

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MIDDLESTONE MOOR PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Spennymoor

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 131886

Headteacher: Mr W H Hornsby

Reporting inspector: Mr Joe Fitzpatrick  
19874

Dates of inspection: 29 January - 1 February 2001

Inspection number: 230404  
Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary School and Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Durham Street Middlestone Moor Spennymoor Durham
Postcode:	DL16 7AT
Telephone number:	01388 816351
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev Canon JS Bain
Dates of previous inspections:	January 1994 and September 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
19874	Joe Fitzpatrick	Registered inspector	English; Religious education	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements; How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve?
13808	Mickie Jacobs	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for it's pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents and carers?
2607	Brian Griffiths	Team inspector	Mathematics; Information and communication technology; Design and technology; Geography; Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage	
14591	Richard Perkin	Team inspector	Science; Art and design; History; Music; Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Middlestone Moor Primary School serves 181 boys and girls aged four to eleven and 52 children of nursery age who attend for half a day each, either in the morning or the afternoon. In all, 80 children attend the nursery and reception classes.

There are 51 pupils eligible for free school meals, the equivalent of 28.3 per cent, which is above the national average. There are only two pupils of ethnic minority background and no pupils speak English as an additional language. Twenty-four per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs, above the national average, and 2.2 per cent have statements of special educational needs, also above average.

The school was formed in September 1999 from the amalgamation of the former Spennymoor West infants school and Nursery Unit and the former Middlestone Moor junior school and is situated temporarily on the site of the former junior school. The former infants school was damaged by fire in August 1997, and when asbestos was discovered a little later, it was decided to house the infants in a local secondary school building. The infant pupils were later moved to temporary accommodation on the site of the junior school. A new purpose built primary school building is being built on the site of the former infants school and it is planned for the new building to be opened in September 2001.

The fire and its aftermath caused a good deal of disruption to the education of pupils in the new primary school, particularly to the cohort of infants entering the school in 1997, who are now in Year 3 of the primary school. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school fluctuates from year to year. For example, in 2000 attainment was close to average, in 1999 it was below average and in 1998 it was close to average. Overall attainment of the present cohort is close to average. The areas from which the majority of pupils come suffer from a considerable degree of economic and social deprivation.

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

This is an effective school which provides a sound education for its pupils. The governors, senior managers and teachers have successfully forged a new school from two previous schools. Teaching is mainly good and much is very good. The results of eleven-year-old pupils in national tests improved considerably between 1999 and 2000. The school gives sound value for money.

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

- Standards in physical education of eleven-year-old pupils are above the national expectation;
- Standards in English, mathematics and science of eleven-year-olds are in line with the national average;
- Provision for pupils' personal development is good and provision for their moral development is very good;
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good in nursery and reception classes; in other classes provision is good;
- There are very good procedures for maintaining and promoting good behaviour.

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

- The standards in English and mathematics of seven-year-old pupils are below the national average;
- Standards in design and technology, geography, history and music of pupils aged eleven are below the national expectations;
- The total amount of time devoted to teaching each week falls short of national recommendations;
- Times allocated to the teaching of most subjects are inappropriate;
- Attendance is below an acceptable level and too many pupils arrive late for school;
- The school development plan addresses too many issues and lacks sufficient focus and direction;
- Not all subject co-ordinators are enabled to take sufficient responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning and the standards in their subject throughout the school.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This school has not been inspected before. Most of the issues identified in the previous inspections of the former infants school (inspected January 1994) and of the former junior school (September 1995) have been addressed. Most of all, the creation of a new all through primary school has improved the stability and continuity of learning of pupils while the improved accommodation of the new building is likely to improve conditions for teaching and learning.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	N/a	N/a	E	D
mathematics	N/a	N/a	C	B
science	N/a	N/a	D	C

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

The results in reading of seven-year-olds in national tests in 2000 were very low and results in writing and in mathematics were well below national averages; these results were also well below the averages in similar school (ie schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals). The education of this cohort of pupils underwent considerable disruption because of the fire and its aftermath. In national tests in 1998 and 1999, the results of seven-year-olds in the former infants school were above and close to national averages respectively.

In 2000, the proportion of eleven-year-olds achieving the expected standard in English was the same as the national figure but the proportion achieving above that level was smaller than was the case nationally; in consequence, the average points score per pupil was well below the national average. In the same year, the school's results in mathematics were in line with national results at both the expected level and the higher level while in science the school's results were below those achieved nationally.

The inspection judgement relates to a different cohort of pupils and indicates that in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science the attainment of eleven-year-old pupils in the school is close to national averages. In religious education and information and communications technology (ICT) also the attainment of pupils in Year 6 is close to the national expectation. The attainment of these pupils is above expectations in physical education, in line with expectations in art and below expectations in design and technology, geography, history and music. These lower than expected standards are linked to the fact that the allocations of time for the teaching of these subjects are too small. This, in turn, is linked to the excessive amount of time that is allocated to English and literacy. Good teaching results in the progress made by pupils in both the infants and juniors being generally sound.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Generally good. Pupils are well motivated to learn. They want to do well and try hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall. Pupils generally listen well and are orderly and polite. They take pride in their school and their conduct is good.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Teachers and pupils have attitudes of mutual respect which have a positive impact on standards and learning.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Attendance in Year 6 is poor. There is also too much

	lateness in the mornings.
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## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching in English and mathematics is mainly good and there is a significant proportion that is very good. Good teaching is helping pupils develop sound skills in literacy and number work by the time they move onto secondary school. The school makes good teaching provision for pupils with identified special educational needs and generally meets the needs of pupils of different levels of attainment. About half of the teaching in lessons seen was good, about a quarter was satisfactory and another quarter was very good or excellent. In 47 lessons seen, teaching was never less than satisfactory. Pupils' learning was generally good. However, in some subjects where the allocation of teaching time was insufficient, coverage was not sufficiently deep and pupils' learning suffered in consequence.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory for nursery and reception pupils. Unsatisfactory for infants and juniors. Too much time is devoted to English and literacy with a consequent reduction in the time devoted to several other subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. There is good in-class support and teachers are sensitive to their needs in lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. There are good quality acts of worship in assemblies and very good opportunities for the discussion of moral issues in several subjects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Overall satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are sound. Procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainment are not sufficiently systematic outside of literacy and numeracy.
Partnership with parents	Satisfactory. Parents are generally satisfied with the school's provision for their children. Information on pupils' progress and attainment in annual reports is not sufficiently clear.

The total amount of time devoted to teaching each week falls short of the national recommendation, in Years 1 and 2 by around 35 minutes and in Years 3-6 by about an hour. In addition, an excessive amount of time - in excess of 40 per cent of the total curriculum time in Years 5 and 6 - is allocated to the teaching of English and literacy. When combined with the large proportion of time devoted to mathematics - in excess of 20 per cent in all year groups - this leaves too little time to be shared by a range of other subjects, with the result that some aspects of these subjects are not taught in sufficient depth. The school provides "booster classes" for selected pupils in Year 6, aimed at helping these pupils achieve more highly.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher has been largely instrumental in bringing together two schools with a cohesive set of policies. However, the school development plan is too large and attempts to address too many issues at once. Not all subject co-ordinators are enabled to take sufficient responsibility of their subject throughout the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are committed to the success of this new school. They have worked hard to provide the school with a unified set of policies, have made a good start in setting objectives for the headteacher and are committed to raising standards of attainment.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has begun to collect and analyse data in order to set targets and has good systems for identifying selected pupils in Years 5 and 6 and promoting their attainment. There is not yet sufficient use of data to drive up standards right through the school.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of various funds to promote pupils' education. The priorities in the school development plan are not sufficiently linked to the school budget.

