plans and statements.
32. The school has strong links with parents and successfully involves many of them in school life. They give good support to social events; they help in classrooms with reading and other activities; they assist with events and visits; and they attend assemblies in increasing numbers. A few dedicated members of the Parent-Teacher Association organise social events and fund-raising which provide welcome resources, such as televisions, video recorders and computers. Most parents attend the consultation meetings and are keen to help their children succeed. Homework is regarded highly by parents and they give it good support.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

33. The headteacher has successfully built a staff team that works very well together for the benefit of the pupils. He has ensured that the values and principles that the school holds dear are visibly reflected in its work. The recently appointed deputy headteacher has responsibility for a number of important aspects of the school – for example, oversight of the curriculum. Sensibly,

it has been agreed that this term she will devote most of her energies to establishing herself with her Year 6 class and making herself familiar with all aspects of the school. Rightly, a key task identified for the future is for her to develop the role of subject co-ordinators. In most cases, two or more staff share responsibility for each subject. Teachers like this arrangement, because it means that they have an insight into the needs of teachers and pupils in all parts of the school and they do not feel isolated. However, as a consequence, teachers are involved with as many as four subjects. This places an unnecessarily heavy burden on them and can mean that developments are inhibited, because their energies are diluted. The school is clear that one teacher needs to have overall responsibility for each subject – checking teaching and learning as well as the curriculum, identifying what needs to be done in order to raise standards, and taking the lead in developments.

34. The headteacher has a sound overview of the work of teachers, based on his informal observations of their work and its outcomes. Because the staff team is small and close knit, teachers are able to share good practice – much of it developed as a result of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. However, formal lesson observations by the headteacher and other staff have been limited. Although the quality of teaching is very good, the school has plans to implement procedures to check systematically the work of teachers and pupils, in order to maintain these high standards.
35. The school development plan is generally an effective tool for moving the school forward, as can be seen by the good progress made since the previous inspection. However, some developments – for example, the production of a financial management policy – have not taken place as quickly as planned, because national initiatives have caused the school's resources and energy to be diverted. In order to make sure that progress is maintained, substantial tasks, such as revising the provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship, are being broken down into more manageable goals.
36. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very well organised by the headteacher, as special educational needs co-ordinator, in partnership with the specialist teacher. Great care is taken to ensure that all pupils receive the support they need – for example, to cope with medical problems or their particular learning difficulties. This ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities to benefit from their time in school. For instance, special arrangements have been made to help two pupils who have difficulties in mathematics. Parents and pupils appreciate the strenuous efforts the school makes.
37. The governing body supports strongly the work of the school – for example, through the activities of its committees – by helping to check on the progress of developments and by being involved in events such as fund-raising. The chair brings a valuable knowledge of management systems. He is keen for all governors to gain first-hand knowledge of the school's work – for example, by being linked to particular subjects or classes – and to bring this to discussions and so inform decisions.
38. The school has a good number of teaching and support staff, who are well-qualified to teach the subjects of the National Curriculum and the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage. Staff development and training are directed to meet the needs of the school development plan and current educational initiatives, such as the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Training of staff in the latest requirements for the information and communication technology curriculum is under way. While practice in staff development is good, there are presently no formal procedures to strengthen this. These need to be put in place in order to ensure that the school can meet the requirements for performance management.

39. The accommodation is good. Classrooms are generally satisfactory for numbers of pupils, although some of the specialist rooms, such as the library and information and communication technology room, are small. Since the previous inspection, significant improvements have been made in the classrooms currently used by the older pupils. No space is wasted. Standards of decoration are good, the site and buildings are very clean and well managed and there are clear programmes for maintenance and improvement. The need for further improvements is recognised. At present, there is no separate play area for the children in the Foundation Stage and this restricts their curriculum and their physical development. The main playground is in need of extension and refurbishment. It lacks seating, and a quiet area, as well as imaginative and active play equipment. Access for disabled pupils, parents or staff continues to be a concern.
40. The quality and range of classroom resources have improved considerably since the last inspection and are now broadly satisfactory in most subjects. However, there is still a need to improve in some areas. There is insufficient equipment to teach control technology in design and technology and information and communications technology; the library still needs more reference books; and more small equipment is needed for physical education. Most importantly, not enough large equipment is available to allow aspects of physical development to be taught to children in the Foundation Stage.
41. The school makes good use of its funds. The inspection confirms the very good financial management described in the last auditor's report. Spending decisions relate well to its priorities for improvement, as set out in the school development plan. The establishment of the information and communication technology room, the redesign and refurbishment of the classrooms for the oldest pupils, the improvements in learning resources and to the school hall, have all had significant impact on children's achievements. The school uses specific grants and additional funding very wisely. For instance, the employment of a nursery nurse in the reception class is enabling these children to achieve very well in their personal and social development. Additionally, standards have been boosted through extra lessons for Year 6 pupils, prior to their National Curriculum tests. The use of funds to employ additional clerical help in financial and other administrative areas keeps the way clear for teachers to concentrate on their work in classrooms.
42. The school is not complacent and is constantly seeking ways in which it can do better – for example, through its current focus on improving achievement in science. It consults widely when considering changes and spending – with parents, about the home-school agreement, for instance, and seeking out the best possible value for the extensive building work. It is continually striving to apply best value principles and has reached a good standard in this respect, through the efficiency of the school's management and the use of its resources.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

