

INSPECTION REPORT

PONTELAND FIRST SCHOOL

Ponteland

LEA area: Northumbria

Unique reference number: 122217

Headteacher: Mr M Lawler

Reporting inspector: Mr P H Cole
2616

Dates of inspection: 25th February – 1st March 2002

Inspection number: 243896

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	North Road Ponteland Newcastle upon Tyne
Postcode:	NE20 9UH
Telephone number:	01661 822103
Fax number:	01662 822103
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C Armstrong
Date of previous inspection:	21 st April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2616	P H Cole	Registered inspector	Mathematics Art and design History Religious education Special educational needs Equal opportunities English as an additional language	What sort of as school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
14404	A Rolfe	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and behaviour How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2632	R W Holmes	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology Geography	How good are the curricular and the opportunities offered to pupils?
30382	D Bullock	Team inspector	Foundation Stage English Music Physical education	How well does the school care for its pupils?

The inspection contractor was:

Peak Education Partnership
19 Huddersfield Road
Barnsley
South Yorkshire
S70 2LT

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ponteland First School takes pupils from three to nine years of age. It has grown since its last inspection and now has 297 pupils on roll, including those who attend part-time in the nursery, which makes it a large school. Most of the pupils are white but more pupils than usual come from minority ethnic backgrounds, mostly from families originally from India or Pakistan. Thirty-four of these pupils are identified as speaking English as an additional language; although most speak English well, four have extra help in school. Only eight pupils are on the register for special educational needs, which is low compared to other schools and only one has a statement to support his needs. All most all of these pupils have difficulties related to learning. The school has identified two pupils as being gifted. Pupils come from relatively advantaged backgrounds and its popularity attracts a significant number of pupils from well outside the local area. Unusually for a school with pupils from these background the pupil's attainment on entry is just below the local authority's average and broadly in line with national averages.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school that is continuing to improve. Results are excellent and pupils are achieving well. Teaching is good and the leadership and management are excellent. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school achieves excellent results in the Year 2 tests and pupils are achieving well in many subjects by Year 4.
- Pupils are very positive about school. Their behaviour is very good and they get on very well with each other.
- Teaching is good and very good in the older classes.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 4 benefit from a very good range of well-planned learning opportunities, including a very good range of extra-curricular clubs.
- Pupils' personal (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) development is promoted very well.
- Pupils are well looked after and their learning needs are very carefully monitored and supported.
- The school has worked hard to win the confidence of parents and now enjoys exceptional levels of support and approval from them.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide excellent leadership and management and are very well supported by the governors and by staff in their roles as co-ordinators.

What could be improved

- The satisfactory provision for nursery and reception children has relative weaknesses in the planning and management of their learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made excellent progress since its last inspection in April 1997. All the key issues have been addressed very successfully. Leadership and management, curriculum planning and the assessment of pupils' learning were all criticised and are now strengths of the school. Standards are very high and the quality of teaching has clearly improved. Parental support is still strong but their satisfaction with what the school does is now much higher.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
Reading	A	A	A*	A*
Writing	A	A	A	A
Mathematics	A*	A*	A*	A

Key

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

The table above refers to the tests taken by pupils in Year 2. The oldest children in the school take their Year 6 tests when they are in the middle school. The results for Year 2 in 2001 were excellent. Pupils achieved in the top five percent of all schools in the country in reading and mathematics and results in writing were well above the national average. The results in reading were also in the top five percent of those in similar schools (based on levels of free school meals entitlement) and were well above the average for these schools in reading and mathematics. Results started to show an improvement in 1998 and have been maintained at high levels ever since. There has been little difference in the achievement of boys and girls in the tests for mathematics, but girls have achieved a little better than boys in reading and writing. The work of the current Year 2 shows that they are attaining above national expectations in English, mathematics and science. Given that their attainment on entry was only just above average, they are achieving well.

The work of the oldest pupils, who are in Year 4, shows that they are attaining comfortably above the national expectations in English and well above them in both mathematics and science. If this level of progress continues, they are currently on course to achieve very well in the Year 6 tests. Pupils are achieving at least the national expectations in all the other subjects and standards are above expectations in history, religious education and art by both Year 2 and Year 4 and above expectations in geography and information and communication technology (ICT) in Year 4.

By the reception year children in the Foundation Stage are on course to achieve the early learning goals for each of the areas and some should exceed them in elements of literacy, numeracy and their personal, social and emotional development.

Pupils with special educational needs, the gifted pupils and those who speak English as an additional language are making good progress and achieving well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are very positive. They contribute eagerly in lessons and sustain tasks well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons, during playtimes and around the school is very good.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils accept responsibility very willingly and they get on with each other very well.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

Pupils clearly enjoy school. They are interested in lessons, work hard and try their best. Very occasionally, when the pace of a lesson is slow, some of the younger pupils allow their attention to wander. Pupils demonstrate very good behaviour during wet playtimes when they play board games and other games quietly together. The oldest pupils are given extensive responsibilities, such as showing visitors around school, looking after the library and keeping a friendly eye on younger pupils during break times; they respond enthusiastically and sensibly to these tasks.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Good	Very good