There is a commitment to school improvement which is shared by teachers and governors. There are sufficient teachers to cover the subjects taught. Teaching and learning resources are satisfactory. The present separation of the main building and the temporary accommodation creates some delays and inconvenience. Some classrooms, including the nursery room and some rooms in the main building are too small for the number of children. The school applies the principles of "best value" when making purchases.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The merging of the two former schools to form a single primary school</li> <li>• The good standards of behaviour</li> <li>• The school is approachable</li> <li>• Children like coming to school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A more interesting range of activities outside lessons</li> <li>• Visits to a wider range of places of interest</li> <li>• Prior notification of themes and topics to be studied</li> </ul>

The inspectors support the views of parents. Prior notification of themes and topics would help parents to become more involved in their children's learning. The school takes part in a range of football and netball fixtures but there are relatively few clubs or other activities, especially in the infants.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

- 1 The attainment of pupils on entry to the school fluctuates from year to year. On the evidence of an LEA assessment test administered in the school each year, pupils' attainment was close to average in 1998, below average in 1999 and close to average in 2000. Taken overall, the attainment of the pupils when they join the reception class is close to average.
- 2 Results of pupils aged seven in national tests in 2000 – the only year in which pupils have sat national tests as part of the new primary school – were very low in reading and well below the national average in writing and mathematics; results were also well below national averages in comparison with results in similar schools. However, the education of this cohort of pupils had been seriously disrupted by the fire in 1997 and its aftermath. Of the two previous cohorts of pupils in the former infants school, that in 1999 had achieved results close to the national average overall while that in 1998 achieved results better than the national average.
- 3 Results of pupils aged eleven in national tests in 2000 were well below the national average in English, in line with the average in mathematics and below average in science; when compared with results in similar schools, results were below average in English, above average in mathematics and in line with the average in science. The results obtained by pupils in the school in English at the nationally expected level (level 4) were the same as the national results but at the higher level (level 5) the school's results were considerably lower than national results; in consequence, the average points score per pupil in the school was lower than the national figure. The results in national tests of eleven-year-olds were considerably better in 2000 than they were in 1999 and previous years, partly because of the ability of this cohort but also because the school had assessed weaknesses in selected pupils' work and had worked hard to overcome them. In both infants and juniors, the achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good, assisted by good quality individual education plans and support from teachers and assistants; the achievement of special educational needs pupils under six is very good.
- 4 The inspection judgement is that in English and mathematics the standards attained by seven-year-olds are below the national average and the standards attained by eleven-year-olds are in line with the national average. The standards of both seven and eleven-year-olds in science are in line with the national average. Pupils make steady progress in the infants and reach standards consistent with their earlier performance. There is, however, a relatively long tail of lower attaining pupils in this group. Especially good improvement is made in the upper part of the juniors where teachers deliberately tackle diagnosed weaknesses in pupils' work. Overall progress in the juniors is sound. For example, a good proportion of eleven-year olds can read with fluency, accuracy and understanding and set out their ideas clearly in writing; in mathematics most have developed a sound grasp of decimals and fractions; and in science they have a sound grasp of how to sort and classify objects and they make predictions and test their accuracy against outcomes. However, there remain some pupils whose standards of attainment are relatively low.
- 5 In information and communications technology (ICT) and religious education, the standards attained by eleven-year-olds are in line with national expectations or the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus of Religious Education. For example, older pupils can use CD Roms and the Internet to discover information on major rivers in the world;

in religious education they have developed sound factual knowledge of some of the main features and personalities of major world faiths.

- 6 In other subjects, by the time they are eleven pupils achieve standards above the national expectation in physical education, standards in line with the national expectation in art and standards below the national expectation in design and technology, geography, history and music. These lower than expected standards are linked with the fact that the allocations of time to the teaching of the subjects concerned are too little. This is linked to the excessive amount of time devoted to the teaching of English and literacy and the shortness of the teaching week and results in some aspects of these other subjects not being covered adequately.

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

- 7 Pupils' attitudes to their work and all aspects of school life are good. They mostly behave well and co-operate well with each other and with adults. This has a positive impact on the quality of learning. Attendance is unsatisfactory.
- 8 Pupils enjoy coming to school. They work hard and show real interest in their lessons. In mathematics, reception children are curious when deciding if objects are heavier or lighter before weighing them to see if their predictions are correct. Year 5 and 6 pupils give good attention to presentation in their literacy work on myths and legends. Pupils in Year 3 are articulate and imaginative when discussing the Angel of the North in art. Year 6 pupils enjoy themselves in physical education, responding to challenge and working with good control and discipline. Pupils of all ages concentrate well. They listen to their teachers and to each other and are eager to answer questions and show their knowledge. The whole school paid good attention in an assembly led by the local vicar.
- 9 Pupils' behaviour is mostly good. Pupils are polite, friendly and happy to talk and explain their work. The majority of parents are pleased with behaviour in the school. Very occasionally, a few pupils challenge teachers through misbehaving in class and there is occasional jostling in queues and in the playground. Any poor behaviour is dealt with well according to the agreed sanctions that all pupils understand. At break and lunchtime, pupils of all ages play well together. The dining room is sociable and well ordered. Pupils respond well to midday supervisors who record any incidents of misbehaviour. Older pupils understand that they may not play football on the playground because of the risk of hurting 'the little ones'. Pupils discuss friends, trust and the importance of valuing everyone in personal, social, health and citizenship education time (PSHCE). In Year 1, specific reference is made to the way some pupils behave towards each other and they understand when they have not been kind. Bullying is rare and staff and pupils are confident that any incidents are dealt with firmly and fairly. There are no exclusions.
- 10 Older pupils are given good opportunities to take on responsibility, which they carry out with pride. They act as corridor prefects, classroom monitors and librarians and help look after younger pupils. Pupils throughout the school are expected to tidy up their tables after activities and to keep their classrooms tidy. Pupils have been consulted about playground planning for the new school. They work well in pairs and small groups, as well as independently. In Year 2 science, pairs of pupils enjoy discovering which materials stretch and if the materials return to their original shape. Year 5 and 6 pupils have 'talking partners' to consult in literacy. However, opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning are limited. They do not often undertake their own research or investigations and resources are not always provided for them. Relationships amongst pupils of all ages are mostly good. Pupils are responsive to all adults working with them in school.

- 11 Attendance is below the national average and is unsatisfactory. Total attendance for the autumn term improved a little on the previous year. Year 6 attendance at an average of around 90 percent is comparatively poor compared to the attendance of every other year group except reception, and is well below nationally expected levels. Punctuality is barely satisfactory and a number of pupils arrive late each day with the result that some lessons cannot start on time. Parents understand their responsibility for informing school of reasons for absence and most do so promptly. Registers are clearly marked and attendance figures carefully collated.

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

- 12 Of the 47 lessons observed, teaching in about half was good, in about a quarter it was very good or excellent and in another quarter it was satisfactory; no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers plan their lessons with care, setting out clear learning objectives and often sharing these with the pupils. Teachers are sensitive to how well pupils understand what is being said or done in lessons and are quick to adjust content or approach to ensure that all pupils learn at an appropriate rate. Support teachers and assistants often work with lower attaining pupils or those on the register of special educational needs to ensure that they keep abreast of the lesson and to help them complete tasks effectively and make good progress. The pace of most lessons is suitably brisk but there is some erosion of time in the first lesson of the day because of lateness and at other times when pupils make their way from other subjects in different parts of the building.
- 13 Most lessons are well structured and unfold in carefully managed phases. Teachers are skilled in eliciting key terms from pupils and entering them on the board to help consolidate their learning. There is good use of question and answer to build up points on the board and, in the best lessons, to challenge pupils to think for themselves. In one excellent science lesson, older pupils were challenged to think of categories for sorting materials and objects. The materials used challenged pupils of all levels of attainment and promoted lively discussion and much hard thinking. Pupils grappled with the subtleties of classification and were rewarded with a good measure of success. On occasion, the teacher's questions allow pupils to offer only very short answers and opportunities for them to ask questions of their own or to give sustained oral responses or to draw on their own experiences are not provided. There is a good emphasis in numeracy sessions on solving problems by means of mental calculation and in literacy sessions pupils learn how sentences are composed and improve their knowledge about language. Teachers frequently make good use of a final whole class discussion to revisit points on the board, reinforce pupils' learning and pull together what has been taught in the lesson.
- 14 Teachers employ a good range of teaching styles and methods to promote pupils' learning – an improvement in the juniors since the previous inspection report. There is brainstorming, whole class discussion, as well as the use of small group work and work in pairs. In many lessons, several pupils work on related activities using the classroom computers. These approaches help to involve pupils in the lesson and the generally good use made of assistants helps to ensure that work is well matched to the needs and ability levels of different groups. In science and other lessons, however, there is often a lack of time for pupils to develop skills of independent inquiry and research, a point noted in the last inspection report. In some lessons the pace of work slows significantly when pupils leave off discussion and debate and get down to a writing activity; in some cases little progress is made from this point onwards as pupils grapple with the mechanics of setting ideas down on paper. In other classes, however, teachers help pupils with their writing by planning carefully delimited writing tasks or by providing writing frames which support pupils during this part of the lesson.

