

INSPECTION REPORT

**St. Cuthbert's Roman Catholic (VA)
First School**

Tweedmouth, Berwick-upon-Tweed

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122309

Headteacher: Mrs M. B. Fisher

Reporting inspector: Mr P. M. Allen
OIN 17531

Dates of inspection: 27th – 30th November 2000

Inspection number: 224808

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3 – 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Prince Edward Road Tweedmouth Berwick-upon-Tweed Northumberland
Postcode:	TD15 2EX
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M. Napier
Date of previous inspection:	13 th January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr P. M. Allen [17531]	Registered inspector	English	What sort of school is it?
		Mathematics	How high are standards?
		Art and design	How well are pupils taught?
		Music	
		Physical education	
Mr P. Berry [11474]	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mrs A. Smithers [17456]	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		Information and communication technology	How well is the school led and managed?
		Design and technology	
		Geography	
		History	
		Foundation stage	
		Equal opportunities	
		Special educational needs	
		English as an additional language	

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The Registrar
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Cuthbert's R. C. School is a voluntary aided Catholic first school catering for children aged three to 9. It is a below average sized primary school which serves the parish of St Cuthbert's near the centre of Berwick-upon-Tweed in Northumberland. Just under half of the pupils are of the Roman Catholic faith and virtually all are of white ethnic origin. The intake is varied both in background and attainment. Attainment on entry to school is judged to be broadly in line with what could be expected. Virtually all the children have had experience of pre-school education through the Nursery. There are around 50 children in the Nursery who attend part-time, either in the morning or the afternoon. In the main school there are 87 pupils on roll in three classes, two for Reception and Key Stage 1 and one for Years 3 and 4 of Key Stage 2. In the school as a whole there are 19 pupils on the register for special educational needs, including two with a Statement of Special Educational Need. The school has been led by a number of headteachers in recent years and, at the time of the inspection, the new headteacher had been in post for less than a term. The school aims to provide a secure, stimulating and challenging environment where each child can develop to his or her full potential. The school has set targets for future development with information and communication technology and writing both being included in the priorities.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school which is becoming more effective. It benefits from a hard working staff who are strongly committed to the school and its pupils. Most pupils make good progress in the core subjects and satisfactory progress in the foundation subjects. Standards in the core subjects have gradually improved in recent years. Although recently appointed, the headteacher is providing strong and purposeful leadership. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and often better. In light of the costs involved, the standards achieved and the quality of education provided, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- ◆ The very good leadership and management by the new headteacher means that the school is moving forward and improving.
- ◆ Standards have risen in recent years in reading, writing, mathematics, science and information and communication technology.
- ◆ The pupils' very good attitudes, enthusiasm and behaviour have a very positive impact on the quality of learning.
- ◆ Relationships are very good and the children are well looked after within the school's caring, Christian ethos.
- ◆ There is good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- ◆ There are effective links with parents, who are very supportive of the school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- ◆ The arrangements for assessing, recording and reporting attainment and progress.
- ◆ The monitoring, evaluation and development of the teaching.
- ◆ Written work across the curriculum.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

When the school was last inspected in 1997, it was judged to have serious weaknesses in a number of aspects of its work. Since then the school has made steady progress, although improvement has been most marked since the appointment of the new headteacher. The issues of the previous inspection have been partially addressed, although there is still a need to develop assessment strategies, to monitor teaching and to develop management roles. The quality of teaching is higher than it was previously judged to be at Key Stage 2 and standards have risen across the school in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. There is a shared will to build on what the school does well and to improve the quality of education through a systematic programme of review and development.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Reading	E	C	B	A
Writing	D	B	A	A
Mathematics	E	C	B	A

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

Evidence indicates that attainment in the foundation stage is sound and in line with national expectations. The children are in line to reach the new nationally prescribed Early Learning Goals in each area of learning by the end of the Reception year, with a significant minority exceeding them. Standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 are sound and broadly in line with national averages. Standards in the previous two years were higher than those observed during the inspection. The attainment of the relatively small numbers in each year group can vary from year to year, especially when there are a number of pupils with special educational needs as is the case with the current Year 2. Key Stage 2 pupils in Years 3 and 4 attain well in English, mathematics and science; their good progress has been maintained since the end of Key Stage 1. The pupils are in line to achieve the key objectives for Years 3 and 4 of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and a significant number will exceed those expectations. Standards in information and communication technology are sound across the school and broadly in line with those expected nationally.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The children enjoy coming to school and have very positive attitudes towards their work.
Behaviour, in and out of	The levels of behaviour are very good, both within class and

classrooms	outside and this contributes to the calm, orderly environment.
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Personal development and relationships	Personal development is good. Relationships are very good with children valuing and supporting one another.
Attendance	Attendance is in line with the national average. There is a prompt and positive start to the day.

Pupils co-operate well in group work, enjoying their very good relationships which underpin the school's ethos.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-9 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	good	Good

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

During the inspection 42 lessons and activities were observed. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory, often good and sometimes very good. It was very good in 14 per cent of the lessons observed, good in 38 per cent and satisfactory in all the remainder. The best teaching seen was in literacy, numeracy and science. In the main, the teaching was less effective in the foundation subjects. Although the planning of the work has improved recently, the quality of teaching can improve further by more carefully ensuring that the work set matches the learning needs of all the pupils. The teaching can be improved by increasing the amount of time in which pupils are actively engaged in their tasks and reducing the amount spent talking to the whole class or group.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced. There is a need to systematically develop a number of foundation subjects, especially art and design. The school is improving its information and communication technology curriculum to provide better opportunities for the pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs is sound and the pupils make steady progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for all aspects of personal development is good and contributes significantly to the pupils' self-esteem, their respect for others and the high standards of behaviour.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school places a high priority on its nurturing approach and cares for its pupils very well.

The school is working hard to improve parental involvement and parents appreciate the welcoming approach. Parents both at the meeting and during the inspection spoke highly of the school and the recent improvements.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Although very recently appointed, the headteacher, supported by the staff, is providing very good leadership and management. There is still a need to develop the roles of the deputy headteacher and the curriculum co-ordinators.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Most of the governors are new to their positions and are enthusiastic and supportive; although the governors fulfil their responsibilities, the need is recognised for a significant development of their roles.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is only just beginning to make a start in self-evaluation through analysing data to inform targets for improvement. There is recognition of the need to develop the monitoring and evaluation of the teaching.
The strategic use of resources	The school is adequately resourced for most areas and generally makes good use of its accommodation. There are times when more efficient use could be made of classroom support staff.

The quality of leadership and management of the new headteacher is having a marked impact on the life of the school. The headteacher and governors are beginning to plan ahead carefully and develop resources in line with the school's priorities, with appropriate attention being given to the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases most parents and carers	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The good progress made and the information given on children's progress. ◆ The quality of teaching. ◆ The approachability of the school. ◆ The expectation that children will work hard and do their best. ◆ The support given to help the children become responsible and their good behaviour. ◆ The quality of leadership and management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Some parents would appreciate more extra-curricular activities.