43. In order to raise standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:
- i.* Develop the outside accommodation to provide suitable facilities for the reception class to play and to support their physical development. *(paragraphs 1; 39; 45; 50)*
 - ii.* Complete the programmes of work for design and technology and information and communication technology, setting out clearly what pupils are to learn at each stage in their development. *(paragraphs 14; 76; 83)*
 - iii.* Define the role of subject leaders and reconsider the allocation of responsibilities. Put in place arrangements for moving each subject forward in a planned and measured way. *(paragraphs 33; 59)*
 - iv.* Implement the plans for checking formally the quality of teaching. *(paragraph 34)*
44. In addition, the following should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:
- Increase the number of planned opportunities for parents to meet staff to discuss their children's progress. *(paragraph 31)*
 - Make safe the hall floor, by attending to the small gaps where two surfaces meet. *(paragraphs 27; 96)*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	44
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
7	55	38	0	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	190
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	18

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	45

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.18
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.22
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	7	19	26

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	7	7
	Girls	17	19	19
	Total	24	26	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (93)	100 (96)	100 (96)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	7	7
	Girls	18	19	18
	Total	25	26	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (93)	100 (100)	96 (100)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	11	13	24

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	9	10
	Girls	13	10	12
	Total	23	19	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	96 (83)	79 (79)	92 (79)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	7	7	8
	Girls	11	11	12
	Total	18	18	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	75 (72)	75 (69)	83 (69)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	
Indian	1
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	158
Any other minority ethnic group	

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.7:1
Average class size	27.1

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	99

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
	£
Total income	355334
Total expenditure	349984
Expenditure per pupil	1903
Balance brought forward from previous year	7329
Balance carried forward to next year	2679

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	190
Number of questionnaires returned	78

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	32	6	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	44	52	3	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	49	1	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	58	8	1	1
The teaching is good.	41	54	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	51	17	6	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	49	3	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	32	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	31	53	14	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	30	44	21	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	58	4	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	40	19	5	4

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

45. Children enter the school and attend full time in the September following their fourth birthday. They come from a diverse catchment area and have not enjoyed common experiences in pre-school education. Assessments show that when they enter the school, children's achievement in personal, language and mathematical development is satisfactory. Teachers use these assessments very effectively to plan activities and to measure children's progress. By the end of the reception year, the majority of children are achieving good standards in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Achievement in knowledge and understanding of the world and creative learning is satisfactory. There is no separate playground or immediate access to the outdoors and, owing to the lack of appropriate resources and facilities, there is some underachievement in physical development. A good foundation is laid for the National Curriculum, because the quality of teaching is never less than good and is often very good.

Personal, social and emotional development

46. By the time they leave the reception class, almost all children have achieved the early learning goals. This is due to skilful teaching that ensures that every activity the children experience contributes to their progress. Children play and work well together, share sensibly, show concern for others and develop very good relationships. For example, in activities with a large parachute they were delighted in what they achieved by working together to make it lift spectacularly off the ground. Later, the teacher raised their confidence as they each plucked up courage to race under the canopy and change places. This increased confidence is shown in children's ability to choose activities and resources, look after their personal hygiene and belongings, and dress and undress themselves. The adults provide good role models in the way they treat each other and the children – with courtesy and respect. This is reflected in the caring way children behave towards one other. Understanding of their own and other cultures is sensitively developed – for example, through children comparing their own party celebrations with those of Eid.

Communication, language and literacy

47. Children have well developed communication skills which are shown in the way they re-tell stories, explain what they are doing and negotiate with others. For example, they recall the 'One Duck Stuck' story, explain the pictures they have produced on the computer, and decide each other's task when preparing a celebration. Literacy is well taught through stories and poems. Children learn to use picture clues and letter sounds to help them tackle new words, and are encouraged to use them when writing about what they have done. They are good at recognising and using letter sounds and learning new words – for instance, rhyming words from the 'I fell out of bed' story. They show great interest in the 'Tricky Word Wall' and can read most of the words that are displayed there. They are given many opportunities to practise writing and most use a pencil effectively when making invitation cards, writing their own name and making labels for their paintings. Most have the confidence to 'have a go' when writing for purposes such as birthday invitations.