- 15 In most lessons a good work atmosphere is generated. Pupils pay good attention, concentrate and persevere till the end of the lesson. There are good attitudes of mutual respect between teachers and pupils and incidents of time wasting or inattention are relatively rare. Teachers know pupils well and make good use of this when planning work and adjusting content to match their needs. The generally good quality of the teaching is helping pupils to make sound progress in both the infants and the juniors.

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

- 16 While the curriculum provided by the school meets statutory requirements, its breadth and balance for infant and junior pupils are unsatisfactory because of the relatively small amount of teaching time used and because of the way time is allocated to the different subjects. In addition, some time is wasted in moving between groups and classes in the juniors.
- 17 A very large proportion of time is spent on English and literacy so that subjects such as science, art and design, design and technology, geography, history and music do not have enough time allocated to develop pupils' skills sufficiently; this is particularly true for the more able pupils. The curriculum is less broad and balanced than at the last inspection, though opportunities for writing and information and communication technology have been extended since then. The issue raised at the last inspection about the lack of development of specific skills in art, design and technology, history and geography in the infants has only partly been addressed because the subjects are not allocated enough time and full coverage of the curriculum is difficult. The school makes good provision for the teaching of personal, social, health and citizenship education through timetabled sessions, school assemblies and religious education, science and physical education lessons; sex education and drugs awareness are included in this programme. Sound strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy have been introduced and are beginning to have an impact on raising pupils' standards. Planning procedures are good, particularly for English and mathematics, and are consistently applied across the school.
- 18 The imbalance in the time allocated to various subjects limits the quality and range of learning opportunities for the infant and junior pupils within the school timetable. Junior pupils have the chance to take part in a limited range of activities outside of school time but there are no such opportunities for the infants; a significant number of parents are rightly concerned that there are not enough out-of-school activities. For older pupils, the football club is starting again soon, a cross-country running club operates at times through the winter and netball is available in the summer term; in addition, there is a well-supported choir and a health club. The learning of pupils throughout the school is enriched through good links with the local community. The school makes effective use of its healthy connections with local industry and is well supported in this by a local education authority unit. There are constructive relationships with local churches, which benefit from visits by the school choir, and the school makes very good use of a wide range of sporting links to keep staff up-to-date with the latest training methods and to upgrade equipment. The curriculum is enhanced by a variety of visits and visitors. The partnership with neighbouring schools on, for example, developing skills in information and communication technology, is also beneficial. An annual residential visit for pupils in Years 5 and 6 enhances learning in geography, history and physical education and makes a good contribution to pupils' personal and social development. Links with other schools are satisfactory. Year 6 experienced science and music lessons at the high school in the autumn term. They visit for a full taster day before transferring. Good attention is given to pupils with special educational needs who have extra visits.

- 19 Provision for children under the age of six is good. There is an effective and appropriate curriculum for these children in both nursery and reception classes which covers all the required areas of learning. The planning of the curriculum in the nursery and reception classes is sufficiently imaginative and thorough to minimise the consequences of limited accommodation. Recently published national guidelines are being implemented effectively and work is linked well to the National Curriculum during the reception year.
- 20 Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for generally and very well provided for in the nursery and reception classes. The procedures for identifying pupils who need particular help with learning are effective and well established throughout the school. The attainment of children on entry to the nursery is carefully analysed and used very well to pinpoint the learning needs of the substantial proportion which is placed on the school's register of special educational needs. The effectiveness of this approach can be gauged by the considerable number of children who make sufficient progress no longer to need this type of support and are taken off the register within months.
- 21 The school makes good provision for pupils' personal development, reflecting the school's aims and values well. Pupils' spiritual development is enhanced by the high quality of school assemblies and by rich opportunities to reflect on the wonders of the world and on other people's feelings and ideas in lessons. One teacher very skilfully used a story about evacuees during the war to help pupils to understand other people's points of view and another science lesson supported the messages from school assemblies in promoting pupils' wonder at the sheer variety of creatures in our world. Pupils learn about other people's faiths and beliefs in religious education. The school makes very good provision for pupils' moral development, largely through the consistent application of an effective positive behaviour policy and the strong example set by staff, whose positive relationships with the pupils strongly promote good behaviour. There is good provision for equal opportunities in lessons and in school life generally. A well-understood system of rewards and sanctions is used very effectively throughout the school and no opportunity is missed to reinforce strong moral messages. Pupils' social development is effectively promoted by opportunities to take responsibility and to work together in lessons and teams. Class visits outside the school, particularly the annual residential visit, provide rich opportunities for pupils' social development. The pupils' cultural development is well promoted by opportunities to experience art, music, dance and literature in lessons and in attractive displays around the school and to learn about cultures and religions other than their own.

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

- 22 The school provides a caring environment in which pupils are encouraged to progress academically and personally.
- 23 Pupils are well cared for. Child protection procedures are understood and followed. First aid is administered with sensitivity and care and a rigorous recording system has been introduced. Regular informal health and safety checks and assessments of risk are carried out and the school recognises the need to set up formal records. Staff know pupils and their families well and they use this knowledge carefully to support individuals. Nursery children visit as part of their induction so that they are familiar with the surroundings. New children are already happy and confident. They understand routines and how they are expected to behave. In the afternoons, reception and nursery children are free to experience activities in either room. Consequently, transition to full time school is eased. Pupils in Year 6 are adequately prepared to transfer to high school, with extra visits arranged for pupils with special educational needs.
- 24 Although attendance is unsatisfactory, the school works hard to encourage regular, prompt attendance. Good attendance is rewarded on a class and individual basis. The

Education Welfare Officer provides good support for the school's own efforts and works closely with some pupils and their families. Registers are checked each day. The school is starting to record attendance data using information technology but recognises that it is not yet making sufficient use of this data to improve attendance. Not enough significance is attached to attendance levels in Year 6, which are well below average. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents stress the need to have reasons for authorising absence, but not the importance of regular, prompt attendance. Newsletters do not remind parents about attendance and punctuality frequently enough.

- 25 The school has a positive discipline policy of very good quality, with an imaginative range of rewards that motivate pupils to behave well and work hard. They earn positive points, which lead to prizes. Each class recognises a pupil of the week who is rewarded at assembly every Friday afternoon. Sanctions are clear and consistently used by all staff so pupils understand the consequences of any poor behaviour. A few difficult pupils are usually well managed. Rules, rewards and sanctions are clearly posted in both buildings. Pupils say there are few incidents of bullying or physical violence and they know what they should do if any occur.
- 26 A whole school approach to assessment and recording has been adopted and a wide range of data is starting to be used to evaluate performance. Further developments are identified in the school's self review and a detailed audit of procedures has recently been carried out. Assessment on entry is beginning to be used to track pupils' performance. In literacy and numeracy, systems for assessing pupils' attainment and progress at the top end of the juniors are having a positive impact on their results in national tests. Individual targets are set, written into pupils' books, and reviewed every two weeks. Assessment and recording are not so rigorously carried out in other subjects throughout the school. On-going assessment is sometimes used to adapt lessons and modify planning. For example, in a Year 1 Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE) lesson, pupils were not responding and the teacher therefore read them a favourite story that reflected the theme of the lesson. Similarly, the assessments made of pupils with special educational needs lead to reviews and changes in their individual education plans.

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

- 27 Parents find the school welcoming and are confident that their children are happy. They are mostly pleased with the academic and personal education their children receive. The prospectus provides clear, basic information to parents about the school's provision and expectations of pupils and parents. The governors' annual report gives a detailed summary of achievements and events during the previous twelve months. Regular newsletters inform parents about events and specific letters are appropriately sent out for special dates. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are informed of their targets and involved in reviews of individual education plans. The school also sends home leaflets about the curriculum and education, for example relating to the objectives for the nursery and reception classes relating to numeracy and reading at home, but does not send out curricular information itself. All classes in the juniors have a helpful home diary in which they record letters taken home and parents are asked to sign that they have received the letters. Parents sign reading records, with occasional brief comments relating to their child's progress. Annual reports to parents were produced last summer using a computer-generated bank of statements. The school acknowledges that these are too generalised and do not satisfactorily inform parents what their own child or children know, understand and can do or the standards they have attained. The quality of Individual targets is variable but often good. Parents are contacted if there are problems about progress, behaviour or attendance and most are confident to approach the school themselves if they have concerns about their child.



- 28 A small number of parents and grandparents actively involve themselves in the life of the school. They help in classrooms, hearing pupils read and offering support for all activities including trips and visits. Volunteer helpers feel valued and welcomed by the teaching staff. The Friends of Middlestone Moor is a core group that arranges a variety of events that are well supported and raise money for additional resources such as books and a digital camera. A recent skating evening was very successful and thoroughly enjoyed by all who took part. Some parents rightly complain that there are relatively few extra-curricular activities, especially for pupils in the infants.