There are limited extra-curricular activities. The headteacher is aware of the point raised and has firm plans to review the arrangements for extra-curricular activities. Virtually all the views expressed were supportive of the school and inspectors support these views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The previous report was critical of standards and progress in a number of areas, especially by the end of Year 4, where attainment and progress in English, mathematics, geography and music was judged to be satisfactory and attainment and progress in all the other subjects was judged to be unsatisfactory. Standards in information and communication technology were judged to be well below average across the school. Standards have improved since that time, most significantly in information and communication technology.
2. When children enter the Nursery their abilities are as would be expected nationally for their age. Children make steady progress both in the Nursery and Reception year and by the end of this, the foundation stage of education, they are in line to reach the nationally prescribed Early Learning Goals, with a significant minority exceeding them.
3. Standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 are sound and broadly in line with national averages. Standards in the previous two years were higher than those observed during the inspection. The attainment of the relatively small numbers in each year group can vary from year to year, especially when there are a number of pupils with special educational needs as is the case with the current Year 2. Key Stage 2 pupils in Years 3 and 4 attain well in English, mathematics and science; their good progress has been maintained since the end of Key Stage 1. The pupils are in line to achieve the key objectives for Years 3 and 4 of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and a significant number will exceed those expectations. Standards in information and communication technology are sound across the school and broadly in line with those expected nationally.
4. The available evidence clearly indicates that standards in reading, writing and mathematics have risen since the previous inspection. Excluding the 1998 tests, results have steadily risen at a slightly higher rate to the national trend. Results were particularly creditable in 1999 and 2000.
5. National performance data indicates that over three years, from 1998 to 2000, the performance of boys exceeded the national average for their age group in reading, mathematics and, most significantly, in writing. Over the same period the performance of girls in writing was slightly below the national average for their age group and the performance in reading and mathematics was clearly below the national average. No evidence was seen during the inspection to substantiate this apparent indication of underachievement by girls and the school is only just beginning to investigate this point.
6. Standards in speaking and listening are fostered well and are good for many pupils. Pupils at Key Stage 1 and in Years 3 and 4 make good progress in their ability to speak confidently and listen carefully both to each other and to their teachers. Because of the number of pupils with special educational needs in the current Year 2, overall standards in reading are in line with national averages at the end of Key Stage 1, although through Year 3 and at the end of Year 4 standards are good and above what could be expected nationally. Pupils are heard to read on a regular basis and parents are very successfully encouraged to play an active part in their children's reading development.
7. Although pupils in the recent past have performed creditably in the national tests in writing,

during the inspection there was very little evidence of personal and creative writing in exercise books and in work on display. Much of the work in English and in the foundation subjects is based on completing worksheets. There is potential for pupils to significantly develop writing skills as part of a whole school strategy to develop writing across the curriculum. Teacher expectations are insufficiently high with regard to spelling, handwriting and presentation and these are areas for development.

8. Pupils at Key Stage 1 and in Years 3 and 4 make good progress in numeracy. By the end of Key Stage 1, most can count objects reliably and use mental recall of addition and subtraction facts up to 10. By the end of Year 4, pupils' good progress enables them have a good understanding of the two, three, four, five and ten times tables and they are able to choose appropriate number operations and ways of calculating to solve problems.

9. In science, pupils show enthusiasm, especially for practical tasks, and make good progress. Standards are sound at the end of Key Stage 1 and good at the end of Year 4. Most pupils gain a good understanding and knowledge of basic science concepts and facts and Key Stage 2 pupils become skilled in carrying out scientific investigations.

10. Standards in information and communication technology are sound across the school and in line with what can be expected nationally. Pupils make satisfactory progress. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. The youngest pupils match words and pictures on the screen. Other Key Stage 1 pupils begin to produce sets of instructions for a programmable toy around a route and older pupils use a CD-ROM to access information and learn to send and receive e-mails.

11. The best teaching seen was in literacy, numeracy and science and it is in these areas where progress is most marked. Progress is particularly good in reading. Teaching was less effective in the foundation subjects and this impacts on the progress being made in these subjects. Progress is good in physical education, especially in swimming. Progress was judged to be sound in information and communication technology, design and technology, geography, history and music. Progress is unsatisfactory in art and design. In each of the subjects, the rate of progress is broadly similar for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils participate enthusiastically in their lessons and their attitudes to learning are very good. Throughout the school, pupils are keen to answer their teachers' questions and respond eagerly when set challenges. Occasionally pupils lose concentration and become restless; this occurs when the initial talk or discussion has gone on too long and the pupils are not kept fully engaged by their teachers. Pupils are able to sit in silence with full concentration; for example, when listening to the stories during the school assemblies.

13. Behaviour of pupils in and around the school is very good. Parents, school governors and staff all reported a significant improvement in pupils' behaviour over the last few years. There have been no exclusions and no instances of serious misbehaviour were observed during the inspection. The pupils' orderly movement allows the school to function effectively. In the Nursery, the children settle quickly into the routines and they enjoy the various activities.

14. There are very good relationships between pupils and staff and between the pupils themselves. Pupils work well together, sharing resources. The personal development of pupils is

enhanced by close links with the Parish, by the wide range of charity work and by the many educational visits made; for example, to theatre productions. Pupils are involved in environmental work, for example, planting trees, and they make visits to the elderly at Abbeyfields Residential Home. The older pupils readily accept responsibilities, such as being monitors and serving meals in the dining hall. The pupils are courteous and friendly showing suitable respect for property and for the views of others. They are extremely welcoming to visitors.

15. The level of attendance is satisfactory, being broadly in line with the national average figure for primary schools. There is a significant amount of authorised holiday absence, some of which extends beyond two weeks. The attendance level in the Nursery is high in comparison to similar establishments. The school has successfully taken steps to eradicate the disruption problems previously caused by the poor punctuality of some pupils.

16. The school has a calm, harmonious atmosphere with a caring, Christian ethos. The pupils are gaining in confidence and self-discipline. Their attitudes, behaviour and personal development make a significant contribution to the quality of education provided.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. During the inspection 42 lessons and activities were observed. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory, often good and sometimes very good. It was very good in 14 per cent of the lessons observed, good in 38 per cent and satisfactory in all the remainder. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. This represents an improvement on the last inspection when there was some unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching has improved at Key Stage 2, which addresses an issue from the previous report. The fact that pupils make good progress in the core subjects is partly due to the consistently good teaching which the school provides in those subjects. The best teaching seen was in literacy, numeracy and science. The teaching was less effective in the foundation subjects where, often, there is an over-reliance on work sheets. The quality of teaching can improve in these subjects by more carefully ensuring that the work set matches the learning needs of all pupils.

18. Teachers have high expectations of pupils to behave well, to listen carefully and to do their best. This aspect of the teaching is recognised by parents who substantially agree that the school provides good quality teaching and that their children are encouraged to try hard. A particular strength of the teaching is how well teachers manage their pupils. This is exemplified by the way that lessons invariably begin on time, by the fact that pupils get out resources and clear them away calmly and efficiently as a matter of course and by the very good relationships between teachers and pupils. All teachers expect, and receive, a high level of interest and enthusiasm from their pupils; this has a positive impact on learning.

19. Teachers generally plan lessons carefully in literacy and numeracy with tasks that will take pupils' learning forward. Teachers usually make clear in their plans exactly what it is they want their pupils to learn and then employ a range of effective techniques which stimulate the pupils. Most lessons begin with a short but lively question and answer session, which both reminds pupils about previous learning and helps them to consolidate their understanding. For example, at the beginning of the literacy hour the teacher goes through what has been covered on previous days and then shares and displays what the objectives are for that particular session. Good use is generally made of time, although teaching can sometimes be improved by increasing the amount of time when pupils are actively engaged in their tasks and by reducing the amount of time spent by the teacher talking to the whole class or group.

20. Teachers usually make good use of the support staff; they are usually working effectively with small groups of pupils or individuals in accordance with the plans prepared by the teachers. Support staff carry out their work calmly and efficiently, although there are times when more productive use could be made of their talents; for example, in the literacy hour when support staff have the role of onlooker instead of being involved with the pupils.

21. All teachers set homework, from regular reading practice to researching information to help pupils in their work in school and most parents are supportive of the arrangements. Teachers have good relationships with parents, whom teachers successfully encourage to take an active part in their children's learning at home. Parents hear their children read regularly and this contributes to the good standards.