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

Teaching is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and well over half of the teaching seen was good or better. Good teaching was seen in all year groups. Teaching in the Years 3 and 4 classes was particularly strong with all lessons being at least well taught and many being very good or excellent. Much of the teaching in Years 1 and 2 was also good. Literacy is well taught across the school, and numeracy is well taught in Years 3 and 4. Strengths in the teaching included: detailed planning and successful matching of work to the needs of the higher attaining and lower attaining pupils in the class; good subject knowledge; very effective questioning that extended pupils; good pace; calm and consistent approaches to discipline; and, effective use of resources to support explanations. Where these strengths were evident pupils' involvement was high, they worked hard and made clear gains in their learning. On occasion, there were weaknesses in some of the otherwise satisfactory teaching. In a few lessons in Year 2 planning was less effective and the pace was a little slow. Pupils were not always fully involved and although the lessons did achieve their intended goals more could have been covered. In reception, children often spend extended amounts of time being taught as a class and this reduces the opportunities they have to learn through purposeful play and exploration. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are given sensitive and effective support which enables them to make good progress. The arrangements made for the gifted pupils are also effective in ensuring

that they are stretched appropriately. The programme for homework is demanding but positively supports the achievement of high standards.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum provides high quality opportunities for learning for pupils in Years 1 to 4. There are too few chances for reception children to explore and find things out for themselves.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is good; pupils' needs are very carefully identified, and the clear targets set for them are successfully achieved.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils who need additional help with English are given well-targeted support funded by both the local education authority and also the school's own budget. They are able to take a full part in lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Pupils' spiritual development is well promoted and the other elements of personal development are very well promoted.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes good care of pupils' physical and emotional needs and very successfully monitors and supports their learning.

Parents are exceptionally positive about the school. Staff work hard to keep them informed and involved in their children's education; parents make valuable contributions to its life through their very successful fund-raising and support for their children's learning at home and in school. The school's very detailed and carefully planned curriculum for Years 1 to 4 pupils is enhanced through well-chosen visits, extensive and well-supported extra-curricular clubs and the very effective links with cluster schools. The high quality of the curriculum has been nationally acknowledged and the school has contributed to the development of materials for use in schools across the country. Extensive and effective assessments are made of pupils' learning and these are used to modify planning and set targets, which in turn promote high standards.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and deputy provide excellent leadership and management. Their leadership has resulted in the school making dramatic improvements and being in a strong position to keep moving forward.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities very well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school makes effective use of test information, observation of teaching and sampling of pupils' work to identify what needs to be done to make improvements.
The strategic use of resources	The school has made and continues to make very good use of its budget and other funding to improve the quality of what it provides for pupils.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have very high expectations, lead by example and show exceptional commitment to improving the school. Teachers in their roles as co-ordinators also make very valuable contributions in their particular areas. Governors are fully involved in identifying priorities and in supporting and monitoring the work of the school. Despite the poor quality of the schools' buildings every effort has been made to make the accommodation attractive and conducive to effective learning. Imaginative solutions to permanently addressing this problem have been enthusiastically pursued and appear to be on the verge of success. The school has good levels of staffing overall and satisfactory resources to support the curriculum. Lack of a permanent co-ordinator for the Foundation Stage has slowed the development of work in this phase. The principles of best value are used effectively to inform decision making.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are very positive about virtually all aspects of the school's life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents identified no areas they would like to see improved. A very small number of parents thought there was too much homework.

The parents' views of the school are exceptionally positive and the inspectors have no reason to disagree with them. As stated earlier, the amount of homework is more than is found in most schools but it clearly helps pupils to achieve well and over 90 percent of parents are happy with the school's approach.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 The school has maintained excellent results in the national tests for Year 2 pupils over the last few years. In 2001, results in reading and mathematics were in the top five percent of all schools and results in writing were high compared to the national average. Fewer pupils achieved level 3 in writing than in reading and mathematics in the school. Four pupils even managed to achieve level 4 in reading, which is the level expected of an average pupil in Year 6. The results were also very impressive when compared to schools that are similar to Ponteland, based on levels of pupils' entitlement to free school meals. Reading was in the top five percent of these schools and both writing and mathematics were well above the average. Since 1998, results in all three of the areas tested have been well above the national average or in the top five percent of all schools. Both boys and girls have achieved better than their peers across the country, although girls have tended to achieve better than the boys in the school in reading and writing, but less noticeably than is the case nationally. The high standards and impressive levels of achievement reflect the good teaching that pupils receive, the well-planned curriculum and the effectiveness of the school's use of assessment.

2 The current Year 2 pupils are achieving high standards. All aspects of their work in English, mathematics and science are above expectations. They are confident speakers who can adapt their voices for different purposes, for example when acting out a part or when reading aloud. Most listen well and can apply their speaking and listening skills effectively when discussing their work with each other. They have secure understanding of what they read and can find information successfully in reference books. They are able to write their own story and information books for other children and for inclusion in the class library. In mathematics, pupils are confident when working out answers in their heads and accurate when using pen and paper. They can apply their knowledge and understanding to solve problems. In science, pupils have a good knowledge of facts and understand the need for a fair test and for accurate observation and recording when they are investigating.

3 Last year, the results of optional national tests showed that Year 4 pupils achieved very well. Far more pupils achieved the average level 3 than is the case nationally. The current pupils' work shows that they are well ahead of the targets for their age. If they continue to make the same level of progress, they are currently on course to achieve very well in the Year 6 tests. This is the result of very good teaching and provision. Pupils apply their skills in speaking and listening well across the curriculum. They use technical language appropriately and provide detailed answers to teachers' and others' questions. They read with fluency and accuracy and talk enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors. Many pupils produce high quality writing for a range of purposes, making effective use of complex sentences and interesting vocabulary. Pupils' knowledge and understanding in mathematics are broadly based. They have rapid mental skills and calculate accurately, using a variety of strategies to work out the answers. They have a good knowledge of shapes and can choose appropriate graphs, including line graphs, to record different types of information. In science, many pupils are already working within the levels usually expected by pupils in Year 6. Their knowledge of scientific facts builds very successfully on what they have learnt in Years 1 and 2 and they are able to apply their knowledge and understanding well in new situations and to solve problems.