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

- 29 The headteacher provides satisfactory leadership. Together with the deputy, teachers and the governors he has worked successfully to merge two schools into a single primary school and has helped to provide it with a coherent and unified set of policies. At a time of considerable upheaval and disruption for staff and pupils alike he has exercised a calming influence and has helped to ensure stability and continuity. At the same time the school's senior management team has helped the school to keep abreast of developments in education, with the successful implementation of the national literacy and numeracy strategies, for example, and more productive use of data to diagnose weaknesses in the performance of pupils in the upper juniors and the setting of targets designed to promote their attainment in national tests. This more productive use of data helped the eleven-year-olds in the school to achieve better results in national tests in 2000 than in previous years. The use of data to diagnose pupils' strengths and weaknesses and to set targets for groups and individuals now needs to be extended to all parts of the school in order to drive up standards. The headteacher is free of teaching responsibilities but on occasion devotes some of his time to relatively low grade tasks that have little or no impact on the quality of education provided or the standards being achieved.
- 30 The school development plan is a large, sprawling document, or set of documents, some typed and some handwritten. There are clear curricular aims and objectives, a review of previous plans and targets and various sections on finance, school developments and staff development. What is lacking is a sense of overview, of clear and ordered priorities and of the linking of one part with another; time-scales and success criteria are not clearly set down and the cost of individual initiatives is not clearly linked to the school budget. In general terms, the plan is not sufficiently focused and lacks a clear sense of direction. The school needs to draw up a shorter, more focused school improvement plan which sets its sights clearly on the goal of raising standards of attainment right through the school and the chief means by which the goal will be achieved. Success criteria need to be clearly identified and costs linked to the school budget. Other initiatives going forward in the school should be dealt with in other documentation.
- 31 Since two staffs were brought together in the new school, much has been achieved. For example, the national literacy and numeracy strategies have been implemented, accompanied by valuable in-service training of staff in which designated governors have taken part. The respective subject co-ordinators for English and mathematics have had the opportunity to observe the teaching of literacy and numeracy throughout the school and this has enabled them to form a confident overview of their respective subjects and to keep abreast of teaching and learning in their subjects throughout the school. This has had a positive impact on standards, especially in the older juniors. Not all subject co-ordinators, however, are as well informed or capable of influencing the teaching of their subject throughout the school in similar ways. They have had no opportunity to observe teaching in their subject throughout the school or to conduct scrutinies of pupils' work, for example. Consequently they feel that they are not well informed and are diffident about giving advice and guidance, in some cases to teachers they have only

recently come to work with. The school management needs to ensure that all subject co-ordinators have opportunities to become informed about the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects and the standards being achieved; only if they are so informed will they be able to exercise their role as co-ordinators effectively, take responsibility for their subjects throughout the school, and play their full role in the school's objective of raising standards of attainment.

- 32 The governors have played an important role in bringing two schools together and checking and approving a broad range of school policies. Most governors have undertaken appropriate training and governors for literacy, numeracy and special educational needs are in place. A sound committee structure helps the governing body to work efficiently and effectively. The headteacher makes regular, informative reports to the governing body. The Chair, who is a local vicar, visits the school regularly, conducts assemblies every week and even assists in the teaching of religious education. Appointed governors have helped the headteacher to review his personal professional objectives and with the help of an external adviser have agreed new objectives for the headteacher and drawn up a programme for reviewing progress in this matter. Governors have, however, failed in their supervision of the management of the curriculum by ensuring that sufficient time each week is devoted to the teaching of the curriculum in both infants and juniors and that an appropriate amount of time is devoted to the teaching of individual subjects. Furthermore, governors do not receive formal reports on the quality of teaching and standards being achieved based on observations carried out by senior managers and some subject co-ordinators. This reduces the information at their disposal when they discuss school issues and make decisions.
- 33 Governors receive accurate printouts of spending against income on a regular basis and are able to exercise appropriate financial controls. Although annual expenditure per pupil is relatively modest, it exceeds annual income per pupil. Nevertheless, the school is in a sound financial condition and there is a healthy sum of money carried forward each year. The school avails itself of the various funds available to support various categories of pupils. It buys in support for pupils with special educational needs from the LEA and has a part-time support teacher. It also takes advantage of the special fund to assist booster teaching. The provision of resources is satisfactory overall; computers are generally of good quality and there has been a recent infusion of books to support work in the literacy hour. The school operates the principles of "best value" when making purchases. The present separation of the temporary accommodation from the main building tends to reinforce a certain division between infant pupils and their teachers and junior pupils and their teachers; however, the school takes measures to counteract this, such as whole school assemblies and the like, and the situation is only temporary. Some classrooms in the main building and the nursery classroom in the temporary building are too small for the number of pupils taught there.
- 34 Day to day administration and financial control are secure. A recent audit report found that financial systems are based on sound principles of control and well operated in practice. The report nevertheless made a number of serious recommendations that the headteacher and clerk are in the process of implementing. The school is considering carefully how to spend funding which has been allocated for information and communication technology.

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

- 35 In order to raise standards throughout the school, the governors, headteacher and teachers should:
- Take steps to improve standards in English and mathematics achieved by seven-year-olds (paragraph 4)

- Take steps to raise standards in design and technology, geography, history and music throughout the school (paragraph 6)
- Ensure that the total time devoted to teaching in both infants and juniors complies with national recommendations (paragraph 17, 18)
- Ensure that an appropriate amount of teaching time is devoted to each subject (paragraph 17)
- Improve pupils' attendance and eradicate persistent lateness (paragraph 7,11, 24)
- Ensure that all co-ordinators take responsibility for the quality of work and the standards achieved in their subject throughout the school (paragraph 31)
- Ensure that the school improvement plan is focused clearly on strategies for raising standards and that priorities are clearly linked to success criteria and costed in the school budget (paragraph 30)

In addition to the key issues above, other less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the school's future plan of action. These are indicated in paragraphs 26, 29 and 32 as well as in subject sections.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	47
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	23	49	26			

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR - Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	26	181
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	51

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR - Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	14	44

#### English as an additional language

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

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.3
National comparative data	5.2

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	20	10	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	14	16
	Girls	5	7	6
	Total	17	21	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	56.7	70.0	73.3
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	15	15
	Girls	5	3	3
	Total	21	18	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	70.0	60.0	60.0
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	10	10	20

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	7	8	8
	Girls	8	7	7
	Total	15	15	15
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	75	75	75
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	7	7
	Girls	7	6	7
	Total	13	13	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	65.0	65.0	70.0
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	156
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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

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

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

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR - Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.7:1
Average class size	25.8

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

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	90

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	30

Number of pupils per FTE adult	13
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	387465
Total expenditure	389437
Expenditure per pupil	1928
Balance brought forward from previous year	59394
Balance carried forward to next year	57422

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	233
Number returned	119

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	36	3	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	53	44	3		
Behaviour in the school is good.	57	38	3	2	
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	50	10	1	2
The teaching is good.	58	40	1		1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	55	30	15		
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	24	1	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	34	1		1
The school works closely with parents.	45	47	8		
The school is well led and managed.	57	37	4		2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	45	3		2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	42	23	5	3

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

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

- 36 The majority of children join the nursery in the September of the year in which they become four and they attend half time - either mornings or afternoons. In the current year there was a small number of vacancies and these were filled by slightly younger children. In the following September only up to 30 children may transfer to the reception class and the remaining children join other neighbouring schools. In the reception class, children are taught in a class of 28 by a teacher who has the part-time help of a classroom support assistant.
- 37 On admission both to the nursery and again to the reception class, the attainment of each year group fluctuates, so that in some years children's attainment is above average and in other years it is below average. Overall, attainment on entry to the school is judged to be close to average but some children are of high ability and there is an above average number of children with special educational needs.
- 38 The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Higher attaining and average children are also catered for well. The curriculum is rich and varied and teaching is good; thus children's learning progresses well and by the end of the reception class, overall standards are usually up to average. The recently introduced national guidelines for the curriculum are fully understood by staff and used sensibly. As children approach the age at which they transfer to Year 1, their curriculum is increasingly influenced by the National Curriculum, thus ensuring a smooth transition to the infant stage.
- 39 As this is a newly formed school it has not been inspected previously. However, the good provision for pupils of this age seen in the infant school that became part of this new school in 1999 has been maintained, even through the difficult circumstances of the fire and its aftermath. Teaching has improved to be good. There is no designated co-ordinator of the work of this foundation stage, but staff work sufficiently well together to ensure that the school is well placed to reap the advantages of the new premises that are to be brought into use later in 2001.