22. More could be done in lesson planning, especially for the literacy and numeracy hours, to identify opportunities to assess pupils' learning and rate of progress. This would contribute to the need to develop clear strategies for the monitoring of attainment and progress of individual pupils. Teachers should have higher expectations of their pupils in spelling, handwriting and presentation. The teaching should target the development of writing cross the curriculum. Work is marked regularly, although the quality of the marking varies.

23. There is a need to develop systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching. During the inspection the quality of teaching varied from satisfactory to excellent. The school has clear aspirations to benefit all its pupils from the best teaching possible. The focused monitoring of teaching can provide targets for improvement; it can support and guide effective practice which can enhance teacher performance, thus impacting on pupil attainment and progress. In this way this effective school can be made even more effective.

24. Teachers and support staff provide well for pupils who have special educational needs. From their use of good individual education plans, teachers plan lessons and activities which are appropriate to the needs of these pupils and often use classroom support assistants and the special educational needs teacher to work with the pupils on an individual or small group basis. The staff as a whole are very committed to the school and its pupils and the good quality of their work has a significant impact on standards and the quality of education provided.

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

25. The school provides a broad and balanced range of opportunities for all its pupils. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The structure of the curriculum has been developed recently and has not yet fully impacted on the provision for pupils. All subjects are given adequate time but the practice of alternating art and design and design and technology by half term does have a negative impact on the standards of work pupils achieve. The curriculum prepares pupils satisfactorily for the next stage in their education.

26. The curricular provision for children in the foundation stage, which includes children in the Nursery and Reception Year, is sound. There is a range of stimulating learning activities and the curriculum covers all the areas of learning as specified in the national guidance.

27. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is sound. Pupils with special educational needs have individual education programmes, which are well matched to their needs and receive one-to-one support on a regular basis. Where it is relevant, outside agencies are fully involved and this has a very positive effect on

the progress made.

28. The school has taken account of the national guidance for the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy and has put in place appropriate strategies. With the exception of spelling and handwriting, literacy is taught well. Numeracy is taught well with useful links across the curriculum; for example, comparing temperature in different places around the world and measuring when undertaking scientific experiments. The links in literacy are less well developed as the recording of subjects such as science, history and geography is not always effective and in some classes there is too great a dependency on photocopied worksheets. There is a need to develop writing across the curriculum.

29. The range of extra-curricular activities is limited. Pupils have organised a Pokemon club, agreeing the rules and expectations for it. They do have opportunities to take part in coaching for some sports activities at different times of the year, as and when they are available. For example, local sports people run a 'fun, fitness and friendship' session and there is tennis coaching just prior to the start of the season.

30. All pupils have equality of access and opportunity to the curriculum. National performance data indicates that over recent years the performance of boys at the end of Key Stage 1 has exceeded the national average for their age group, whilst the performance of girls fell below the national average for their age group. During the inspection period there was no evidence of this during the observation of pupils' response or during an analysis of their written work.

31. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is sound. Due attention is given to health education; for example, feeling the heartbeat after sustained physical activity and eating foods rich in vitamins such as fruit and vegetables. Sex education meets the statutory requirements. Pupils do take responsibility in and around the school; for example, putting the music on prior to assembly. A Road Safety Show visits the school to raise awareness of these issues. Pupils are taught good hygiene procedures.

32. The school has satisfactory links with the community; for example, as a Catholic school, the local congregation are invited to the mass which is held in school. There are appropriate links with partner institutions and the new headteacher has already made contact with the local middle school to improve the continuity of the provision; for example, through discussing the handwriting style.

33. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good. The close links with the Catholic church and the ethos within assemblies contribute very strongly to pupils' spiritual development. The excitement in learning experienced by pupils who were able to send an e-mail to the Falkland Islands and receive a reply before the end of the day added to their awe and appreciation of the capabilities of mankind. Pupils are taught to distinguish right from wrong and there is a strong ethos of caring for and supporting others within the school.

34. Opportunities are provided for pupils to collect for charities, particularly Christian based ones that work and support people in other countries. Money is sent to Nigeria and pupils learn about life for children in that country and realise that their contributions do make a difference. They donate toys to be sent to children in Romania and Croatia at Christmas. During circle time, pupils use 'Mr Giggle' to explore ideas of co-operation and how they can help each other; they learn to value different points of view and listen carefully to them. The curriculum provides many opportunities for cultural development. Pupils learn about the local culture by visits to places of interest; for example, The Grace Darling Museum at Bamburgh. Visiting theatre groups perform productions such as 'The Little Princess'. Visitors to teach music and drama linked to the museum visit on the theme of time, enhance the cultural curriculum. The provision for learning about other

cultures is evident through their geographical studies and contributions to charities in distant places.

35. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is one of the strengths of the school, making as it does, a very positive contribution to the quality of education provided.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. The school provides a warm, welcoming environment, especially in the Nursery where the new children settle quickly. The caring staff know their pupils well, give good supervision and work hard to ensure that pastoral issues are dealt with promptly. The individual needs of the pupils, including those with special educational needs, are suitably met. The school has a number of procedures for the support and welfare of pupils; whilst some of these are good, others are in the process of being reviewed or updated by the new headteacher.

37. The school has a good behaviour and discipline policy, the rewards and sanctions being applied consistently by all staff. Constructive use of praise encourages the pupils to develop their work and improve their personal self-esteem. The positive achievements of pupils are celebrated with stickers and certificates. 'St. Cuthbert's Code' provides whole school guidance and the pupils in individual classes develop their own codes of conduct. There is a need to monitor pupils' attendance closely and ensure that all parents fully understand how important good attendance is for their children's progress.

38. Independent learning is well promoted; during a Year 1 and 2 mathematics lesson, the teacher encouraged pupils to 'think, decide and then work it out'. The well-planned assemblies make a significant contribution to the pupils' personal development and healthy lifestyles are well promoted. Pupils receive some personal, social and health education within lessons but it is not yet formally included within the curricular provision and is, therefore, inconsistent. The nursery children do receive good provision, including road safety, the Dansi project and the 'Here I Am' topic.

39. The school has good links with the external agencies who support the school well. Child protection is covered by an appropriate policy and the designated teacher is suitably trained. Whilst the school has had a health and safety audit within the last year, the recommendations have not all been implemented. The health and safety procedures are in need of review and improvement; for example, first aid training should be extended, the use of the school's accident record book is too informal and the policy should reflect the delegated responsibilities. Provision of a perimeter path around the car park would reduce the potential danger for pedestrians. The school buildings are well maintained, clean and tidy.

40. Overall, the school meets its aims of fostering good Christian morals. Based on its positive, caring ethos, the school provides suitable support and guidance for its pupils. This enhances their confidence and contributes to the standards that are achieved.

41. The previous report judged assessment across the school to be poor which informed an issue to develop effective assessment strategies. Since that time assessment has improved but there is still much to be done. There is a need to develop assessment practices and implement a clear whole school policy which describes the agreed practices for the monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress.

42. Baseline assessments are undertaken on entry to both the Nursery and the Reception year

and these provide some useful information. Teachers have good knowledge of pupils' abilities and a great deal of informal assessment takes place, much of it unrecorded. Records are kept of the results of a standardised test in reading administered in Years 2, 3 and 4. Good use is made of the optional national tests in English and mathematics for pupils in Years 3 and 4. There are currently no formal assessments in science or in information and communication technology.