Mathematical development

48. There is very good teaching in this area and most of the children have exceeded the learning goals by the end of the reception year. They count confidently to ten and beyond and most order and match numbers to this level. In one lesson, they showed good skills in counting to twenty. The different ways of counting – loudly, softly, quickly and slowly – introduced by the teacher, provided a great deal of interest and enthusiasm. Many children were quick and accurate when challenged to find the missing number on a number line and one answer, ‘It’s nine because that’s what comes before ten’ showed how well their understanding of number has developed. Mathematics is promoted through many activities – for instance, when counting and making sets of ‘smells we know’ and ‘smells we don’t know’. Understanding of mathematical words is developed as an important part of children’s everyday language and they are regularly asked to define terms such as, ‘more, less’, ‘biggest, smallest’ ‘longest, shortest’. In all activities, the teacher provides very well for children who learn at different rates. For example, some faster learners made models of ‘Mary’s Garden’ by cutting out specific numbers of various coloured flowers and answering mathematical questions about what they had done.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

49. Children are keen to explore and find answers by investigating – for instance, when using the ‘feely box’, and trying to identify a range of common smells. They have a good awareness of where they live and talk about places that interest them. They love to design and make – for example, models of ‘Mary’s Garden’ and designs for Muslim festivals. The teacher makes sure they have some awareness of history through looking back at their own lives as babies and toddlers. The good teaching enables children to learn how to control a mouse to move an object across a computer screen. A topic about celebrations, leading up to an Eid celebration, has been imaginatively used to give them an awareness of the lives of people with different cultures and beliefs.

Physical development

50. Many opportunities are provided for children to cut and fold paper, build with construction kits, manipulate puzzles and explore materials including sand and water. They gain confidence in using a range of writing, drawing, cutting and painting tools, and respond enthusiastically and imaginatively to music. The staff make sure that sufficient support is available, but encourage children to be as independent as possible, so that they practise their skills. However, the lack of large play equipment and apparatus and a suitable safe outdoor play area means that there are no opportunities for children to achieve some of the learning goals in this area.

Creative development

51. Through music making, painting, printing, story making, imaginative play and baking, children achieve well creatively. They use colours boldly when painting large self portraits and become skilled when colouring designs for festive clothes. They use props and other resources in imaginative play. In one activity, very effectively supervised by the nursery nurse, children learned how to create ‘sweets’ by following a recipe. Children were excited to see how the colours and consistency of the mixture changed with stirring, and noticed that the end product was the result of putting many different things together. The nursery nurse ensured that children had many opportunities to speak and to share their ideas, as well as to develop their creative skills.

ENGLISH

52. The inspection findings show that standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing at ages seven and eleven are above those expected nationally. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. For pupils aged seven, this is lower than shown by the school's National Curriculum test results for 2000 in reading and writing. This is because the pupils who were seven last year are more able than those in the current Year 2. The findings of the inspection for pupils aged eleven are in line with the results of the 2000 National Curriculum test results. The standards reached by both age groups are part of an improving trend.
53. In both age groups, the improving trends are consequences of the hard work devoted by the school to implementing the National Literacy Strategy and its use of information gained from assessments, in order to set group and individual targets for improvement. For example, younger pupils' independent writing was identified as an area for further development and in Year 6, individual pupils were given targets to improve their spelling and punctuation. In both instances, these targets were successfully achieved. A further important factor in the high standards achieved is the quality of teaching. This has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is now consistently very good and occasionally excellent. The quality of pupils' learning is correspondingly very good and occasionally excellent.
54. Throughout the school, pupils' ability to listen carefully and speak clearly is encouraged by the very good relationships between pupils and teachers. Teachers respect and welcome the contributions made by pupils and this increases their confidence and determination to improve. For example, Year 1 pupils listened attentively, and eagerly offered comments about the book they were sharing, 'Peace at Last'. This is because the teacher also listened carefully and praised their efforts, helping to improve their speaking and listening skills. In Year 4, the pupils were confident to make suggestions about writing their own versions of 'A Day in the Life of Danny the Cat' because the teacher valued and respected their contributions. They were able to organise their ideas logically when speaking, sharing their thoughts and deepening their understanding and enjoyment of poetry. In lessons in other subjects, teachers have similarly high expectations for pupils to achieve. For example, in a physical education lesson, Year 6 pupils were required to make very good use of their speaking and listening skills in order to evaluate and discuss how they might improve paired sequences of movement. By the time they are aged eleven, pupils speak willingly and confidently, whether taking part in class discussions or informal chats, putting their point of view politely and clearly. School productions, such as 'Joseph', provide opportunities for them to perform in front of an audience, adding to their ability to communicate and their self-assurance.
55. Reading is taught very well and pupils gain a real enthusiasm for literature. In Year 1, the teacher builds on the interest pupils have already developed during the reception year. Stories such as 'Peace at Last' are read in a lively and stimulating manner, so pupils cannot fail to listen attentively. By asking questions, to check their understanding and memory of the text, the teacher helps pupils to improve their reading skills. As a result, nearly all the class read simple passages fluently and with expression, showing that they understand the meaning. Teachers throughout the school have a very good knowledge of how letters are combined to produce sounds and they explain this in highly effective ways. This means that pupils learn to read in a carefully structured way, adding to the skills that they already possess. For example, during the inspection, pupils in the Year 2 class became more aware that sounds might be written down in different ways, suggesting words such as 'mountain' and 'frown'. As pupils move through the school, they learn about an increasing range of stories, plays and poems and become more