#### ***Personal, social and emotional development***

- 40 Children progress well in this area of learning because overall provision, especially teaching, is good. By the time that they leave the reception class, their attainment is at around average levels. Considerable emphasis is placed on the promotion of children's personal, social and emotional development by planning for it across each early learning goal. Children quickly learn to trust staff and they respond well to other children. By the end of the nursery year many children have developed a positive attitude to learning and they play and work co-operatively alongside each other in small groups. By the time that they leave the reception class, many children, including those with special educational needs, have learned how to co-operate with others not only in lessons but also in activities such as tidying away their equipment. In activities such as playing with sand, water and large outdoor toys, the majority of children begin to learn to solve problems at a level that is appropriate for their ages. They develop a respect for the needs of others and a healthy self-esteem. Much of the progress that children make is due to the carefully thought out provision and the friendly, supportive yet challenging atmosphere that adults provide.

#### ***Communication, language and literacy***



- 41 By the time that children transfer to the Year 1 class, they have generally made good progress and have reached standards that are average for their age. Children's learning progresses at a good rate because teaching is thorough, and full and effective use is made of the rather restricted space of the classroom, the outside play area and the good range of resources. More especially, the adults place a good deal of emphasis on the spoken word. Children listen carefully and with growing understanding to well read stories; they answer with increasing confidence the carefully phrased questions that are put to them by adults. In the reception class good use is made of sensible adaptations to the school's literacy strategy and this helps to enhance children's achievement. In both classes, good use is made of action songs and rhymes, and this is particularly effective with the substantial number of children with little earlier experience of such activities before they start school. Speaking and listening are developed effectively in a wide range of contexts; for example, in a reception class mathematics lesson, children's use of language was enhanced considerably when they had to use their own words to describe how much water there was in a bottle. When one child described a half full bottle as containing 'medium water', the teacher praised the imaginative choice of word, related 'medium' to other situations and established the greater accuracy of the phrase 'half full'. This had a positive impact on the learning of all children in the group because they were participating and listening carefully. In the nursery, opportunities for acting out roles such as that of a parent, help to develop speaking skills. For example, one child used a 'telephone' to speak to the 'doctor', coherently describing how poorly her friend was, and how much she needed the doctor to visit. Children enjoy books and generally handle them carefully. By the end of the reception year children recognise letters of the alphabet and many can both read and write their own names, using capital letters in the correct places, and have developed positive attitudes to the school.

### ***Mathematical development***

- 42 Children make good progress throughout the foundation stage and reach around the nationally expected standard in all aspects of mathematics. Teaching is good, making productive use of well-planned and enjoyable mathematical activities and also drawing on the mathematical content in other activities. For example, children using modelling material in the nursery were successfully encouraged to consider 'heavier' and 'lighter' and 'bigger' and 'smaller'. On other occasions children learn well in modified versions of the daily lesson in numeracy that is used with older pupils. In thoroughly planned and resourced work, children are led to understand the major characteristics of simple two-dimensional shapes and talk about where they are seen in every day life. Sorting and counting activities systematically and effectively encourage children's ability to count, so that in the nursery most recognise and use numbers up to ten; they struggle with 11, 12 and 13 and become more confident with 14 up to 19. In the reception class, children count confidently and accurately add and subtract simple numbers, usually by counting objects. Higher attaining pupils can add mentally up to ten.

### ***Knowledge and understanding of the world***

- 43 Children make good progress and reach sound standards, largely because the teaching of this area of the curriculum is carefully thought through by staff and then imaginatively taught. Children learn the basic skills of computing and the higher attainers have very good control of the computer mouse, using technology to enhance their skills in areas as different as mathematics and art. Many children are skilful users of constructional materials and build structures of considerable size and increasing complexity, using good manipulative skills to fit the pieces together. Many children talk sensibly about where they live, events in their own life such as the birth of a sibling, and about the things that were different for their parents and grandparents when they were children. Higher attaining pupils talk sensibly about other places to which they have been on holiday and

which are 'a long way away' and 'a very long way away'. They respond well to the methods used by staff, so that the effective and structured approach to learning seen in the reception class builds well on the less formal but still carefully considered provision of materials in, for example, the structured play sessions seen in the nursery. The different levels of maturity of children in both classes is catered for well in, for example, the joint nursery and reception class sessions when the two classrooms are combined and children can choose where they work. Work is well matched to the children's previous attainment.

### ***Physical development***

- 44 When they arrive in the nursery, a good proportion of pupils walk and run confidently and quickly acquire the ability, for example, to steer and pedal tricycles, often at an impressive pace and with good control. They enjoy physical exertion and learn to play with and control equipment such as balls and hoops. In all of these activities they are aware of the space that is available and of the needs of other children for their own space. They handle tools and constructional materials appropriately, safely and with increasing confidence and control. Good use is made, largely by the nursery, of the outside play area and the good range of large toys; this makes a substantial contribution to the development of children's physical skills. The reception class, in particular, uses the hall well for physical education lessons that effectively develop children's ball skills. Teachers make good use of helpful guidance in this area from the local authority. Children respond well and work and play hard because activities are carefully planned and adult support is warm and supportive. Teachers match children and activities with considerable skill.

### ***Creative development***

- 45 Children enjoy creative work, whether it is painting, modelling, making music or acting out a variety of roles in play situations. They progress well. Creative work is linked productively to other areas of learning, such as mathematics and the development of language skills. Children respond well to this rich experience and work hard and behave well. They control brushes, pencils, and crayons – and even the computer mouse – carefully in order to produce paintings and drawings of a reasonable quality. Higher attaining children produce artwork of real charm. Music is used and enjoyed and the careful choice of songs helps to develop children's skills in other areas; for example, an alphabet song in the reception class was sung enthusiastically and musically whilst also making a contribution to language and literacy development. Much of the best learning in both classes comes from adults' thoughtful use of colourful and stimulating resources, that are chosen well to match the learning that is planned to take place.

## **ENGLISH**

- 46 The language skills of pupils entering the school are variable between years. In some years they are close to the expected level, in others they are below that level.
- 47 In national tests in 2000, the standards in reading reached by seven-year-olds were very low compared with those in all schools and well below average compared with those in similar schools; standards reached in writing by seven-year-olds were well below the national average and the average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils reaching standards above the nationally expected level was particularly low in both reading and writing. These results were achieved by a cohort of pupils whose early education was badly disrupted by the fire that occurred in the former infants school and their subsequent movement into temporary accommodation first in a secondary school building and later on the site of the former junior school. Standards in reading and writing reached by seven-year-olds in the former infants school in 1998 were above the

national average and those reached in 1999 were below the national average in reading but above that level in writing.

- 48 In national tests in 2000, the standards reached by eleven-year-olds were well below the national average and below the average attained by pupils in similar schools. The percentage of pupils in the school reaching the nationally expected level was the same as the national percentage but the proportion reaching above that level was lower than was the case nationally; consequently, the average points score per pupil in the school was below average.
- 49 At the time of the inspection, the standards reached by pupils aged seven were below the nationally expected level in both reading and writing. This was a different group of pupils from those who took the national tests in 2000. Higher attaining pupils can read appropriate books and passages with a good level of fluency and understanding but a relatively large number of pupils experience difficulty in reading fairly simple sentences and pronouncing words that are unfamiliar to them. While a small number of pupils can express their ideas in writing at good length and with a sensitive ear for vocabulary a larger number struggle when attempting to express their meaning on paper. They have a relatively poor command of spelling and punctuation and frequently fail to produce more than a few lines of writing, even with support from the teacher and other adult helpers. Pupils' ability to listen with understanding and to express their ideas in speech is satisfactory overall. Working in pairs, for example, Year 2 pupils were able to suggest lots of ideas to develop a story about a space adventure, mentioning words like "alien", "robot", "monster" and "space ship". Pupils enjoy answering questions in class and relating their experiences to each other and the teacher.
- 50 The standards reached by eleven-year-olds at the time of the inspection were in line with the national average. Regular reading practice has helped a majority of the pupils to read relatively demanding texts with a good level of understanding and a good ability to pronounce accurately words that are new to them; higher attaining pupils read with expression at a good pace and their reading records show that they read a relatively large number of books each term. Some, but not all, Year 6 pupils can also use a catalogue to find books and information in the library and most of a small sample interviewed knew how to find information using the internet. Work on story building and sequencing has also helped a majority to write stories of a satisfactory length with a beginning, a middle and an end. Although writing remains a difficult medium for many pupils, most are achieving a reasonable level of success, especially when their work is supported by a structure or framework provided by the teacher. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are satisfactory at this stage. They can explain what they are doing clearly to an adult and answer questions sensibly and with a suitable command of relevant vocabulary.
- 51 The amount of time devoted to the teaching of English and literacy is excessive, amounting to over 40 per cent of the total curriculum time by Years 5 and 6. A consequence of this is that too little time is devoted to teaching a range of other subjects and pupils' skills in some of these subjects, including their command of appropriate technical terms, are unsatisfactory. It should be possible for the school to reduce substantially the amount of time allocated to the teaching of English and literacy and still maintain or improve standards, especially if opportunities are taken for developing pupils' language skills through the other subjects.
- 52 The general quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers plan their lessons with care and lessons form part of a coherent sequence of work. Objectives are frequently shared with pupils and are often pinned up at the front of the class for all to see. Good use is made of a variety of teaching approaches – an improvement since the previous inspection of the former junior school – including brainstorming, whole class discussion, small group work and working in pairs. Teachers make good use of the board, entering