43. The new headteacher has firm plans to develop detailed records for individual pupils and year groups to include data and targets which will then enable the school to track the

attainment and progress of both individuals and groups. There are also plans to enable opportunities for assessment to be identified in planning and for assessments to more clearly inform curriculum planning. There are further plans to improve the quality of marking and the quality of the annual reports.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. The school has a good partnership with its parents, who give good support. Parents feel welcomed and their participation in school life is encouraged and appreciated. The parents' association organises social events and raises funds, the latest project being to arrange the painting of the playground, to provide for organised games. A small number of parents help within school and there is an active "Learning First" group. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school could be further extended. There is always a high attendance of family, friends and parishioners at the 'First Friday Mass' each month.

45. In the inspection questionnaire and during discussions, parents expressed their high level of satisfaction in many aspects of school life, except that some would like to see more extra-curricular activities. The responses to the questionnaire for this inspection indicated that there was a much stronger parental perception that behaviour was good than the responses indicated in the previous inspection report. One parent noted that the school was very accommodating when special arrangements had to be made for her child's before and after school care. Parents are generally happy with the amount of homework provided, although the school is aware that colour coding would aid the pupils' choices of appropriate reading books.

46. The school is welcoming to parents, who know that they can approach the teachers informally after school if they have any concerns or questions. The parents receive regular news bulletins and the school arranges for some provision of curricular information for parents. The Nursery children have good record of achievement folders, which are always accessible to parents. There are two formal parent evenings during the autumn and spring terms; the headteacher plans to introduce an open day in the summer term.

47. The end of year pupil reports are unsatisfactory. They do not give details of progress and attainment for individual pupils. The school has a good prospectus and governing body annual report. There is a good set of documentation for the parents of new starters in the Nursery. There are effective links with parents who are very supportive of the school. The quality of the partnership with parents enhances the quality of education provided.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. The previous report identified serious weaknesses in the management and efficiency of the school. This judgement is no longer appropriate. The issue in that report concerned with

developing the management roles of the deputy headteacher, staff and governing body has only been partially addressed and there is still work to be done.

49. The very good leadership by the recently appointed headteacher is a strength of the school. All the staff share a very good commitment to improvement and have the capacity to succeed. There has been good improvement in this aspect since the last inspection, mostly in the last six months.

50. The very good quality of leadership is providing clear educational direction for the school. It involves a number of changes and all staff are very supportive of the new procedures. Now there is a need to develop systems to monitor and evaluate current practice. All staff have job descriptions but in the past their roles have been under-utilised. The deputy headteacher is keen to fulfill her role and is to undertake training to support this.

51. There is a positive ethos of care and hard work. The school has clear aims and values and these describe the school's intentions well. The staff, pupils and parents clearly understand what the school is trying to do and support it fully.

52. The governing body has undergone a period of considerable change in the last four years but is now settling to its role and increasing in effectiveness. There is still a need to develop the role further. Governors are enthusiastic and supportive and are beginning to ask relevant and helpful questions in order to gain information and are keen to help and support the school. The governing body fulfills its statutory responsibilities.

53. There is a shared will to build on the school's strengths through a programme of review and development and this is identified in the school improvement planning. The school is only just beginning to make a start in self-evaluation through analysing data to inform targets for improvement. Monitoring and evaluating of teaching and learning are not yet in place but the new headteacher has firm plans to implement rigorous procedures. Currently, the school improvement plan is too extensive and it is not possible, within the planned time, to complete all the tasks identified well, but the headteacher is aware of this and intends to review the document after reflecting on the inspection report.

54. Governors are kept fully informed of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and the governors' annual report to parents fulfills the requirements. The co-ordinator is effective in maintaining the register, which is held in the school. Class teachers and support staff work together well. They are directly included in the planning and assessment meetings. Parents are kept well informed.

55. Currently, the new headteacher is managing the budget set by her predecessor but is developing plans for spending within the next budgetary cycle. She is making good use of the standards funds and is aware of the constraints within the future budgets. Future financial decisions are to be tied very closely to the development targets of the school such as the improvement in resources for information and communication technology. In all matters of spending the school practises prudent housekeeping, applying the principles of best value.

56. The secretary makes a satisfactory contribution to the day-to-day running of the school. The number of hours the school is able to employ administrative support is low and currently it does not have access to up to date technology to facilitate systems and procedures.

57. The school is staffed effectively. Professional development is appropriately supported. Resources are adequate in quality and quantity except in the Nursery, where they are good. The

school needs to develop its information and communication technology resources. Mostly support staff work effectively but their time is not always used efficiently; for example, in the literacy hour when support staff have the role of onlooker instead of being involved with the pupils.

58. The school benefits from good-sized accommodation which is well presented and maintained. It supports all areas of the curriculum well except information and communication technology where the opportunity to have a suite of computers would enhance the curriculum further. The caretaker and his staff create a warm and clean environment. The majority of children stay at school for their lunch and enjoy food of good quality with staff providing good care and support.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governors' action plan will set out how the areas for improvement identified during the inspection are to be addressed.

In order to further raise standards and the quality of education provided, the governing body, headteacher and staff should:

◆ develop the arrangements for assessing, recording and reporting to include:

- *a consideration of the specific assessments to be undertaken;*
- *the means of tracking the progress of individual pupils;*
- *the strategies to identify opportunities for assessment in planning;*
- *the use made of those assessments to inform planning;*
- *a review of marking of work;*
- *the improvement of annual reports;*

(paragraphs 22, 41, 42, 43, 47, 82, 83, 84, 88, 90, 94, 95, 96 and 111)

◆ develop the monitoring and evaluation of teaching with:

- *a clear policy to guide the arrangements;*
- *the dissemination of good practice;*
- *structured classroom observations, initially in literacy and numeracy;*
- *clear feedback, leading to the setting of targets;*

(paragraphs 23, 53, 84, 90, 95 and 96)

◆ develop and improve written work across the curriculum by:

- *raising the profile of writing in the school;*
- *giving pupils more opportunities to write and make a personal response in foundation subjects;*
- *giving pupils more opportunities for extended writing including the development of detail;*
- *creating opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and audiences;*
- *targeting higher standards in spelling.*

(paragraphs 7, 22, 28, 80, 81, 82, 84 and 94)

In addition to the above areas, the following less critical areas should be considered for inclusion in

the action plan. These are indicated in paragraphs 7, 11, 12, 19, 22, 25, 48, 52, 73, 81, 83, 88, 89, 93, 102, 105, 106 and 109:

- ◆ the development of the role of the governing body;
- ◆ standards of handwriting and presentation;
- ◆ a review of the use of teaching time to enable pupils to spend more time actively involved in their learning;
- ◆ the art and design curriculum.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	42
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	56

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2	12	38	48	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	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	25	87
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	22

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	17

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
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 Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	7	9	16

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (78)	100 (94)	100 (94)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teacher Assessments		Reading	Mathematics	Science
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (78)	94 (100)	100 (100)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

As the number of boys and girls being assessed in the year group are less than ten, then only the percentage results are shown.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	86
Any other minority ethnic groups	0

Exclusions in the last school year

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.3
Average class size	29

Educational support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of educational support	4
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Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
	£
Total income	212,145
Total expenditure	214,202
Expenditure per pupil	2,329

staff	
Total aggregate hours worked per week	56

Balance brought forward from previous year	6,559
Balance carried forward to next year	4,502

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	49

Number of pupils per FTE adult	8.3
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out:	88
Number of questionnaires returned:	60

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school	70	28	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school	62	32	3	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good	53	45	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home	40	43	7	2	8
The teaching is good	67	31	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	48	46	3	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem	68	25	7	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best	68	28	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents	55	33	8	2	2
The school is well led and managed	52	43	2	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible	55	45	0	0	0
The school provides as interesting range of	20	17	28	8	27

activities outside lessons

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

59. Children enter the Nursery at the beginning of the year in which they have their fourth birthday. They attend part-time either for the morning or afternoon sessions. The majority leave the Nursery to attend other local first schools. Children enter the Reception class at the beginning of the year in which they have their fifth birthday. When children enter the Nursery their abilities are as would be expected nationally for their age. Children make steady progress both in the Nursery and in the Reception year and by the end of this, the foundation stage of education, they are in line to reach the nationally prescribed Early Learning Goals and a significant minority will exceed them. Children with special educational needs and English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.