4 Standards in all the other subjects were at least in line with national expectations by Years 2 and Year 4. In history, religious education and art, pupils' attainment is higher than expected by the end of Years 2 and 4. By the end of Year 4, pupils are also achieving above

expectations in geography and ICT. Although it was not possible to make an overall judgement of standards in music, the evidence points to attainment being at least in line with expectations, with pupils who have instrumental tuition achieving well above expectations.

5 Children in the nursery and reception classes are on course to achieve the early learning goals in their knowledge and understanding of the world and in their physical and creative development. Many are on course to exceed expectations in the development of their communication language and literacy skills, mathematical knowledge and understanding and in their personal, social and emotional development. Overall, they make satisfactory progress. This reflects the satisfactory quality of teaching and provision. The school is aware that this is an area for further development.

6 The school works hard to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language and those who are gifted or talented. They are given targeted support, appropriate work and placed in different teaching groups when this is necessary. These arrangements work well and ensure that these pupils make good progress and achieve well.

7 The school does not have to set formal targets in terms of results but it does make good progress towards the internal targets it sets itself for groups of pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8 Pupils' attitudes to learning, their behaviour, relationships and personal development are all very good. This reflects a further improvement on the good standards seen at the time of the last inspection. All these factors have a positive impact on pupils' learning.

9 Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Discussions with pupils indicate that they enjoy coming to school. They are able to identify favourite subjects and a significant number of pupils participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school. They co-operate well with their teachers and show good levels of interest and enthusiasm in their work. They listen carefully to their teachers' instructions, maintain concentration for appropriate periods of time and are keen and eager to contribute to classroom discussions, indeed, in many lessons pupils showed obvious disappointment if they were not chosen to respond to their teacher's questions. In many lessons, pupils showed the ability to work well together, for example in a Years 3 and 4 science lesson in which they were identifying different types of teeth in their own mouths, pupils were enthusiastic and keen to do the work. They worked very well together sharing ideas and correcting each other, and therefore made good progress in the lesson. Most pupils take a pride in their work; taking great care with its presentation. They are keen and confident when going about their work. Pupils with special educational needs have good attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons and around the school.

10 The standard of behaviour is very good, and there have been no exclusions. In a high proportion of lessons, behaviour was very good. For example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson, pupils were very eager to succeed. Their behaviour throughout the lesson was very good; they worked hard, co-operated well together and were keen to contribute to classroom discussions, all of which had a very positive impact on their learning. In only a very few lessons were there any instances of pupils being involved in low level inappropriate behaviour, and on almost all occasions this was when teaching lacked pace or challenge, and pupils lost interest in the lesson. Almost all pupils are aware of what is and is not acceptable behaviour; they like the school's merit system and readily accept the principle of sanctions as an appropriate response to instances of inappropriate behaviour. Outside of lessons, pupils interact well together. They chat and socialise together without any signs of

rowdy or boisterous behaviour, and this good standard of behaviour was maintained during a number of 'wet play' sessions observed during the inspection. Parents and pupils themselves confirm that bullying is rare and the school reacts quickly and positively to any known instances. There is no evidence of sexism and pupils from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together. Pupils treat school equipment with care and respect; there is no evidence of vandalism and little or no litter around the school.

11 Pupils make very good progress in their personal development. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good; so too are relationships between pupils. In lessons, pupils work well together in pairs and small groups, taking turns and sharing resources, and they listen to and respect the views of other members of the group. For example, in an ICT lesson pupils co-operated well in pairs, sharing ideas and helping each other, and they showed obvious pleasure in the results they produced. Pupils are developing well their understanding of other people's faiths and cultures and are encouraged to reflect on the impact of their actions on others, mainly through their studies in religious education and personal and social education. For example in a religious education lesson in which pupils were studying the Five Pillars of Islam, they showed a good level of interest in the subject and made good progress in improving their understanding of Islam. Towards the end of the lesson, they thought about what it would be like to live by the principles of the Five Pillars of Islam.

12 Pupils in all year groups are keen to accept responsibilities and are given many opportunities to do so. All pupils undertake a range of duties as classroom monitors. Older pupils assist younger pupils in the dining room: they operate a 'Buddy' system at breaks and lunchtime and show visitors around the school. Pupils take pride in undertaking these tasks and take their duties seriously. Pupils are encouraged to work independently and to take some responsibility for their own learning, for example through the extended homework that gives them the opportunity to do independent research.

13 Attendance is satisfactory. It is broadly in line with national averages and there are no recorded unauthorised absences. This represents a slight decline in attendance since the last inspection when attendance was above the national average. However, during the reporting period a significant amount of pupil absence was due to pupils' inability to attend school due to foot and mouth disease restrictions. Evidence in the attendance registers for the current academic year indicates a general improvement in attendance. Registration is taken morning and afternoon and meets statutory requirements.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14 Teaching is good and is better than it was at the time of the last inspection. Good lessons were seen in all year groups. Teaching does vary between the different key stages, however. It is satisfactory in the nursery and reception classes, good in Years 1 and 2 and very good in Years 3 and 4. There was no unsatisfactory teaching seen during the inspection although there were relative weaknesses in some lessons in the reception classes and in Year 2.