key words and building up vocabulary in order to help pupils with their writing. Teachers and support assistants circulate to help pupils develop their ideas. Support teachers and assistants often target weaker pupils or those with special educational needs to help them keep abreast of the lesson and to focus on the task in hand. Concluding whole class sessions are frequently used to reinforce points covered in the lesson and to pull ideas together. Pupils take part willingly in discussions and are keen to do well. Well structured and skilfully delivered lessons are helping both infants and juniors to make sound progress from their prior level of attainment. The support provided for pupils with special educational needs is helping them to make good progress in both infants and juniors. Additional booster classes are provided for selected pupils in Year 6 deemed to be underachieving in order to help them improve their level of attainment. Homework is regularly used to develop pupils' skills in reading and writing and has a moderately positive impact on standards.

- 53 The subject is well led by a knowledgeable co-ordinator who has a good overview of the subject throughout the school. She has helped to ensure that the national literacy strategy has been successfully implemented. As a result of the strategy, the teachers have a more detailed and secure understanding of the mechanics of reading and of how to structure and support pupils' writing; pupils are also developing their own knowledge about language. The subject has the support of a full-time, trained assistant and a few parents also help by hearing pupils reading. In order to improve the quality of provision further, the school needs to rationalise the time devoted to English, ensure that language skills are taught through the medium of other subjects, enlist more adults and parents, if possible, to hear pupils reading and continue to "push" those pupils who are underachieving.

## **MATHEMATICS**

- 54 National test results in 2000 were well below the national average at the age of seven, largely because an unusually large proportion of pupils had some difficulty in learning and were on the school's register of special educational needs. The education of this class of pupils had been considerably disrupted by the repercussions of the fire in the former infants school. The results obtained in national tests in 1998 and 1999 are more consistent with the overall inspection findings that attainment at the age of seven is close to but below the national average. Eleven-year-old pupils reached standards in their tests that were close to, but slightly above the national average. These results are an improvement on the results of eleven-year-olds in previous years. They are consistent with the inspection findings that attainment at the age of eleven is in line with the national average and that the relatively recent improvements are the result of careful targeting of areas of relative weakness that were identified after rigorous evaluations had been made of pupils' achievements.
- 55 During the infant stage, pupils of all abilities make steady progress and reach standards that are consistent with their earlier levels of attainment. Higher attaining pupils reach good standards and, for example, confidently and accurately use a knowledge of the three times table to help them to add together 18, 8 and 7. Lower attainers can put into the correct order amounts of money such as £5, £25 and £10. Most seven-year-old pupils know the names of two-dimensional shapes such as square, circle, hexagon and pentagon and they know key properties such as the numbers of sides and corners; higher attaining pupils recognise when these angles are greater or less than ninety degrees. They estimate with reasonable accuracy lengths around one metre and understand the idea of symmetry. Higher attainers gather information and record it accurately in lists and tables; some pupils use computers to assist these tasks and use accurately the symbols for 'less than' and 'greater than' when recording their findings.

- 56 At the age of eleven, standards are in line with national averages, largely as a result of teaching being focused on the weaknesses in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills that have been identified through a thorough assessment of their earlier performance. Especially good improvements are made in the upper part of the juniors, especially by pupils of average attainment, although pupils make good progress throughout this stage. For example, eight-year-olds accurately add pairs of numbers such as 17 and 3, 26 and 4 and 53 and 7; nine-year-olds add together larger numbers than this and progress to adding together three numbers up to 100 and pupils in Year 6 handle addition sums involving numbers of up to four digits. In addition, eleven-year-olds have a grasp of decimals and fractions and the higher attainers can explain that  $27 \times 32$  will give an answer around 900 because it is approximately  $30 \times 30$ ; they can then use their knowledge of multiplication to quickly work out the accurate answer. Eleven-year-olds have an equally sound grasp of other aspects of mathematics. For example, they recognise and know the major characteristics of two- and three-dimensional shapes; they understand at the appropriate level how to work out the perimeter and area of simple, regular shapes and higher attainers have a good grasp of how to do this with more complex shapes. Most eleven-year-olds can use a computer to produce graphs and charts from data that they have collected, and then use these charts to answer questions.
- 57 In both infant and junior classes, pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards their carefully considered targets, largely because teachers are aware of their needs and ask them questions, throughout lessons, that are of the right level of difficulty to make them think and learn. Many other pupils, especially the higher attainers, benefit considerably from the extra attention that they receive as a result of additional funding being used to provide an additional mathematics teacher in the upper juniors and a weekly mathematics 'Homework Club' after school. Junior aged pupils' achievements are enhanced by the carefully targeted teaching that results from teaching groups of similar levels of attainment.
- 58 Pupils throughout the school have benefited considerably from the carefully considered introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, which has had a positive impact on both the quality of the curriculum and on teaching. On a few occasions, the final part of mathematics lessons is not used sufficiently well to consolidate and clarify what pupils have learned in the earlier stages. Pupils' progress is enhanced by links that are made between mathematics and other subjects such as science, information technology and geography. Overall, teaching is good throughout the school. The planning of lessons is thorough and effective. Teaching materials are chosen carefully and used well. During almost all lessons teachers ensure that they are aware of how well the work is being understood by pupils, and adjust the content of the lesson to ensure that all pupils learn at a good rate. Relationships and discipline are good. On a small number of occasions the best use is not made of additional adults in lessons who spend too much time listening to the teacher rather than contributing to learning. The pace of lessons is almost always productively brisk. However, time is lost at the beginning of some lessons (mainly in the juniors) due to some unpunctuality for the first session of the day and some lateness at other times when pupils make their way from the teaching of other subjects in different parts of the building
- 59 The school's approach to mathematics is co-ordinated well by a conscientious teacher who has overseen the effective changes to the school's approach to mathematics, including to resource levels, both material and human.
- 60 The generally good level of provision seen in the infant and junior schools which recently combined to form this new school has been maintained, in spite of many difficulties. Plans are securely in place to ensure that the teaching of mathematics in the new

building due to be occupied later this year continues to improve. The school is well placed to do this.