60. Both Nursery and Reception children are confident and feel secure in their environment. They understand the routines of the school day and are able to adapt their behaviour to its differing demands. They line up in the classroom and move sensibly to the hall. Reception children are able to dress and undress for physical education lessons. They show increasing independence in selecting and carrying out activities from a range available within the classroom. They are beginning to have the confidence to link up with others for support and guidance; for example, nursery children develop small world scenarios together using the dolls house and Reception children work together on the computer. All children display good levels of involvement in activities and engage for extended periods of time in an activity of their choosing; for example, one girl spent more than half an hour painting. They learn to share and co-operate when playing together and to take turns when playing dice games.

Personal, social and emotional development

61. In the Nursery and the Reception year, provision for the personal, social and emotional development of children is sound. Adults act as positive role models through what they say and do. Praise is used effectively and children are encouraged to take risks when exploring new learning. The classroom organisation and management enables children to independently access resources and make choices at various specified times during the day. At other times staff intervene and direct children to specific learning activities. In the Nursery, the role-play area encourages both individual and co-operative play and enables children to begin to make sense of their world through acting out scenes; for example, in the home, where they talk on the telephone, put the dolls to bed, or take them to the hospital.

Communication, language and literacy

62. Attainment in communication, language and literacy skills is what would be expected nationally. Children make steady progress and by the end of the Reception year a number of children will exceed the Early Learning Goals. Children listen attentively and are able to talk about their experiences. They respond well to stories and poems and make up scenarios during small world and role-play. They enjoy books and understand that words and pictures convey meaning. By the Reception year, children know that in English, print is read from left to right and top to bottom. The majority can name some letters and recognise the associated sounds. Higher attaining children are beginning to read simple sentences. They are beginning to form recognisable letters and write their own name and some write simple sentences.

63. The provision for developing communication, language and literacy is sound. In the Nursery,

there is a good range of resources for the children to use and these are set out in an orderly and stimulating way. Nursery staff encourage children to write and provide effective one-to-one and small group support for activities. Books are well displayed and encourage children to want to read. There are specified times when children access books to read for themselves and change them to take home to read within the family. There is a listening centre where children can choose to listen to stories. Children are encouraged to speak to the whole group when talking about their birthday and other events in their life. They are expected to listen to adults, sometimes for long periods of time. The provision for the Reception year follows the national guidance for the age group and children experience direct teaching of word and sentence work and have designated reading sessions. This is supported effectively by opportunities for children to communicate with one another in an appropriate range of small world pretend scenarios, to interact with adults and to spend time enjoying books.

Mathematical development

64. The children's mathematical attainment is within the range expected for their age and a small number achieve higher order skills. Nursery children use mathematical language to describe shape and size; for example, they choose to paint on triangles or circles. They are beginning to count and recognise numbers and enjoy reading about 'Mr. Bear's Apple Tree' and counting the number of apples on it. Reception year children know numbers to ten and are beginning to add them together. They are extending their mathematical vocabulary; for example, to include full and empty when playing with containers in the sand. They are becoming familiar with shapes and learn their names in both two and three dimensions.

65. Provision for mathematical development is sound. In the Nursery, there is a stimulating environment that makes good reference to mathematical vocabulary. Positional language such as in front and behind is used during physical education sessions. Adults interact well and play dice games with children, directly modelling the counting and encouraging children to take turns around the group in the order expected for group games. For example, when playing a game involving putting bees in a hive. Children learn about colour and make a collection of objects of the same colour, learning to sort by one criteria. The provision in the Reception year follows national guidance and children have opportunities to carry out simple number problems in their heads. There is direct teaching of simple concepts and these are supported effectively by tasks and activities that enable the children to count and manipulate objects and learn about shape and space through building with construction kits; for example, tall buildings to represent the skyscrapers of New York.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

66. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is appropriate for their age and they make satisfactory progress. They are beginning to recognise changes that occur in the different seasons; for example, observing the change in colour of the leaves in autumn. Nursery children watch the birds feed on the feeders just outside their window; they investigate which of a range of objects will float and sink. They learn the days of the week and how to observe and record the weather prevailing that day. Reception children follow the travels of Barnaby Bear and learn about different places; for example, that it takes about eight hours to fly to New York and that to get there you must go either by aeroplane or ship as it is across water. Nursery children sequence events to include yesterday, today and tomorrow and Reception children learn about historical characters such as Guy Fawkes. They are able to use computers using the mouse competently. They understand that some people are baptised and know that water is used as a sign of life.

67. The provision is effective. The learning objectives relate directly to the area of learning and

take into account the guidance for the foundation stage in education. Stimulating, practical, first hand activities are evident and support children well in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills. Resources are used effectively; for example, nursery children are able to investigate and explore the concepts of floating and sinking and the adults support this well through effective questioning techniques. Reception children use a map of the world to locate the United Kingdom and the United States of America. They are encouraged to talk about the differences they can see in the buildings in New York from those around them. Drama is used effectively to support their learning about baptism.

Physical development

68. Physical attainment is sound. Children move confidently around the classroom, playground and hall. They run, balance, bend and stretch. They are beginning to handle pencils and other tools competently. They control the mouse at the computer accurately. They manipulate construction kits to make aeroplanes and buildings and use malleable materials to squeeze, pinch and stretch before rolling out to cut into a specified number of shapes.

69. Provision for physical development is sound. Nursery children have access to a designated outdoor area where they use wheeled toys. Nursery and Reception children have access to the hall and the Reception children take a break in the playground with the rest of the pupils at the school. There are opportunities to develop fine motor control skills through using small world toys, construction sets and threading toys as well as pencils, crayons and other mark making resources.

Creative development

70. Children's attainment in the creative area of learning is sound. They explore what happens when they mix colours and paint. They use musical instruments to explore how sounds change. They can sing simple songs from memory. They play alongside other children who are engaged in imaginative scenarios within the role-play area and the small world farmyard.

71. The provision for children's creative development is sound. A range of activities is planned and children are given opportunities to develop their own ideas. Ideas are valued and interaction is supportive and helps children to develop confidence and independence in making choices and responding to all their senses. Resources are well cared for and well organised. Whilst children are engaged in some creative activities, for example making candles and birds, the work is too adult directed and does not allow children to use their own skills independently.

72. Children's attitudes are good overall. They enjoy the stimulating learning environment and respond well to the activities. They always try hard to do their best. They are confident, independent learners. Behaviour is good.

73. The quality of teaching is sound overall. There is detailed planning for each of the areas of learning. In the Nursery, very informative guidance is provided for adults; for example, informing them of the objectives to be achieved while children are playing with sand and water. Resources are well maintained and used effectively and there is a good quantity. Teaching is less effective when children are required to sit for too long at one time and where the activities are too prescriptive and require the children to follow the teacher's actions at an inappropriate rate for their age. When staff are working with small groups they do not always position themselves so that they have an overview of the room. Staff are warm and caring and value the children as individuals. Support staff make a positive contribution to the ethos. There are effective procedures for assessment; all children are assessed against all the areas of learning on entry into the Nursery and this record is maintained throughout the foundation stage. All children have a record of

achievement and these are regularly taken home and parents contribute to the contents.

ENGLISH

74. The available evidence indicates that standards in English have risen since the previous inspection. Excluding the 1998 tests, results have steadily risen in reading and writing from 1996 to 2000 at a slightly higher rate than the national trend.