independent in their use of books and information and communication technology to find information. Teachers have very high expectations, so that pupils appreciate that they must work hard and give of their best. For example, in a lesson with Year 5 pupils, the teacher used questions very effectively to deepen pupils' understanding of the characters and relationships in 'A Christmas Carol' – 'Did Scrooge show that he trusted his clerk?' Pupils were challenged to deepen their understanding of the text – for instance, by considering how the language could be changed to make it more appropriate to a modern audience. They responded very well to the teacher's own enjoyment of the book, offering considered opinions, showing that they could make inferences from what they had read – for example, commenting that 'Scrooge keeps an eye on Cratchit in case he might steal.'

56. This lesson illustrated the very good provision made for pupils with special educational needs, both in class and when pupils are withdrawn for specialist help. The special educational needs support teacher works very flexibly in partnership with the class teachers, so that pupils' work reflects that of the rest of the class. There are very high expectations for these pupils to achieve, which are set out in their individual education plans. During withdrawal sessions, pupils are given intensive support – for example, in reading and spelling. This is particularly effective because the teacher links the two aspects closely together – pupils learn different ways of combining letters to make sounds, then to build up words and finally to recognise them quickly, so that they read more fluently. The benefit of pupils also working in class, alongside other, more able pupils, was seen clearly in a Year 2 lesson. Here, the focus was on writing – pupils were learning the succinct, direct language needed when conveying instructions. While the above average and average pupils wrote about making a snowman, the pupils with special educational needs were given support, including a special workbook containing prompts, to help them write instructions for making a jam sandwich. Pupils were able to identify the sequence of tasks necessary, and made good attempts at writing them down. Significantly, they showed that they had learned from taking part in a discussion with the rest of the class, when one pupil suggested ending the list with 'Finally...'
57. Standards in handwriting have improved since the previous inspection, because teachers have consistently very high expectations, whenever pupils are writing – not just in English lessons. They are carefully taught how to write. For example, in Year 2, the teacher sets targets for pupils to develop letter joins, helping them to produce legibly formed and joined handwriting. By the time they are eleven, pupils' handwriting is fluent and their work is always neatly presented. Teachers are very skilled at sharing their knowledge of English with the pupils, by giving extremely clear explanations. For example, in a lesson with Year 6 pupils, the teacher described characters in Dickens' novels and the origins of some proper names, using a wide range of interesting words. This successfully encouraged pupils to extend their own vocabulary – 'sincerely', 'philanthropist', 'dismal' – and to apply this when writing. This lesson also showed how well teachers use homework to support the work in class and reinforce pupils' knowledge and skills. The tasks set were very well matched to pupils' needs – for example, less able pupils worked on the use of commas in lists, whilst others were required to write comparisons of characters such as Gradgrind and Scrooge.
58. Teachers make very good use of literacy in other subjects of the curriculum. For example, in history pupils describe the lives of Victorian children and write about life in Roman Britain, and in geography they write post cards relating to their studies of parts of Scotland. In science work on micro-organisms, they learn the meaning of such words as 'decay' and 'contamination', and develop their research skills when finding out about the achievements of Alexander Fleming. Most pupils know how to use the well-organised reference library system in order to conduct research, although there are too few reference books. They use the contents and index pages

accurately in order to find information, and older pupils extend their vocabulary through glossaries and thesauruses.

59. The overall subject co-ordinator has only recently been appointed. Although the team of co-ordinators work hard to provide support and guidance for colleagues, there is not yet a clear view of what the co-ordinator's role should be in providing leadership in order to maintain and improve standards within school. The school is aware of the need to develop a consistent system of monitoring teaching and learning by the co-ordinator in order to raise standards further.