15 Pupils are taught in single-aged classes up to Year 2 and in mixed-aged classes in Years 3 and 4. Teachers ensure that work is carefully planned to meet the needs of the different groups of pupils in their classes. This is simplified in mathematics in Years 3 and 4, where the pupils are placed in to sets according to their attainment in the subject. In these sets and in other subjects, when it is appropriate, teachers clearly identify tasks that are well matched to the learning needs of pupils of different attainment.

16 Almost all lessons benefit from having clear objectives for learning and in most lessons these are shared with the pupils and successfully guide their efforts. They provide a useful pointer for both pupils and teachers about the effectiveness of learning in the lesson. Very occasionally planning is not precise enough to ensure that teaching is sharply focused and this can lead to learning being less effective than it could be. This was seen in a numeracy lesson in Year 2 on the concept of 'difference', which did not make clear enough the distinction between 'difference' and 'take away'. Teachers in Years 1 to 4 almost always show either good or very good subject knowledge and in the best lessons use technical language consistently. This helps to promote pupils' good knowledge in many subjects, particularly mathematics, science and religious education. Teachers' good knowledge of the subjects also enables them to explain new learning clearly and to ask probing questions that extend pupils' learning. In an excellent numeracy lesson, the teacher's very good range of questions challenged above average pupils to achieve well above expectations in their understanding of classifying numbers using Venn diagrams. The lack of well thought out and resourced play provision linked to planned learning is a weakness in some of the teaching in reception and indicates that the approach to teaching children in the Foundation Stage is not as well understood or consistently implemented as it could be. Opportunities for pupils to consolidate and extend their understanding of what has been taught in more formal lessons in reception are therefore sometimes missed.

17 A feature of many of the lessons that were good or better was the lively pace that kept pupils interested and 'on their toes'. In an early literacy support lesson for Year 1 pupils, the teaching assistant in charge of the group kept the pace lively and used a variety of effective approaches to successfully maintain pupils' involvement. As a result, pupils made clear progress and enjoyed their learning. In a well-taught gymnastics lesson in a reception class, the teacher kept children very active throughout with a good variety of well-chosen activities that exercised the children well and enabled them to refine and improve their movements. A relative weakness in some lessons in Year 2 was the slow and deliberate pace that led to some pupils losing concentration and not benefiting from the lesson as much as they could. This was the case in a geography lesson when the teacher talked too much and missed opportunities to encourage the pupils to share their ideas and opinions. As a result, they became restless and their interest dropped.

18 A feature of many lessons was the very good use made of resources to support explanations and to make learning more meaningful and accessible to pupils. This was seen being done particularly well in a very good science lesson in Years 3 and 4. In this lesson the teacher dramatically demonstrated the functions of different teeth by using a chisel, pick and grinding stone on an apple. Aids to learning are used well in almost all literacy and numeracy lessons, for example number squares to explore patterns, big books to develop aspects of language and word lists to support writing with the younger pupils. Occasionally these are used less effectively, for example when they are not displayed at a height that ensures all can see.

19 Classroom assistants have good skills and are used well to support pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. Much of the work they do is with groups who are withdrawn from class. They follow detailed plans and programmes that are well matched to pupils' individual needs and which enable them to extend their learning from their time in the class.

20 In almost all classes, teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well. They are calm and sensitive and skilfully bring individuals back on task on the rare occasions when this is necessary. In a few lessons in a Year 2 class, the teacher did not always identify pupils who were not sufficiently involved and tolerated too much calling out of answers during class discussions.

21 Teachers set and mark homework very regularly and ensure that it complements class work. This approach is demanding for both teachers and pupils but it does make a very significant impact on the standards that pupils are achieving.

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

22 The curriculum is adequately broad and balanced in nursery and reception and very well organised in the rest of the school. This is much better than at the time of the last inspection and has played a significant part in the school's improvement and the much-improved standards that pupils achieve.

23 In nursery and reception classes, children meet a wide range of experiences but the curriculum gives too little emphasis to exploration and learning through play. The school is working towards the early learning goals for children of this age, but at the moment national guidance for the Foundation Stage has not been fully implemented. Much of the curriculum, particularly in the reception classes, is taught through lessons led by the teacher and children are given less opportunity to develop their understanding at their own pace than is usual at this stage. For example, in a mathematics lesson in a reception class, children were all taught the time at each 'o'clock' together. Many were soon able to do this and there was little extra provision to extend their learning, for example using timetables in the 'travel agents' or describing the events of their diary alongside a time-line of the hours.

24 Curriculum organisation in Years 1 and 2 and in Years 3 and 4 is very strong. National guidance for each subject has been analysed carefully and adapted to local needs. In Years 3 and 4, this has been done in close collaboration with the middle schools so that there is continuity in the pupils' learning. Adequate time has been allocated to each subject, so that there is a strong emphasis on English and mathematics and also appropriate weight for other subjects. An important innovation has been to move assembly time to the end of the day so that most effective use can be made of the time when pupils are freshest and best able to learn.