75. Given the relatively small numbers in each year group, levels of attainment can vary from year to year; for example, when, such as with the current Year 2, the number of pupils with special educational needs is likely to affect the overall evaluations. Because of this, the judgement at the time of this inspection is that standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 are sound and broadly in line with national averages. This is not reflected in the results achieved in the previous two years where standards were higher than those observed during the inspection.

76. Standards at the end of Year 4 are good. Key Stage 2 pupils in Years 3 and 4 attain well in English. Their good progress has been maintained since the end of Key Stage 1. The pupils are in line to achieve the key objectives for Years 3 and 4 of the National Literacy Strategy and a number will exceed these objectives.

77. Over three years, from 1998 to 2000, the performance of boys exceeded the national average for their age group in reading and more significantly in writing. Over the same period, the performance of girls in writing was slightly below the national average for their age group and performance in reading was clearly below the national average. During the short duration of the inspection it was not possible to find any reasons for this apparent underachievement by girls and the school is only just beginning to investigate this point.

78. Speaking and listening are fostered well and standards are good for many pupils. Pupils are keen to share their news, talk about their work and use their oral skills well across the curriculum. Teachers expect the pupils to listen carefully and the pupils respond well; for example, they are very attentive in assemblies and at story time, when their recall of detail reflects good retention of information. At Key Stage 1, pupils enthusiastically talk about their Christmas plans and hopes. By the end of the key stage, most pupils confidently ask about things they wish to know, express themselves clearly and listen well to one another. In Years 3 and 4, pupils develop their ideas and listen attentively. In responding to a poem on 'What I like about Ice', pupils learn to enjoy words and poems and to develop expressive vocabulary. Older pupils are able to talk about their favourite writers. They discuss their last year at the school prior to going to the middle school and they reflect on previous experiences; for example, on their 'Dinosaur Day' visit and their visit to Cragside Museum where they learnt how Lord Armstrong made electricity using hydraulic equipment.

79. Parents expressed the view that reading is given a high priority and this is reflected in the good standards for most pupils; pupils are well supported by their parents. At Key Stage 1, pupils develop fluency and expression and most become able to competently read books at an appropriate level. They join in shared reading with enthusiasm. By the end of the key stage, the majority of pupils read confidently at good levels and have developed ways of working out unfamiliar words. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 continue to make good progress and are beginning to read with sustained concentration. By the end of Year 4, many are beginning to be reflective readers who can read a range of texts fluently and accurately and who can use their knowledge of the alphabet to locate books and find information. The high standards in reading are clearly reflected in the results of the standardised reading tests administered in conjunction with the local education authority.

80. Although the test results indicate that pupils have the capacity to attain well in writing, during the inspection there was very little evidence of personal and creative writing in exercise books and in work on display. Much of the written work in English and in the foundation subjects is based on the completion of worksheets. These are sometimes, but not always, matched to the needs of the pupils and prevent them from having regular opportunities to make a personal response in writing. The school should raise the profile of writing, including the promotion of extended writing and the development of detail. Writing tasks should be built into work in subjects such as science, history and geography. Pupils' writing skills will benefit from opportunities to write for a wide variety of purposes and audiences.

81. In formal English work, pupils are encouraged to give appropriate consideration to punctuation, grammar and spelling but are given too few opportunities to develop their own writing. Teacher expectations are insufficiently high in spelling, mistakes are not sufficiently identified. Standards of presentation and handwriting are variable across the school and for many children they are unsatisfactory. Cursive writing is being developed and there are plans to develop a shared policy with the local middle school feeder schools. Untidy handwriting and presentation of work does not fit in with the school's ethos of effort and care in work.

82. The quality of teaching is good overall and this has a significant impact on the pupils' achievements, their attitudes to work and their productivity. In the most effective lessons seen, there was a good pace, high expectations and a good quality of learning; pupils were making good progress. Work in exercise books indicates that sometimes the same activity is set for all pupils which does not sufficiently meet the needs of all the pupils. Although work is marked regularly the quality is inconsistent, the best providing helpful comments which move learning forward. The teaching now needs to target the development of writing across the curriculum.

83. Although the literacy hour, now a routine part of school life, has been effectively implemented, it can now benefit from review to determine which aspects are working best. The strategy has been adapted to the needs of the school and the Key Stage 2 work benefits significantly from teaching in two small, discrete year groups. There are times when the time given for talking to the whole group goes on too long, when pupils are more than ready to actively undertake their learning tasks. Although the teaching is well supported by the classroom assistants, there are times during the literacy hour when more effective use could be made of their support, with less time spent in a passive role. Teachers make use of an interesting range of texts and progressively develop phonic skills, an area in which they show good technical competence. Although teachers use a consistent method of planning, this could more clearly identify opportunities for assessment.

84. The new headteacher is co-ordinating and leading the subject well. The level of resourcing is good for fiction but there is a need for more non-fiction books. Pupils could benefit from more opportunities to develop word processing skills. Wider provision of both hardware and software would better enable skills to be practised and information to be accessed. Good use is being made of the national strategy and useful policies on guided reading and writing have just been developed. Good use is made of both a standardised reading test and the optional national tests. There is a need to develop clearer assessment strategies to enable the school to closely monitor the attainment and progress of pupils. There are firm plans to monitor and evaluate teaching in the literacy hour. This can provide feedback and targets for development as part of the school's clear drive to raise standards of teaching and learning.

MATHEMATICS

85. Evidence indicates that standards in mathematics have risen since the last inspection when

they were judged to be average. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 at the time of this inspection were judged to be sound and broadly in line with national averages. This overall judgement is influenced by the number of pupils with special educational needs in the relatively small year group but does not reflect the standards of attainment for 1999 and 2000 when attainment was higher than that observed during the inspection. Standards at the end of Years 3 and 4 are above what could be expected; the pupils' good progress has been maintained since the end of Key Stage 1. The pupils are in line to achieve the key objectives for Years 3 and 4 of the National Numeracy Strategy and a number will exceed these objectives. Over the last three years, boys' performance in mathematics has exceeded the national average for their age group whilst the performance of girls has fallen below the national average for their age group. There are no obvious reasons for this apparent underachievement by girls but nevertheless the school is reviewing this situation.

86. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils can count sets of objects reliably and use mental recall of addition and subtraction facts up to 10. They gain understanding of the place value of each digit in a number and use this to order numbers up to 100; some can work with larger numbers. Pupils name basic shapes correctly and can use standard measures of length and weight. They interpret pictograms and use simple fractions and right angles.

87. By the end of Year 4, the pupils' good progress enables them to have a good understanding of the two, three, four, five and ten times multiplication tables and to choose both appropriate number operations and ways of calculating to solve problems. They use known number facts and place value to add and subtract mentally using pairs of two-digit whole numbers. There are some pupils who attain above these competencies. There is some evidence of pupils using information and communication technology to support work in mathematics but the use of technology in mathematics is currently underdeveloped.

88. The quality of teaching, which is higher than that described in the previous report, is sound and sometimes good. Lessons begin with a brisk mental mathematics session which ensures that pupils are well focused and interested. Teachers give clear explanations and questioning is effective in challenging and reinforcing the main points of the lesson. The teachers are familiar with the national strategy which they apply effectively. Good use is made of prescribed planning formats. The management of pupils is good, although there are a few times when too long is spent in talking to the class as a whole and too little time is spent on pupils working at their mathematical tasks. The marking of work is variable; it is better when pupils are given a clear idea of how they can improve their work. Group work is planned according to pupils' ability, although this part of the lesson works best when there are other adults to support the groups. Splitting the Year 3 and 4 pupils into two groups with separate teachers for the numeracy session works very well and enables the pupils to make good progress.