MATHEMATICS

60. Standards have improved since the previous inspection and are now good. However, this is not as good as indicated by the National Curriculum test results for 2000, which were well above average for seven and eleven year olds. The difference is due to the current Year 2 and Year 6 pupils not being such high attainers as those of last year. In the tests, a large proportion of pupils achieved the higher levels at the age of eleven – nearly twice the national average. This represents a dramatic increase since the last inspection, when the percentage of pupils achieving those levels was below average. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls and the achievements of many of the pupils identified as having special educational needs are very good, as many of them reach national standards.
61. There are three major factors in the improving standards. The quality of teaching is now very good; the National Numeracy Strategy has given the teachers new confidence and interest in the subject; and pupils have very good attitudes to mathematics. Teachers plan challenging activities for the pupils, in line with the recommendations of the Numeracy Strategy. In each lesson, teachers are very clear about what they want pupils to learn, and they share this with them, so they understand what is expected of them. Lessons move along quickly, and some particularly effective work is done during the mental session, which is an integral part of each one. The activities are varied and challenging and generate excitement and enthusiasm. For example, the Year 5 class were given clues to an unknown six-digit number, and required to use this information in order to guess the number. In most of these oral sessions, the teachers adapt their questions very well to the different abilities within the class, thus ensuring that all pupils participate fully. The main activities generate similar enjoyment and interest. However, most are planned with a common starting point for all ability groups and this sometimes slows the progress of more able pupils. In the best lessons, different starting points are identified and this ensures that pupils of all ability are able to make maximum progress. For example, in an excellent Year 6 lesson on time zones, the less able pupils were working at changing 12-hour times to 24-hour times and solving appropriate problems, while the higher attaining pupils were solving problems involving international time zones and planning journeys which involved time differences. In this particular lesson, the teacher planned an additional teaching point as pupils realised that some larger countries had different times zones within their boundaries. This point was then emphasised during the final, whole-class session. These are used well across the school, to reiterate key information and check pupils' understanding, referring back to what the teacher wanted them to learn.
62. Teachers are very good at teaching the basic skills of numeracy. They are careful to ensure that new work builds securely on what pupils already know and understand, and will try different approaches to consolidate a teaching point. They are confident enough in their own subject knowledge to allow pupils to work out their own solutions – for example, when a Year 2

pupil used his knowledge of doubles to help him work out a problem involving multiples of two. The pupils develop an increasing confidence in their ability to use their knowledge of mathematics. This was seen in the Year 6 class, where pupils could quickly answer mental problems involving squares and square roots.

63. Numeracy skills are used effectively in other areas of the curriculum – for example, in history when pupils use information on the wages of Victorian workers, and in science, where they produce graphs recording the growth of plants.
64. The management of the subject is good. Until recently, two teachers have shared responsibility for mathematics. They have guided the staff through the very successful introduction of the Numeracy Strategy, with the help of the local authority advisers. They have observed every teacher during lessons and have a very good idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the staff. Test results have been analysed carefully and groups have been targeted for extra help.

SCIENCE

65. The attainment of seven year-olds has improved since the previous inspection, when it was judged to be satisfactory. It is now above average and better than the results of the 2000 National Curriculum Teacher Assessments. The main improvement is in the number of pupils that achieve at higher than the expected level.
66. Eleven year-olds attain average standards, similar to those shown by the results of the National Curriculum tests in the summer of 2000. These were in line with the national average and were also average in comparison with similar schools. While these levels are not as high as reported in the previous inspection, there has been a significant improvement since 1999, when they were below average. The number of pupils attaining Level 5, the higher than expected level, has risen sharply. The school identified issues such as poor resources, pupils' lack of skill in answering questions scientifically, time taken by the emphasis on literacy and numeracy in the curriculum, and shortage of space for Year 6 pupils to carry out experiments, as the main reasons for the decline in standards. These issues have been, or are being, dealt with, influencing the recent improvement.
67. Throughout the school, the quality of teaching is never less than good and is often very good. It has improved since the previous inspection, when it was judged to be generally good. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and of the best ways of helping pupils to make progress. In a Year 2 lesson about drugs, the teacher was very clear about what she wanted the pupils to learn. Children with special educational needs and faster learners had good opportunities to make progress, because the teacher skilfully adapted the level of questioning and language in order to meet their needs. The pupils had an awareness of some of the dangers of the incorrect use of medicines and by the end of the lesson, they had developed a very good understanding of the significance of labels and logos on the packaging used for drugs and other dangerous substances. Among pupils up to the age of seven, their skills, knowledge and understanding of life and living processes are particular strengths. They know how exercise increases the heart rate in humans, understand the conditions that animals and plants need in order to survive, and know how to carry out a 'fair test'. During one lesson, Year 1 pupils studied the changes in humans as they grow older. They learned how to use features such as hair colour and skin texture to differentiate between people of various ages. The teacher had very high expectations – for example, when pupils suggested that one group of photographs could be labelled 'mams and dads', she gently proposed 'young adults' as an alternative. The

activities chosen were highly suitable, because they enabled pupils to learn about the effects of ageing through looking carefully at the evidence available, developing their skills of investigation.