25 All subjects are supported by detailed schemes of work which guide teachers' planning effectively and ensure full coverage of the subject and build in progress from year to year. In all subjects, the work to be covered ensures that pupils achieve high standards and develop good understanding rather than superficial knowledge. In religious education, for example, three other religions are studied alongside Christianity in order to strengthen pupils' grasp of the similarities and differences and to better reflect the ethnic mix in the school. Links between subjects are strengthened to help pupils learn better, for example ensuring the water cycle in geography reinforces work on solids, liquids and gases in science.

26 National strategies for literacy and numeracy are thoroughly embedded in the work of the school. There are separate lessons covering them, and pupils' learning in English and mathematics is also supported well through other subjects, for example through giving explanations in science, use of graphs in geography and the consistent approach to writing in all subjects. The breadth of this approach contributes well to the high standards pupils achieve in English and mathematics.

27 The curriculum for special needs is organised well and contributes to the good progress these pupils make. The recommendations of the code of practice are followed well and appropriate individual education plans are provided for each pupil. Extra support is provided sensitively so that pupils do not feel different and can still take part in all school activities. Pupils learning English as an additional language are supported well so that they

can play a full part in the life of the school. Gifted pupils are extended well by being given challenging work and by being taught alongside older pupils, when this is appropriate.

28 The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visits linked to subjects, for example to Beamish and Craggs House to study how people lived in the recent past. There is also a good programme of personal, health and social education which deals well with issues such as bullying, the choices open to the pupils and the consequences arising from the decisions they make. The strength of this programme contributes well to the pupils' personal development. Sex education is not covered in the programme and is dealt with later by agreement with the middle schools.

29 There is a very good range of well-attended extra-curricular activities, including choir, country dancing, sports clubs, chess, reporters' club and creative club. This is much more than is usually available in a first school.

30 Good links have been established with other local schools. Regular meetings are held and systems have been developed to ensure that there is continuity in pupils' learning when they move into the middle schools. There are good systems for passing on information about pupils so that they can receive appropriate support and challenge in their next school.

31 Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. This is much better than at the time of the last inspection.

32 Spiritual awareness is developed through several aspects of the curriculum and the provision is good. Religious education in particular provides many opportunities for pupils to reflect on issues and beliefs. The poems that pupils write, some of which are on the web site, clearly indicate that they respond with feeling to the world around them. Issues such as Remembrance Sunday are explored, pupils visit the local cenotaph and their writing shows a sensitive response to the tragic loss of life. Assemblies provide good opportunities to reflect on a range of important issues. They are planned carefully to help pupils encounter celebrations from different cultures and faith groups as well as confront issues such as disability. The vicar is a regular visitor. Assemblies are a useful addition to pupils' experience in the school and also meet the requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

33 The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The school has a short and simple list of rules so that pupils are helped to understand what is acceptable behaviour. This is reinforced by all staff in the school. They provide very good role models themselves and support the school's code of conduct very consistently. The programme of personal, social and health education helps pupils explore issues such as bullying, resolving conflicts and taking responsibilities for actions, and pupils respond very thoughtfully. Older pupils help younger ones to develop an understanding of how they should conduct themselves in school through the buddy system. These arrangements all contribute to the school's strong ethos and support the very good relationships and strong sense of self-discipline within the school.

34 Social development is also promoted very well. Pupils are encouraged to work together collaboratively in many lessons and they mix together very well at playtimes and around the school. In lessons they almost always listen to each other well and show respect for each other's ideas and feelings; for example in an English lesson, planning to write about a space-craft landing, two pupils played the role of witnesses taking questions from pupils who took turns, deferred to each other and shared the time sensitively. Pupils in all classes are given responsibilities and in older classes they have responsibilities across the school, for example running the fruit shop, helping in assemblies and acting as buddies for younger pupils at lunchtimes. Overall the school has a strong sense of community and pupils feel pride in belonging to it.

35 The school's provision for cultural development is very good. There are many visits into the surrounding area linked to work in geography, history, science, art and design and English. Pupils get to know their local area and its heritage well, from walks around Ponteland itself and further afield to Craggside and the Roman wall. They are made aware of other cultures through the Eurozone Project and through school subjects, such as considering the provision of clean water in the third world countries as part of science. Cultural diversity is also explored through art and design, geography, history and English. Different faiths are explored in religious education and through assemblies; for example, the Jewish festival of Purim was the theme of an assembly presented by Years 3 and 4 pupils during the inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36 This is a very caring school in which pupils feel happy, safe and secure and where they can learn and develop. Staff and pupils are well known to each other and interact well together both inside and outside the classroom. Pupils are confident that they can approach their teachers should they have any problems either of a personal or academic nature, and that appropriate support and guidance would be forthcoming. The school provides a good level of care for its pupils; for example, during the recent foot and mouth disease outbreak when a number of pupils were unable to attend school due to the restrictions in place, arrangements were made to provide pupils with work to do at home.

37 The health and safety policy meets statutory requirements. Procedures for general risk assessments, including school trips, and fire risk assessments are in place and inspections are carried out on a regular basis. Overall, first aid provision is good; there are appropriate numbers of qualified first aiders, and good records of accidents and injuries are maintained. However, there are some inappropriate materials in some first aid kits. The school is successful in providing a safe working environment for staff and pupils, although a small number of minor areas of concern were brought to the attention of the headteacher during the inspection. The school's arrangements for child protection are good. The headteacher is the designated teacher. He has received appropriate training and has a good knowledge of child protection procedures. The school follows the local education guidelines relating to child protection which are linked to the Area Child Protection Committee procedures; however, these guidelines, as at the time of the last inspection, have not been developed into school policy. Whilst teaching staff are provided with the local authority guidance and have received appropriate training, lunchtime supervisors have not received child protection training. There are good links with outside agencies and the designated teacher attends case conferences as appropriate.