89. The teaching has a clear impact on the pupils' response to the work and the standards they reach. They are keen to do well and work co-operatively with each other. There are times when the presentation of work is very untidy. Good provision is usually made for the pupils with special educational needs who make sound progress. The classroom assistants provide good support.

90. The subject is well resourced and regular homework is set. Now that the numeracy hour is well established there is a need to review its effectiveness. The school should introduce the monitoring of teaching in mathematics through lesson observations with feedback and targets for development. Some assessments are undertaken through a commercial test and the optional national tests but more needs to be done to develop this area to enable the effective monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress, with target setting and higher expectations. There is a clear commitment in the school to raise standards of teaching and learning.

SCIENCE

91. In 2000, teacher assessments of standards at the end of Key Stage 1 were very high compared to those of other schools nationally. The numbers of pupils achieving the higher level, level 3, was average. This is an improvement on the last inspection. At the end of Year 4

pupils are attaining levels above those expected for their age. Data shows that over the past four years there has been a trend of improvement. Attainment varies within cohorts and from the inspection evidence the current 7 year olds will not perform as well although the teaching and planning are effective. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress.

92. In Year 1, pupils learn about the way heat changes some materials, for example, clay. In Year 2, they learn that ice melts and turns from solid to liquid form. They place the ice in a variety of different places to see how quickly each melts, realising that it will melt more quickly if it is warmer. They discover the effect of heat on substances and enjoy watching a balloon expand when it fills with the gas given off when sugar and yeast are mixed with warm water. Year 3 and 4 pupils are very good at investigating and find out about forces, including upward thrusts. They experiment with rolling objects down a wooden ramp and time their path, making sensible suggestions as to the cause and effect. They make parachutes and discuss their flight path, identifying ways to ensure that when comparing the flight of different parachutes it is a fair test. They make spinners and consider the position of the wings to have the most effect on the upthrust of air.

93. All the pupils are very enthusiastic about the subject as most lessons have a practical approach. Their learning is particularly enhanced when they are given opportunities to investigate for themselves following written instructions rather than listening to teacher instructions for too long. They work very hard, utilise previous learning and take a pride in their achievements. They show very good co-operative skills when working in small groups and independence in tackling the problems. Younger pupils are inclined to grow restless when required to sit for too long.

94. Teaching is good overall and ranges from excellent to satisfactory. Excellent teaching is characterised by well structured practical sessions, which have a brisk pace. Where the teaching is less effective, teachers do not provide sufficient practical opportunities for all pupils to be fully engaged in the task and the tasks are insufficiently structured to ensure the appropriate concepts are clearly understood. For example, ice balloons are a stimulating starting point but the concepts are not developed systematically. Staff manage pupils well, providing good role models and showing the pupils respect. There is no written evidence of ongoing assessment which informs future planning. The analysis of pupils' work indicates that there is sometimes too great a reliance on the completion of photocopied work sheets that do not encourage pupils to independently present their work to the highest possible standards. There is insufficient expectation that correct scientific spelling is used. All staff use questioning techniques effectively.

95. Long and medium term planning is based on the national guidance and is effective. The policy is in need of review and there are plans to do so. The subject is adequately resourced with a plan to audit resources to fit in with the two year rolling programme of topics. The co-ordinator has not been given the opportunity to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in the past and therefore currently does not have an impact on practice. Staff work well together and there is good informal support. There are insufficient assessment procedures in place, nor are good records of pupil's progress kept and analysed to ensure that all pupils make the maximum progress of which they are capable.

96. Since the last inspection standards and the quality of teaching at Key Stage 2 have

improved. There has been no significant improvement in the role of the co-ordinator in monitoring the subject nor have assessment procedures been put in place. These are important areas for development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

97. Standards in information and communication technology are sound and in line with what could be expected nationally. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The school is beginning to make good use of the national guidance for its scheme of work.

98. Younger pupils are aware that computer programs use sounds, text and pictures to convey meaning. They match words and pictures. Older Year 1 and all Year 2 pupils use a word processor to produce sentences that communicate meaning. They are beginning to produce a set of instructions to move a programmable toy around a route. They are able to enter information into a graphing package and use a graphics package to create a picture. They are able to combine them to present graphs, which also make use of colour. Year 3 and Year 4 pupils search a CD-ROM purposefully to find information; for example, about the weather around the world. They receive and reply to e-mails. Good use is being made of the school's new digital camera.

99. Pupils enjoy their work and are keen to participate. They are knowledgeable about some procedures and they are able to articulate instructions so that the class teacher can follow them during class lessons. They are confident in their approach. There is real excitement in receiving e-mails from as far away as the Falkland Islands and frustration when, due to the systems in place, they are not able to access the Internet during their designated session.

100. Teaching is satisfactory. Staff are gradually becoming more confident and knowledgeable about the subject. The organisation of resources does not facilitate effective teaching strategies. There are a small number of computers in each classroom and although this enables teachers to use the resource to support other areas of the curriculum for small groups, it does not allow the specific skills and techniques to be taught to all the pupils together. The teacher demonstrating with the assistance of pupils is not effective. The school improvement plan identifies the significant development of resources

101. The curriculum has improved through the introduction of recent planning strategies. Staff have attended training and this is ongoing. Currently the school improvement plan includes appropriate developments for the subject. There is no monitoring or evaluation of the provision. Regular assessment procedures are not in place and there is no record of pupil progress. There has been a satisfactory improvement in standards and provision since the last inspection although more remains to be done.

ART AND DESIGN

102. The previous inspection was critical of both the art curriculum and the teaching. Although recent national initiatives have determined priorities for school in other areas of curriculum development, the school now needs to target its art and design work in order to improve the provision.

103. At Key Stage 1, pupils paint self-portraits and make colourful observational drawings of fruit and vegetables. They illustrate the Gunpowder Plot through drawings and create posters on food

safety. They gain from some opportunities to experiment with colour mixing to create their own paintings. Older pupils draw oil pastel portraits of class members. They create drawings, paintings and fabric collages of flowers, plants and leaves.

104. At Key Stage 2, pupils create computer generated pictures and illustrate the story of Grace Darling with charcoal drawings; they experiment with lino prints. Looking at pair and group portraits by various artists, they create their own 'double portraits'.

105. During the inspection no art and design lessons were observed, mainly because art is covered briefly every other half-term, alternating with design and technology. There is little evidence, both in the work seen on display and in the planning, of the use of a good variety of media, of three-dimensional work and of making use of the work of different artists. The art provision is very arbitrary with little systematic development and practice of skills. Insufficient progress is made from year to year.

106. The previous report's observations that 'pupils are given few opportunities to develop skills and techniques' and 'few opportunities to practise these skills' are still appropriate. Some use is being made of the nationally prescribed scheme of work but much remains to be done. Resources should be developed and art and design needs to be incorporated into other aspects of the curriculum, such as in the topic work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

107. Standards of attainment are sound throughout the school. Since the previous inspection they have improved at Key Stage 2. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily, although skills are not being developed systematically.

108. The youngest pupils learn how to make a fruit salad and progress to discussing the importance of eating five pieces of fruit or vegetables a day. They use this link with science to collect data on how many pieces of fruit or vegetables they have eaten already that day. They learn to present the information in the form of a graph. Year 1 and Year 2 pupils design and make fruit or vegetable dishes for a particular group of people; for example, babies who need soft food. They consider the occasion during which the food would be consumed. They are able to draw up a list of skills they would need in the preparation of the food, such as chopping, coring and grating and identify the utensils they may need. They suggest strawberry cheesecake, carrot cake and apple pie, which they are able to prepare and cook with effective adult help. At Key Stage 2, working with wooden rods, rolled newspaper and mod-roc, pupils design and make figures to be part of a Nativity scene. They are able to make measured cuts to provide jointed limbs, join with butterfly clips and ensure the model stands.