68. By the time they leave school, pupils have learned how to work methodically through a scientific enquiry, to ensure that investigations are carried out fairly, and to interpret the results. Their enthusiasm for science is nurtured in lessons that provide challenge and interest. For example, pupils in Year 3 conducted a number of relevant investigations into plant growth, concentrating on the need for light. These included an experiment to find out if a plant could find its way out of a darkened maze, and an exploration of the plant life beneath tree stumps in the nature area. The teacher used questions very effectively to prompt pupils to think hard – for example, ‘Why has the plant grown tall?’ ‘Would this happen to all plants?’ Combined with the well-chosen practical activities, these enabled pupils to make very good progress in gaining new knowledge, developing their ideas and increasing their understanding.
69. A new programme of work has been introduced, which sets out clearly what pupils are to learn and is closely linked to the revised National Curriculum. This means that as pupils move through the school, lessons are built upon what they have already learned. At the moment there is no formal whole-school system for tracking their progress, although the co-ordinators are considering a number of options. There is also no consistent approach to checking the quality of teaching and learning.
70. Resources have improved considerably since the previous inspection, although information and communication technology has not yet had any impact on standards in science. The subject is enhanced effectively by the use of resources beyond the school. Visits to the National Glass Centre, Sunderland Fire Station and the open cast mining site at Herrington have all taken place recently, helping pupils to appreciate the impact of science on everyday life.

ART AND DESIGN

71. Standards are satisfactory, but pupils achieve well in drawing, because the necessary skills are taught carefully. It is not possible to make a judgement about the quality of teaching, because of the timetable during the inspection week, but all the evidence suggests that teaching is good. By the time they are seven, pupils select a suitable area of the classroom and make a careful drawing. They mix colours accurately and apply paint neatly. Pupils can work imaginatively as well as being able to represent what they see. For example, when supplied with magazine illustrations that the teacher had pruned, pupils completed the images, to create detailed drawings of flamenco dancers, footballers and polo players. Using crayons, they reproduced the original colours, demonstrating the care that they take over their work.
72. As they move through the school, pupils’ drawing skills continue to develop well. By the time they are eleven, they can use pencils very effectively for shading, to create three-dimensional effects. For example, during the inspection, pupils aged nine carefully observed one half of an image of a face and then recorded the other half, to create a complete portrait. Many produced impressive results. Because the teacher had provided black and white photocopies for them to work with, pupils were able to focus precisely on developing their shading skills, without the distraction of colour. The teacher supplied good quality advice and support, giving pupils’ confidence by pointing out their successes. At the end of the lesson, a display of finished pieces enabled her to ensure that pupils knew how they could improve and make progress – for example, by leaving small areas of the white paper to represent light shining on spectacles.

73. Pupils throughout the school learn a suitable range of techniques, but there is only limited evidence of their having opportunities to choose for themselves how they create images. The use of sketchbooks needs to be developed, so that pupils build up records – for example, of how they have produced different effects or of images that they find interesting. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection and resources have improved, although there is a shortage of examples of the work of famous artists. The co-ordinators are well informed and enthusiastic. They have constructed a suitable programme of work and are well aware of the need for them to be more actively involved in checking how well pupils are learning. Art makes a good contribution to pupils’ cultural development, and teachers are quick to take advantage of opportunities to extend pupils’ awareness – for example, by visiting exhibitions or inviting artists into school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

74. There is insufficient evidence to judge standards of pupils’ work or the quality of teaching, because of the timetable during the week of inspection. Since the previous inspection, developments have been slow, owing to the necessary emphasis placed on literacy and numeracy. However, the use of national guidance material has meant that teachers are more aware of what the subject involves. They have developed some well-structured projects that enable pupils to make good progress. For example, seven year olds recently designed and made model vehicles. In the course of this work, they explored different types of vehicles – in particular, their wheels and axles. After drawing a picture to show how they wanted their own vehicle to look, they worked out what resources they needed – recycled packaging, wooden wheels, scissors, glue etc. The completed models were neatly finished – for example, cardboard boxes were covered with paper and then painted. Pupils compared their vehicles with their initial drawings and noted the changes they had made.
75. During the inspection, the eleven year-old pupils were still in the early stages of designing a shop front. Although the project has some positive features – for example, pupils have investigated shops in the locality – opportunities for them to develop practical, making skills are limited. Additionally, the design sheets prepared for them do not offer much scope for pupils to record their ideas. They are not sufficiently distinctive from the booklets used by the seven year-olds.
76. Rightly, the school has identified design and technology as an area for development. There is no means of ensuring that pupils learn skills and knowledge systematically, building on what they have already learned. Sensibly, teachers try to make links between work in design and technology and other subjects. However, because the steps in pupils’ learning have not been agreed, activities are not always sufficiently demanding – for example, cross stitch samplers linked to pupils’ study of the Victorians, in history. Resources have been purchased since the previous inspection and are broadly satisfactory, other than for controlling working models.

GEOGRAPHY

77. Attainment was judged to be satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection, and these standards have been maintained. It is not possible to judge the quality of teaching, owing to subject’s not being timetabled during the inspection period.
78. Year 2 pupils know about land features such as rivers, hills, lakes and mountains, and use symbols to help them to keep a weather diary. Fictional stories about the ‘Island of Struay’

have been a starting point for their studies of maps, sea shore locations, place names, and for developing their ability to use and interpret photographs. Discussions with Year 6 pupils show that they have a sound knowledge of the geography of the immediate locality and why the occupations of people in Silksworth have changed in recent times. They understand how climate and terrain influence human activities and can use maps and atlases to find answers. However, while being able to name and locate places within Tyne and Wear, they are less knowledgeable about places farther afield in the United Kingdom.