38 Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good, and this is a marked improvement since the last inspection when they were found to be unsatisfactory. A code of conduct clearly sets out the school's high expectations of good behaviour and is implemented well. Stickers and certificates are used very effectively to encourage good behaviour and effort and are clearly valued by pupils. Bullying is not tolerated and parents are provided with helpful guidance on how to identify it and the actions to take should they suspect their child is being bullied.

39 Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are good. Parents are advised of the need to notify the school if their children are absent for any reason. Staff monitor attendance on a daily basis and advise the headteacher if there are any unexplained absences. The headteacher makes direct contact with parents. The headteacher and the

education welfare officer monitor registers on a regular basis to check for any patterns of absence. Certificates for full attendance are awarded each term.

40 There are very comprehensive and effective systems to monitor the progress of all children. Statutory assessments in English and mathematics are made through national standardised tests Year 2. In Years 3 and 4 pupils undertake national (optional) assessments. The results of both statutory and optional standardised tests are carefully analysed to evaluate pupils' progress from year to year and are used as the basis for setting targets to raise standards for individuals and groups of pupils. This procedure is used effectively to raise standards by highlighting individual pupils who would benefit from help, for example through additional literacy support. It is also used in mathematics to facilitate the setting of pupils into ability groups. Test papers are analysed to identify the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and to make appropriate adjustments in order to raise standards. In addition, the school uses standardised tests to assess children's progress in reading and mathematics. The results of these are used to ensure that individual pupils are making good progress. Pupils are aware of their targets and work towards achieving them. Teachers regularly assess pupils' progress in almost all the other subjects and make judgements about which pupils have met, or exceeded, expected levels of attainment.

41 Pupils with special educational needs, English as an additional language and those who have been identified as being gifted are carefully assessed and the information gained is used to set precise targets for their learning. These are followed closely by teachers and support staff and enable these pupils to make good progress.

42 Procedures for checking pupils' progress have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now very good. Information from pupils' assessments has played a major part in improving standards. There is a comprehensive policy which is understood by all staff. This effective approach to checking pupils' progress and analysing their achievements is benefiting all pupils in the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43 The school has established a very good partnership with parents that makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning.

44 Parents' views of the school are excellent. Virtually all parents are pleased with the progress their children are making in their learning, the good teaching, the good standard of behaviour and the expectation that their children will work hard. Parents overwhelmingly agreed that their children liked coming to school, that it is helping them to become more responsible and mature, that leadership and management are significant strengths and that they are kept well informed about their children's progress. Parents' comments were very supportive with no concerns being expressed apart from some about the quality of the school's accommodation.

45 Parental involvement in children's learning is very good. A significant number of parents help in classrooms by listening to pupils read and with cookery and computers. Parents accompany school trips and arrange and support extra-curricular activities. The Parent Teachers Association (PTA) is very active in arranging social and fund-raising events and also manage the book shop and uniform shop. The PTA have raised substantial funds that have been used to improve facilities and learning resources, including the provision of a outdoor play area for younger pupils, all of which have had a positive impact on pupils' learning.

46 The quality and range of information provided for parents are very good. The school prospectus and governors' annual report are well presented and provide a wide range of information about the school and its activities. Parents receive a detailed newsletter every three weeks that ensures they are aware of current school issues. Each term, parents are provided with a calendar of events, and booklets that describe what will be taught in numeracy and literacy. Each half term, parents are provided with detailed information about what their children will be studying in other subjects. There is a comprehensive homework policy and both pupils and parents are provided with a weekly timetable of homework tasks. The reports to parents are good; they contain good quality information about children's progress, and areas for their development. The school runs parents' workshops which have covered literacy, numeracy and other curricular matters. Parents are invited to two formal consultation evenings and attendance at these meetings is very good. There are good arrangements to involve the parents of pupils with special educational needs in the development and review of their children's individual educational plans.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47 The school is extremely well led and managed. The headteacher has very high expectations and is determined to achieve excellence. He sets an excellent example through his high profile presence around the school, his availability to parents at the start and finish of every day and through his consistent commitment to teaching mathematics every day. The deputy headteacher also sets an excellent example through the very high quality of her teaching and her hard work in developing key elements of the school's life such as the assessment. Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher share a vision for the school that they work tirelessly towards. There is an exceptionally strong and positive ethos: it is caring, values everyone's efforts and strives for high standards and high quality educational provision. In a relatively short time, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have established effective and efficient structures to promote and support change and development. These include joint co-ordination of subjects, regular patterns of meetings, staff and governors' involvement in setting the school's agenda and reviewing progress towards shared goals. This is reflected in the common approaches to working, good communication and well-organised documentation.

48 Teachers and other staff have been delegated considerable responsibility to develop their subjects and aspects of the school's life. They have played key roles in developing documentation, schemes of work and assessment practices and in the monitoring of the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. Teamwork is strong and staff support each other very well.

49 Governors are very knowledgeable about the school and fulfil their responsibilities very well. They are appropriately involved in deciding what the school should do to improve, and play an important role in setting the budget and in supporting and monitoring developments through their links to subjects and involvement in analysing test results. They share the senior management's vision for a new school building and are proud of its achievements.