109. Pupils enjoy their work. The youngest pupils get restless when they have been sitting for too long. Older Key Stage 1 pupils work well together. They are able to sensibly join into friendship groups of mixed gender. They collaborate well and discuss suggestions put forward, listening to one another's point of view. They enjoy making the produce.

110. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Planning takes account of national guidance but some objectives are insufficiently focused and relevant. Staff use effective strategies to develop co-operation during group work and they participate in the processes, providing good role models. Questioning is used well to recap on previous learning.

111. The school has recently adopted the national guidance as a basis for curriculum planning

and this has not yet fully impacted on the curriculum provision. The subject is taught half termly, alternating with art and design. There is need to develop resources. The subject is not monitored nor are pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding assessed. There has recently been some improvement since the last inspection but this is insufficient to have made a significant improvement to either the provision or the standards.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

112. Standards in geography and history are in line with what could be expected throughout the school. These are similar findings to the last inspection, except in history where standards have improved at Key Stage 2. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress.

113. The school alternates the teaching of geography and history, but includes work from both subjects where appropriate, using the subject title of the humanities. This is a useful strategy providing pupils with a range of different information to enhance their learning. The main focus during the inspection was geography.

114. The youngest pupils learn about different places, following the travels of Barnaby Bear, who sends postcards to school from distant lands. On receipt of the card they talk about the information it contains; for example, they are able to elicit that he flew to New York by aeroplane and that it takes about eight hours to fly there. They learn the position of the United States of America on the world map and they look at the different buildings on the postcard and compare them with local buildings. In history, they can answer why, what and when questions about Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot. Older Key Stage 1 pupils develop their mapping skills by drawing plans and maps of the locality. Their learning is enhanced through a walk around the area close to the school, where they use the school's digital camera to take photographs of what they have seen and then use the computer and printer to reproduce them in the classroom. They locate their own address. These pupils learn about Grace Darling, her efforts to save shipwrecked sailors and her bravery. They visit the nearby town of Bamburgh and enhance their learning by visiting the museum documenting her exploits.

115. At Key Stage 2, pupils learn about the weather around the world. Teaching makes very good use of local contacts to show journeys to Nepal and the Falkland Islands. Through the direct contact of local people living and working there, pupils are able to understand the similarities and differences between their own life and town and life in the Falkland Islands. They learn of the advantages and disadvantages to different means of travel, work expectations and weather patterns. They access information from a CD-ROM about Shackleton's expedition to the South Pole and subsequent shipwreck due to the ice crushing his ship, the *Endurance*, in 1915.

116. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning as it directly relates to their own lives. They are keen to participate and try hard to do their best. Their presentation improves when the expectations are such that they know they are contributing to a group project to be displayed, for example, a plan of the area.

117. The quality of teaching is good. The stimulating relevant tasks support learning effectively. Staff are well prepared and make very good use of resources. Homework is used effectively to support pupils' research skills.

118. The school has recently introduced the national guidance for planning the curriculum and this has yet to impact on standards. There has been a satisfactory improvement in the standards in

history at Key Stage 2 and in developing guidance for geography through the introduction of the national guidance.

MUSIC

119. During the inspection the small number of lessons observed at Key Stage 1 were mainly concerned with singing and percussion playing. No lessons were seen at Key Stage 2. There was insufficient evidence to make firm judgements on standards in the two strands of learning of composition and listening and appraising. The school's planning indicates that, over time, pupils gain the appropriate experiences. Tuneful, enthusiastic singing was observed during assemblies. The limited evidence indicates that standards are similar to those described in the previous report.

120. At Key Stage 1, pupils learn a wide range of songs, including ones for collective worship. They begin to recognise the main elements of music. They can identify fast and slow and high and low sounds and can identify the sounds of some instruments. They experience a range of percussion instruments and can compose simple percussion accompaniments to songs. Pupils start to develop a musical vocabulary and become aware of melody and the rhythm of words. They are able to follow a graphic score. They develop good listening and remembering skills. Some pupils show good musical ability.

121. Older pupils explore the duration of both vocal and instrumental sounds. They play percussion instruments with control and care, paying attention to dynamics, tempo and pitch. They further develop their skills of composition. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are able to listen carefully to, and make simple appraisals of, sounds and pieces of music. They sing a range of songs confidently and can play simple pieces and accompaniments showing an awareness of pulse. By the end of Year 4, their skills are becoming well developed.

122. The pupils observed responded well with both interest and concentration. Pupils showed good listening skills. They sang expressively and co-operated well with one another. They were confident in performances and enjoyed singing together especially in action songs and nursery rhymes; they enjoyed singing 'The Musical House'. Overall, pupils made sound progress in the activities observed.

123. The quality of teaching in the small number of lessons seen was good overall. The teaching generally provides good support for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Lessons are generally well prepared, have clear objectives and make appropriate use of resources. The effectiveness of practical sessions is enhanced in those lessons where every pupil has access to an instrument. The quality of the learning benefits from the very good relationships and the enthusiasm of the teachers.

124. There is a need to review the policy. Although some use is made of a commercial scheme and the new national planning guidance, the school should now develop its own scheme of work. The subject is well resourced with tuned and untuned percussion instruments. Weekly hymn practices benefit from piano accompaniment provided by a volunteer. Pupils enjoy performing in concerts at Christmas and Easter; a number benefited from taking part in the local education authority's 'Concert for 20,000 Voices'.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

125. The previous report was critical of the standards, the progress, the response of the pupils and some of the teaching in this subject. The quality of work has now improved so that these criticisms are now inappropriate.

126. At Key Stage 1, pupils develop and practise the skills of travelling with, sending and receiving a ball. In dance work linked to music, pupils make short and long movements with their bodies to the sounds of the tambour and the cymbal. In gymnastics, pupils gain an increasing control over their bodies as they explore travelling and learn that different parts of the body can be used to support its weight; for example, using hands and feet. They stretch, curl and balance and can practise, refine and begin to link a series of movements using different parts of the body. They show good awareness of space and levels. By the end of the key stage, pupils can link a series of actions and are able to simply evaluate their own work and that of others.

127. In Years 3 and 4, the pupils carry out gymnastic movements on the apparatus with control, showing good co-operation and an awareness of personal safety. In swimming lessons at the local sports centre, attainment is very good with a number of pupils showing strong, controlled strokes and good technique. By the end of Year 4, virtually every pupil can swim effectively.

128. The pupils enjoy their work and generally make good progress; they particularly enjoy swimming where they make very good progress. Pupils show positive attitudes and behave well, listening to instructions carefully and becoming involved in their tasks. They show perseverance in planning, developing and refining their movements and happily show their work to the rest of the class. They work co-operatively with good pace and show consideration and support for each other. In team games they take turns and show team spirit.

129. The pupils are generally well taught. Good use is made of warming up for, and recovery from, exercise. Teachers sometimes join in the activities enthusiastically. Although a number of planning formats are used lessons are usually well organised and taught at a good pace. Teachers expect good behaviour, offer appropriate encouragement and praise and have appropriately high expectations. Good use is made of demonstration when self-esteem is raised and pupils respond to encouragement and make simple appraisals. They are encouraged to be reflective; 'think about what you have been learning' says one teacher. Very good teaching was seen from the teachers at the swimming pool where enthusiasm, pace and clear instructions had a clear impact on the quality of the work.

130. Although the work benefits from a hall with a safe, clean floor it is not large enough to comfortably accommodate the largest class. The draft policy has recently been reviewed and although some use is made of the national guidance, the school should develop its own scheme of work. There are no extra-curricular activities in sport, except for the summer tennis coaching. Overall, the subject is adequately resourced and, whilst there is a reasonable playground, there is no playing field.