## SCIENCE

- 61 Pupils' standards of attainment are at expected levels at ages seven and eleven, as they were at the last inspection. Standards have significantly improved from last year, particularly for the seven-year-olds; last year's Year 2 class included a large proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Standards for the eleven-year-olds have improved year on year since 1998. The attainment of boys and girls in this year's Year 6 class does not reflect the unusual differences shown in last year's national tests, where boys performed markedly better than girls. Pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, attain satisfactorily, although higher attainers do not always have the time to improve their skills in working independently; this was also noted at the last inspection.
- 62 Pupils learn well because of the good quality of teaching and the school's appropriate emphasis on investigations. However, the limited amount of time given to the subject in the juniors means that teachers have too few opportunities to develop more advanced scientific skills or to allow an appropriate amount of independence for pupils in investigations and this inhibits the learning of the more able pupils in particular. Younger pupils have sound knowledge and understanding of the materials that magnets attract and those that they do not; they can also find their own way of recording their findings. They predict sensibly what materials will stretch and what will happen when they do. They relate their knowledge of science to the class topic of homes and houses and apply what they have learnt from a visit to a builder to deciding whether parts of a house should be transparent, translucent or opaque; they record their findings imaginatively. Older pupils have a firm grasp of how evaporation and condensation play their part in the water cycle. In Year 6, pupils find their own categories for sorting out living things and learn how their way differs from scientists. Older pupils have too little experience in setting up their own investigations and so do not acquire skills of investigation and research and habits of independent study.
- 63 The quality of teaching is good and, in one lesson, it was excellent. Teachers are confident in their knowledge of the subject and consequently are able to devise approaches and ask questions that stimulate interest and promote pupils' learning; for example, in a Year 6 lesson, the teacher's knowledge of how scientists categorise animal life enabled him to devise an intriguing opening to the lesson that had pupils involved in a challenging scientific activity from the very start. By the time they had struggled to categorise the apparently random list of the teacher's possessions, they were in a good position to devise their own plausible categories for the creatures that they were shown. Because the Year 5 teacher had a firm grasp of the scientific principles underpinning the water cycle, she was able to use clear explanations and challenging questions to develop pupils' learning. The pace of lessons is invariably brisk and stimulates good levels of scientific knowledge and understanding, as shown in the previous example. However, the limited amount of time available for the subject meant that in that lesson, there was no time for pupils to carry out their own investigations into, for example, evaporation and they had to rely on an investigation carried out by the teacher. Teachers' planning and preparation are thorough and they use resources imaginatively to stimulate interest. Their classroom management skills, based on positive relationships, lead to high levels of hard work and behaviour and pupils work productively. Pupils are made aware of the objectives of the lesson and the whole class session that takes place at the end of most lessons normally checks the extent to which those objectives have been met. There was no evidence of science homework being set or of the use of information and communication technology being used for science.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

- 64 Pupils' attainment by the time they leave the school is in line with that expected nationally; this marks an improvement since the last inspection. These standards are achieved in spite of the relatively small amount of time allocated to the subject because the teaching of the subject is often very good and because art is promoted by effective displays throughout the school. The quality of the sculptures and collages produced in the lessons observed was often above average but there is insufficient time for skills to be progressively developed to reach that standard across the art curriculum. What suffers most is the systematic development of skills and knowledge as pupils move through the school, particularly the skills of critically evaluating their own work and that of great artists. Consequently, the achievement of pupils of all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs, is only just satisfactory.
- 65 Pupils use a variety of techniques and tools and work with a satisfactory range of materials within all classes and art is used to support other subjects in topics such as that about the ancient Egyptians. Year 6 pupils produce effective collages of figures in motion after developing a template to allow them to experiment with alternative arrangements of figures. Year 3 pupils use a puppet to help them to produce often very good wire and foil models based on a sculpture by Giacometti; they then use their models as the basis for convincing sculptures. They learn about how the Angel of the North was created and how the sculptor used a similar process to theirs.
- 66 Only two art lessons were observed but in both of these the quality of teaching and learning was very good. The teacher in Year 3 stimulated very high levels of interest and enthusiasm by careful preparation and organisation of activities, well supported by a very effective display of pupils' wire models alongside photographs of the Giacometti sculpture and pupils making interesting body shapes. A busy and purposeful atmosphere was maintained as the teacher and her assistant challenged and encouraged pupils to do even better work. There were very high levels of expectation of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with behavioural problems; all pupils responded very positively and worked hard and creatively. The teacher valued their work by using an imaginative approach to the final whole-class session, where individuals were set up as artists and interviewed by the rest of the class about the process of their work and the materials they had used. This and the subsequent discussion about the Angel of the North led to significant and sensitive insights and clear explanations and contributed well to pupils' speaking and listening skills and to their cultural development. The teacher in Year 6 stimulated very high levels of pupils' interest by the effective presentation of challenging materials. Pupils responded very well to the imaginative use of resources and to his confident subject knowledge. Very effective class management ensured a very high work rate and very good behaviour. Pupils are encouraged to use sketchbooks throughout the school but they are not used in a consistent way. Where they are used well, as in Year 6, the sensitive comments of the teacher enable effective learning to take place. The subject makes a positive contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. A keen and conscientious co-ordinator has a firm grip on the subject throughout the school.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

- 67 Standards at the ages of both seven and eleven are below those expected nationally. Whilst the school's policies and teachers' plans are of a reasonable quality there is too little time allocated to the subject for the quality of the preparation to convert into a sufficiently broad curriculum and into high enough standards. Throughout both infant and junior stages, children enjoy using tools to make models and artefacts which are

often of sound quality and which show the careful use of appropriate tools and an experience of a variety of materials. However, most of these models are produced without pupils having developed the ideas for them in sufficient depth. Thus, by the age of eleven, very few pupils have the usually expected skills in designing an object, deciding and explaining what materials and tools they will need, and they have little experience of taking into account the needs of the person who might wish to use their product. Similarly, pupils can not explain how they would go about assessing what they have made in order to learn from this process how to improve their designing of similar or different models. The lack of a systematic approach to the design and evaluation stages of the subject also reduce the opportunities for pupils to consolidate and develop the skills in writing and mathematics that are often associated with these processes. As a result, the progress made by pupils is unsatisfactory.

- 68 In the one lesson that was observed, the teacher had prepared carefully for the task of making a mechanism. A 'pop-up' book was used effectively to stimulate discussion and to motivate pupils for the task. Explanations were clear and accurate. Pupils set about their task with a real interest and used tools carefully and accurately to cut, stick and assemble a simple mechanism. Experiences in design and technology are too limited to provide pupils with the confidence to develop ideas further than those offered by the teacher or seen in books. As a result the products the pupils make lack imagination.
- 69 The subject is led by a co-ordinator who is new to the role but who has a good grasp of the school's needs. However, the school will need to allocate more time to the subject and extend the range of the curriculum before it can be confident that standards will improve. In addition, there will need to be more systematic monitoring of teaching and standards in order to identify where the greatest needs lie.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

- 70 It was not possible to observe any geography teaching during the inspection, so that no judgement can be made on the teaching of the subject.
- 71 Standards at both seven and eleven years are below those expected nationally. In work that has been taught, many pupils have understanding and knowledge that is at least sound and in some cases good. However, in other areas, pupils have limited knowledge, understanding and skills. The school's policies, teachers' plans and records are of reasonable quality and resource levels are satisfactory. However, too little time is given to the teaching of the subject to ensure a reasonable coverage of the curriculum and so to ensure satisfactory standards. In other words, what the school does in geography it does quite well – but it does not do enough for pupils to reach the proper standard and make satisfactory progress.
- 72 Older junior pupils have a good range of skills for discovering information regarding geographical features in connection with, for example, a research topic on major rivers of the world. In one such topic pupils used the internet and CD-ROMs in order to produce attractive and informative booklets on major world rivers such as the Amazon and the Mississippi and on local rivers such as the Weir. Pupils of the full range of attainment speak with enthusiasm about this work and remember key facts about the river that they studied. They are especially, and justifiably, proud of the team work that they undertook in order to produce a large map of the world with switches and electrical circuits that allow the location of rivers to be quickly identified. There was little interaction between pupils during their work and few opportunities were made to disseminate each pupil's findings to others. Thus individuals are relatively expert regarding their own river but know little about the others. The absence of this dissemination stage is also an opportunity missed to contribute to pupils' skills in writing and speaking to an audience. Many pupils are able to draw general conclusions from the work they have done. They



know that many rivers, in Britain and abroad, have provided transport and power, so that settlements formed on their banks that in some cases have translated into today's large cities and towns. Most pupils have a limited knowledge of their own country. Whilst they can identify features such as the Pennines, the River Tyne and Newcastle, many of them are unsure of the position of London and other major cities and of rivers such as the Thames, Humber and Severn.

- 73 Work in geography includes effective links with other subjects, notably mathematics and ICT, from which all three subjects benefit. Field trips and educational visits have a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to the subject and on their personal and social development.
- 74 A new co-ordinator has been appointed for geography. She has a good grasp of the subject and of the school's needs. In order to ensure improvements, the school will need to allocate more time to the subject and to ensure that both teaching and standards are carefully monitored.