79. Teachers' planning for lessons is generally sound. A recently introduced programme of work ensures that pupils' progress is securely based on what they have previously learned. Resources have improved since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory, although information and communication technology is not widely used. Visits to places such as the Derwent valley, Holy Island and the Millennium Dome are used effectively to extend pupils' knowledge of geography.

HISTORY

80. Standards are satisfactory throughout the school. Pupils achieve well and develop an enthusiasm for history. Their success reflects the quality of teaching, which is consistently good. The youngest pupils now achieve better than at the time of the previous inspection. By the time they are seven, pupils have a clear understanding that history relates to real places and events, and that changes occur with the passing of time. Teachers provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to appreciate at first hand the differences between life today and in the past. For example, during the inspection, the youngest pupils examined a variety of toys, old and new, modern and traditional. By looking at them closely and identifying their similarities and differences, pupils develop their ability to use clues to help them draw conclusions. The lesson included toys from a museum's loan service and followed a visit during which pupils were encouraged to play with traditional toys. This demonstrates the effective way in which teachers structure pupils' learning. For example, the seven year-olds learn about famous people from the past. Initially, the teacher took care to ensure that pupils understood the concept of a 'famous person' – for example, Tony Blair or Cilla Black. They went on to distinguish between 'real' and 'made up' royalty – Princess Diana and the Wicked Queen. Pupils were then well placed to learn about significant events in the lives of people such as Louis Braille, Samuel Pepys and Florence Nightingale. In the course of this, they learned to sequence events – for example, in the Great Fire of London – and to compare features of life in the past with those of today – conditions in hospitals, for instance.
81. By the time they are eleven, pupils have learned about a number of periods in British and world history. Further, they have developed their ability to carry out independent research, using a wide range of sources. For example, nine year-olds, finding out about the every day life of Victorians, have visited Beamish museum, taken part in a Victorian school day, studied census data and explored CD-ROM and the Internet, to gather information. During the inspection, pupils compared buildings in Silksworth today with photographs of them as they were in Victorian times. They could identify features of Victorian architecture – for instance, sash windows, middens and pantries – and identify the most common features that change over time – for example, windows. They used their knowledge to make deductions – such as why a sweet shop needs railings outside it nowadays.
82. The full use made of the locality is a strength of the teaching. This, together with teachers' enthusiasm, brings history alive for the pupils and contributes strongly to their achievements.

Other adults are invited to share their specialist knowledge with pupils – for example, the chair of governors helped the oldest pupils to appreciate the lasting influence of the Romans, as he pointed out clues in the church, such as Roman numerals and symbols.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

83. Standards of work are good, although there are elements of the subject, particularly control, which need to be improved. The school has clearly identified this as its next stage of development and is presently researching into suitable resources. Standards have improved since the previous inspection.
84. An instructor leads the majority of lessons, working to plans provided by, and discussed with, the class teachers. He takes groups of pupils in the computer suite while the class teacher does some related activities in the classroom. This arrangement works extremely well and the school is very fortunate to have the services of such a knowledgeable and able person. The lessons are very well prepared and are appropriately challenging. After a very brief period of instruction, using the network facility, the pupils set about their tasks with enthusiasm and energy. The Year 2 pupils were set the task of entering their personal details into a pre-prepared template and were then asked to experiment with the font style and size and were encouraged to use a spell check. The pupils were very confident in using a word-processing package and displayed good mouse control and an ability to use drop-down menus effectively. In this lesson, the class teacher made a significant contribution and displayed high expectations of pupils' work rate, accuracy of work and behaviour. The purpose of the lesson had already been discussed in the classroom beforehand and this enabled the practical session in the computer room to start immediately. In all other lessons, the instructor himself manages the pupils well. He has established very good relationships with them and is quick to praise their efforts and to encourage them further. He uses his time very well to assist pupils experiencing difficulties and allows the more able pupils to extend their skills further than was planned. For example, when the Year 4 class were creating their Christmas cards using a simple publishing program, one more able pupil was encouraged to experiment with a more sophisticated program and to complete all four pages of his card when the majority were still working on their front cover. The instructor used pupils' errors effectively to make good teaching points. His good knowledge of the subject generated confidence in the pupils and by the end of each session, they were independently using the program to produce at least the front page of their card. They were able to make choices of colour, shape and size of font and were able to select appropriate images from clipart and insert them into their designs.
85. By the time they leave the school pupils have experienced a wide range of information and communication technology. For example, they have used CD-ROMs and the Internet for research and have communicated with another school via e-mail and by video conferencing. Pupils use their information and communication technology skills to support their work in a number of subjects – for example, English, mathematics and history.
86. The management of the subject is satisfactory. Information and communication technology is the responsibility of the newly appointed deputy headteacher, who has not had time to impact upon standards. However she is well aware of what needs to be done to improve the provision and is embarking on training to improve her own skills and understanding of the subject. At present, the expertise of the instructor and the help of a knowledgeable parent are used effectively, but the school needs to be very conscious of the training needs of the teachers as well.