50 The school has good systems for monitoring, analysing and evaluating how well it is working. These involve the local education authority, governors and teachers in their roles as co-ordinators. Lessons are observed, pupils' work is sampled, results of tests are analysed to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance and action is taken on the basis of what has been found to make things better. The school development plan is modified to tackle weaknesses that are identified; for example, the relative weakness in writing in results in the Year 2 tests is included in the development plan. The main focus of lesson

observations has been mainly to see how well agreed approaches are being implemented and has not been as concerned with identifying individual teachers' strengths and weaknesses. Some relative weaknesses in a few individual teachers' skills still need to be tackled.

51 The school's development plan is focused on raising standards and is a detailed working document that takes a long-term view of school improvement. It is supported by very good financial planning and effective use of the principles of best value. Specific grants, such as those for special needs and English as an additional language, are used well to provide good quality support for these pupils.

52 The school has sufficient appropriately qualified and experienced teachers and support staff. Their professional development has been well targeted and effective in improving teachers' skills, for example in ICT. Performance management is well established and has been positively assessed by external evaluators. Routine administration is very effective and ensures that the school runs smoothly.

53 The school's accommodation is adequate and despite its poor structural condition has been kept attractive through the considerable efforts of staff and parents. It is very clean and enhanced by extensive displays that value pupils' efforts and promote their learning. The considerable efforts made by the staff and governors to achieve a new building are close to being realised.

54 Resources to support teaching and learning are at least satisfactory for all subject areas with some good resources available to support the teaching of the literacy strategy and religious education. Since the last inspection considerable improvements have been made to the resources available for ICT and, despite problems with finding a suitable space, a library has been established.

55 The overall effectiveness of the leadership and management is reflected in the excellent progress that has been made in tackling the key issues identified in the last report since the current headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed. Areas where there are weaknesses have almost all been identified and action has or is being taken to tackle them, such as improving the effectiveness of Foundation Stage curriculum.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

56 In order to raise even further the standards achieved and the quality of education provided the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Bring the quality of provision made for the pupils in the Foundation Stage up to same high level found in the rest of the school by:
 - a. Completing the appointment of a suitably qualified and experienced early years specialist;
 - b. Reviewing the provision made for learning through self-directed exploration to ensure that it supports and extends what is taught in more formal sessions;
 - c. Reviewing the use of time in literacy and numeracy lessons in reception classes so that they provide a more suitable balance between direct teaching and self-directed learning.

Please refer to paragraphs 16, 23 and 57 to 72.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	54
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	19

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	7	28	15	0	0	0
Percentage	2	14	55	29	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	26	264
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	NA	12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	13

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	34

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	5.9
National comparative data	5.6

School data	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 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	19	28	47

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	19	19
	Girls	28	28	27
	Total	47	47	46
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	98 (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	18	19
	Girls	28	27	28
	Total	47	45	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	96 (100)	100 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	13
Pakistani	18
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	3
White	172
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Yr – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27
Average class size	30

Education support staff: Yr – Y4

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	76

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	26
Number of pupils per FTE adult	13

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001
	£
Total income	464,499
Total expenditure	464,246
Expenditure per pupil	1,814
Balance brought forward from previous year	10,795
Balance carried forward to next year	11,048

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0

Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	323
Number of questionnaires returned	144

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	77	19	3	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	66	31	1	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	63	36	0	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	47	39	8	0	6
The teaching is good.	74	25	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	59	34	6	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	84	15	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	85	14	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	65	34	0	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	76	23	0	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	32	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	33	5	0	8

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

57 Children enter the nursery at the beginning of the year in which they are four and move into the reception classes the following year. Attainment on entry to nursery is broadly in line with national levels and children are confident and happy. Staff assess children's abilities at the beginning and end of nursery and again at the beginning and end of reception. In addition, each child's progress is monitored through ongoing assessments and children in need of additional support are identified at an early stage and benefit from additional teaching.

58 Parental links are established from the outset. A pre-admission meeting is held and parents are encouraged to spend time in classrooms. Children in the reception classes take reading books and word lists home. These links enhance children's confidence, ease their smooth transition from home to school and ensure continuing progress.

59 Staff in the nursery and reception classes work together to plan a variety of suitable activities that support the areas of learning and the Early Learning Goals. However, the school does not follow national guidance for the Foundation Stage curriculum, choosing instead to follow a similar but simplified programme of learning. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and sometimes good. Children make satisfactory progress throughout their time in nursery and reception but the more formal approach to some aspects of their learning limits opportunities for self-initiated learning through structured play. Most children will reach the expected levels in all areas of learning and some are likely to exceed expectations in elements of communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and personal, social and emotional development.

60 The nursery classroom is well organised and reflects all areas of learning. Children's work is displayed attractively and enhances the environment. However, in reception there are inconsistencies in the quality of the learning environment between the two classes. Where provision is good, resources are organised and attractively presented. For example, reading areas are enhanced by adding soft toys, a comfortable chair and books written by the children. Where provision is unsatisfactory, the presentation of resources, within areas of the classroom, limits opportunities for learning.

61 The Foundation Stage is in transition at present and has not benefited from the same degree of development as other aspects of school. Recent staff changes and problems in recruiting a Foundation Stage co-ordinator have added to these difficulties. However, the school is addressing this matter.