## **HISTORY**

- 75 Because of the short amount of time allocated to the subject, pupils do not have time to develop some of the necessary skills in the subject; consequently, their attainment by the time they leave the school is below that expected. At the last inspection, attainment was in line with the national expectation but pupils had limited skills in evidence seeking and an under-developed conceptual understanding. The achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is unsatisfactory because some areas of the curriculum are not covered thoroughly enough through shortage of time.
- 76 While pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topics they are taught is satisfactory, they have not developed such skills as interpreting evidence for themselves or comparing different sources of evidence. Young pupils know about some of the differences between Victorian kitchens and kitchens today and can place events on a simple time-line. Year 4 pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of artefacts of Saxon Britain and can describe details of, for example, a Saxon shield boss well. They are able to discuss some implications of the presence of certain objects in the Sutton Hoo burial chamber. An attractive display of work about ancient Egypt shows that some Year 5 pupils understand well what it was like to live in those times; they write convincingly in role as ancient Egyptians. Year 6 pupils show empathy not only for the evacuees in their class story but also, after sensitive prompting from their teacher, for the people on whom they are billeted. In discussion, Year 6 pupils were much less convincing when asked to evaluate types of evidence about the period they were studying and had little experience of sorting different kinds of evidence for themselves.
- 77 The quality of teaching and learning is at least satisfactory and often better than this. Pupils are interested because teachers have sound subject knowledge and use resources in a stimulating way. They generally work hard and concentrate well. Occasionally, too much is crammed into a lesson; for example, after a productive whole class session on the Sutton Hoo burial, pupils moved onto an exercise that took them into their own time instead of working on a task that further explored the Saxon evidence and helped them to consider the nature and validity of that evidence. Teachers share their own enthusiasm for the subject effectively and pupils respond well. Computer programs are used effectively to support learning in history and there are good contributions to literacy. Assessment procedures are under-developed so that planning cannot benefit from detailed assessments.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

- 78 Pupils reach standards at the ages of both seven and eleven that are in line with the national expectation. By the age of seven, the great majority of pupils are able to use computers to organise and classify simple sets of information that they have collected. They use ICT to write simple accounts and stories. Higher attaining pupils know that computers are widely used beyond school in, for example, homes and shops. They know that supermarket check-outs use a computer system. Most pupils know that computers can be connected so that messages can be sent and information found through telephone lines. They are very interested in the use of technology and enjoy talking about their experiences both in and outside school. As with junior aged pupils, many of the higher attaining infants have computers at home and benefit from their use.
- 79 During the junior stage pupils continue to make good progress over a widening ICT curriculum. Pupils' achievement is enhanced by the small group sessions with staff, voluntary helpers and the technician for ICT. Standards in the subject benefit from an approach that includes direct teaching of aspects of the subject and also from the ways in which it is used to enhance learning in other subjects. For example, older pupils use CD Roms and the Internet in order to discover information on major rivers of the world; they identify which information is most useful to them and then print out the appropriate passages. In other sessions, skills and necessary background knowledge are taught directly and effectively. For example, pupils in a lower junior class benefited considerably from a lesson during which they considered what action they should take if they were to receive various types of unsolicited e-mails. Higher attaining pupils use ICT to organise and present information in styles that are suited to the material and the intended audience. A small group of pupils, of varying levels of ability, discussed accurately and enthusiastically how to go about using a graphics program to design a tartan pattern to make into a man's tie. Pupils can program and use a floor robot to, for example, trace the pattern of a simple maze.
- 80 The good progress made by many pupils is largely a result of effective and often knowledgeable teaching, and the contribution to learning made by volunteers and support workers. In both class lessons and group sessions, teachers manage pupils and learning well, and behaviour is good. All adults who contribute to teaching ICT are fully aware of how well pupils are understanding the work that they are doing and the pace of the lessons is adjusted accordingly. Good support is given to pupils with special educational needs, enabling them to progress well. Boys and girls are treated equally and progress at very similar rates; they often work together well. Teachers' expertise and confidence have been enhanced by the work of the co-ordinator and through productive links made with the local secondary schools which have technology status and give valuable help to the school. The technician acts as an effective 'trouble-shooter', as a result of which the computers are usually all working and available for use; he also is able to give technical advice when needed. Pupils' progress is enhanced by the use that is made of ICT in other subjects such as mathematics, science, English and geography.
- 81 In the inspection of the junior school that was amalgamated with the associated infant school to form this new primary school, information technology was identified as a weakness. It no longer is and the school's plans for the improvement to facilities, especially a computer suite, in the new building ensures that it is well placed to improve further on standards.

## **MUSIC**

- 82 Pupils' attainment is below average overall because of the lack of time to develop skills systematically across the music curriculum. Achievement is unsatisfactory for the same reason; achievement is better for those who are in the choir and for those

receiving flute or clarinet lessons. The standards seen in the last inspection have not been maintained because of the short amount of time given to the subject.

- 83 The commercial scheme of work used ensures that the elements of composing, performing, listening and evaluating are taught to some extent, though not in sufficient depth. Year 2 pupils compose 'sad tunes' and use pictorial ways of recording their composition, using their knowledge of musical terms. Year 6 pupils respond to music appropriately in movement and identify the instruments used in Jewish wedding music. They begin to compose tunes using tuned percussion but the level of the compositions and the performance of them reflect the lack of time available to bring them to acceptable levels. Pupils sing a variety of songs tunefully and enthusiastically and those in the choir sing two-part songs and rounds. The small number of pupils who have flute or clarinet lessons play those instruments well.
- 84 It is clear from the one lesson seen and from the way that singing assemblies and the choir were led that teaching and learning are often good or better. This good teaching does not translate into high standards because too little time – about half the national recommendation – is devoted to teaching the subject. Teachers lead singing confidently and engage pupils' interests well. Music sessions have a brisk pace and material is sufficiently challenging and often relates to topics pertinent to other lessons. A well-informed co-ordinator has a clear view of how to develop the subject.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

- 85 By the time they are eleven, pupils reach above average standards of attainment and pupils of all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. The high standards seen at the last inspection have been maintained.
- 86 There is an appropriately broad physical education curriculum that includes rugby, cricket, football, netball, hockey and athletics. Pupils have swimming lessons in Years 3 and 4 and almost all reach good standards. During the summer term, an outdoor and adventurous activity programme focuses on orienteering and culminates in a residential visit to an outdoor pursuits centre. In lessons, pupils show good spatial awareness and well-developed ball control skills in football, hockey and small ball work. Year 2 and Year 5 pupils are well co-ordinated in their dance and pupils with special educational needs are enabled to play a full part in the activities because of the effective support they receive.
- 87 The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and sometimes very good. Teachers have confident subject knowledge and skills. Pupils work very hard and behave very well as a result of the teachers' effective class management skills and the brisk pace of the lessons. They respond very well to increasingly challenging tasks, as when Year 6 pupils in their warm-up showed great control in moving quickly within smaller and smaller areas without once touching anyone else. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed their dance, listening very well to instructions and concentrating hard to get the steps right. Levels of enjoyment, concentration and behaviour were very high in all the lessons observed. The curriculum is enhanced through a programme of out-of-school activities in football, netball and cross-country running and the local competitions engaged in these sports. The subject is effectively led and managed by a co-ordinator who is at pains to learn and share the most up-to-date training methods and to exploit his contacts to the full.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

- 88 The standards reached are in line with those set out in the locally Agreed Syllabus for the subject by ages seven and eleven. By the time they leave school most pupils have a

sound knowledge of some of the outstanding personalities and stories of Christianity and other world faiths, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, and have learned something of the importance of such religious truths as love of God and love of neighbour. In both infants and juniors pupils make sound progress in both learning about religion and learning from religion.

- 89 In one well structured lesson in Year 3, the teacher helped pupils deepen their understanding of Christian marriage. She drew on the pupils' own familiarity with weddings, drawing from them such terms as "bride", "bridegroom", "vicar", "priest" and "minister" as well as "vows" and "altar" and entering them on the board. She also showed them a copy of a wedding certificate and shared mementoes of her own wedding, holding the pupils' attention and motivating them to pay attention and learn. The discussion then moved to the pupils' own lives and the importance of making and keeping promises. In other lessons in both the infants and the juniors, pupils considered the notion of rules and commandments and, besides learning the Ten Commandments of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, studied the commandments of other world faiths or considered the importance of rules in their own lives. In one lesson junior pupils drew up a list of commandments they would enforce in their own desert island. Lessons were always well planned, time well managed, there was good control and learning objectives were usually achieved. The general quality of teaching was good. Pupils' learning was sometimes enhanced by teachers making good use of available resources, such as visits to local churches or an interview with the local vicar. The generally good teaching does not translate into good standards of attainment largely because insufficient time is devoted to the subject.
- 90 Teaching of the subject is supported by the Durham Agreed Syllabus and a satisfactory range of books and other resources. It contributes well to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. There are also some very good quality displays of features of the Christian faith as well as aspects of other world religions in classrooms and corridors. Some of these incorporate well presented examples of pupils' writing, but the potential of the subject for developing pupils' writing is not fully exploited.