MUSIC

87. Standards in music for seven and eleven year olds are satisfactory, overall, and have been maintained since the previous inspection. The performance element is good in the junior classes, with pupils singing tunefully and showing ability for two-part singing. This was very well illustrated in the recent school production of 'Joseph and His Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat', in which a large proportion of junior pupils participated. The show was an outstanding success and was a culmination of very good teamwork between staff, parents, the community and the pupils. A video recording showed that the quality of singing, acting, and dancing was good and the pupils who participated enjoyed it greatly.
88. The quality of teaching is very good overall and never less than good. Those teachers with good musical knowledge use it well to stimulate pupils and to extend their knowledge and enjoyment of music. Some teachers are less knowledgeable but nevertheless plan interesting lessons, which are enjoyable and challenging.
89. Pupils sing with enthusiasm, and learn new songs very quickly. In the Year 6 class, the teacher introduced some new songs to the pupils and within minutes they knew them well enough to give a very creditable performance. This ability to learn quickly is strengthened by pupils' sound knowledge of musical terms and notation. In the infant classes, pupils learn about pitch, texture and dynamics by singing familiar songs in different ways and are encouraged by the teacher to think about the musical elements while singing. In a Year 5 lesson, the teacher displayed very good musical knowledge and used this to encourage pupils to breathe properly and to phrase their singing, in order to gain maximum effect. Pupils are encouraged to think about the words of the songs and to express their emotions appropriately when singing.
90. Music plays a significant role in pupils' cultural development. They are encouraged to listen to a range of music from their own and different cultures. For example, in assemblies pupils listened to some music composed and performed by a local young person, based on the work of the old lamplighters. In another assembly, the teacher played 'Jerusalem', to illustrate the theme of improving the world. The school also enjoys visits from several different musical groups from around the world, ranging from a South American group playing panpipes to a local brass band. The co-ordinator has played his Northumbrian bagpipes to pupils in the infants to illustrate pitch, texture and dynamics.
91. The management of the subject is good. The headteacher has assumed responsibility since the departure of the music specialist and his own musical ability and knowledge is maintaining the development of the subject well. He is very aware of the need to develop the assessment of the subject and the need to check the quality of teaching and learning more systematically.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

92. In the elements of physical education seen during the inspection, standards are above those expected for pupils aged seven. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. Only one lesson was seen for the older pupils, so it is not possible to make a judgement on standards by the age of eleven. The quality of teaching of the younger pupils is very good. Again, this is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. The quality of pupils' learning is correspondingly very good.

93. Teachers have a very good subject knowledge. They know about the importance of warming up and cooling down and explain this clearly to pupils so that they know about the effects of exercise on the body. They are very good observers of pupils' movements so that they can analyse aspects for improvement. They carefully share this with pupils so, for example, in Year 1, pupils improve their imaginative response to music.
94. Teachers make very good use of resources. For example, in Year 2, the teacher used a recorded tape lesson, according to the skills and needs of the pupils, rather than slavishly playing it from beginning to end. This enabled her to talk to the pupils, in order to enhance their exploration of moods and feelings in response to music. Relationships are very good. For example, in a lesson with Year 1 pupils, the teacher moved around the class, encouraging and praising them, so that they used a range of body actions and parts with increasing co-ordination and balance. Pupils responded readily to this and were confident and eager to improve their performance. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and involvement. As a result, Year 1 pupils behave very well when they come into the hall and are immediately ready to begin the lesson. Year 2 pupils exercise vigorously and co-operate well in large groups and pairs, beginning to evaluate and improve their own work.
95. In the one lesson seen for older pupils the quality of teaching was excellent. The teacher used her considerable subject knowledge to evaluate pupils' performance and to challenge them to extend their very good skills in devising sequences of movements. An excellent feature of this lesson was the quality of the interaction and dialogue between teacher and pupils and pupils and their peers. They worked in small groups to discuss skills and techniques and chose, combined and applied skills showing a very high standard of precision, control and fluency.
96. The subject is well organised and the co-ordinator provides good support to her colleagues. However, opportunities for her to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning throughout the school are not systematically developed. Since the previous inspection, the removal of furniture from the dining section of the hall has made more space available for pupils' work in physical education. However, the small gaps where the two floor surfaces meet are potentially dangerous. The school provides a good range of sporting activities outside lessons, including athletics, gymnastics for younger pupils, football, netball and line dancing. Approximately 130 pupils take part in such activities, supervised by three teachers, two coaches and a parent.