Personal, social and emotional development

62 Staff promote children's personal and social development through all areas of the curriculum and teaching of this area of learning is good. Many children are likely to exceed the expected levels of attainment for their age. Relationships between staff and children are very positive. Staff provide good role models, treating children with respect and kindness whilst establishing clear expectations about behaviour. Staff provide an environment where the children know that their efforts and achievements are valued. This means that they are motivated to do their best and concentrate well during lessons. Children know what is right and wrong and show consideration and kindness towards each other. For example, during 'snack time' nursery children, guided by sensitive adult support, are able to share and take turns to pass round the fruit bowl. However, whilst staff carefully plan each area of learning,

too little time is allowed for children to follow their own initiative or to develop their own interests in sustained periods of structured play. However, children in reception classes can maintain their concentration and involvement well throughout whole class lessons in literacy and numeracy.

Communication, language and literacy

63 The teaching of this area of learning is good; children make good progress in all aspects. Most children will achieve the levels expected and more able children are likely to exceed expected levels.

64 The majority of children speak to others with confidence. Most are able to talk about their interests and ideas. Nursery staff take part in role-play, modelling appropriate ways to speak to 'customers' in the 'hat shop'. This develops children's vocabulary, encourages them to work well together and sustains their play. Children can listen well to stories and contribute their own ideas.

65 In the nursery, staff make a good start in promoting an interest in letter sounds and stories. Children are well supported in learning to read their own names, for example from name cards. Children are encouraged to predict what will happen next in the story of Mrs Honey's Hat and to use the pictures to help them to understand the text. Some good links are made with other areas of learning, for example, between making hats and days of the week. There is little opportunity for reading practice, however, by, for example, providing simple instructions for mixing paints or by including questions on displays. In writing, whilst children can practise pencil control when completing worksheets, there are too few opportunities for them to learn early writing skills within other areas of the nursery.

66 In reception, staff build upon children's early experiences and the teaching of letter sounds gives most children a good basis for reading. Children can read a simple text, know some words by sight and can use their knowledge of letter sounds to work out unknown words. More able children read with increasing fluency. Teaching is good within short, focused sessions which actively involve children in their learning. For example, listening for sounds, making simple three-letter words or acting out main parts of a well-known story help children to develop literacy skills. With such support, children can write their own stories and almost all can sequence the story of the Three Little Pigs and write about it. They use their knowledge of letter sounds to 'have a go' at writing the words they need. The more able children can spell some common words. Another strength of the teaching is the links made with other areas of the curriculum. For example, making pig puppets and houses made of straw, sticks and bricks gives purpose and enjoyment to the children's learning. However, there is sometimes a dependence on individual worksheets which require children to spend a long time colouring and this is less successful in developing children's literacy skills.

Mathematical development

67 The teaching of mathematics is satisfactory in reception and good in nursery where a strength of the teaching is in making learning meaningful by relating it to work in other areas of the curriculum. Good use of questioning is used to promote the children's understanding of subtraction by taking away items from Mrs Honey's Hat. A lively pace within short teaching sessions moves the children's learning on and the use of 'mixed up squirrel' motivates the children to help to put numbers one to five in the right order. Children were less confident when counting the numbers backwards and simple number rhymes helped them to become more confident. Days of the week are discussed each day and the children look forward to 'happy Friday'.

68 In reception classes, mathematical skills are taught using the National Numeracy Strategy and within whole class lessons. There are limited opportunities for children to extend and consolidate their learning through other activities. For example, children learning to tell the time spent a whole hour being taught. There were no opportunities or resources provided for them to use their new knowledge and understanding in the class 'travel agents' by, for example, using simple timetables. Staff sometimes uses demonstrations well. They show children how to carry out simple investigations, such as how to find out how much water different containers will hold. Opportunities are then provided for children to play in the water tray. This consolidates their understanding and they are able to say when a container is full or empty. Some are beginning to be able to make sensible estimates of how much different containers will hold and know which containers will hold the most or the least. Most children can count to 20 and their learning is supported by number lines displayed in classrooms. Most children know how to form numbers correctly and many know how to tell the time using o'clock. Children make satisfactory progress; most will attain the expected levels and more able children will exceed them.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

69 Staff promote children's knowledge and understanding of the world well. Children make satisfactory progress and are on course to develop an understanding of the world around them at an expected level for their age. A strength of the provision is that learning is often linked to other areas of the curriculum. In the nursery, opportunities for role-play in the 'hat shop' enable children to develop an understanding of the world around them. They behave in appropriate ways as customers and sales assistants. Children in reception make pig puppets, for a puppet show of the Three Little Pigs using the materials selected by the staff. In both nursery and reception, children develop a sense of their own past and can recall special events in their lives such as holidays to Disneyland. Work on display and photographic evidence show that children are helped to develop understanding of a range of cultures and religions through experiences related to Chinese New Year, Eid, Harvest and Christmas. Children have access to a computer and some can use the mouse as they work on a range of programs.

Physical development

70 By the end of the reception year, most children will have the level of co-ordination and the physical skills expected for their age. In physical education lessons children can move with confidence and safety around the hall. In nursery children are gaining confidence in balancing, climbing, jumping and landing. In reception children can stretch, curl, run, crawl, and jump with growing control in response to taped music. Currently, opportunities for physical development out of doors are restricted because of difficulties with the outdoor play spaces. There are opportunities for children to develop manipulative skills by using cutters in playdough, and through water and sand play. Teaching is satisfactory overall and sometimes good. In a well-taught lesson, a reception class worked hard and consistently towards improving their jumping and balancing skills as the teacher maintained a lively pace and skilfully developed their skills.

Creative development

71 Children in nursery and reception can use a variety of art materials to draw, paint and make collages. By the end of the reception year, they are on course to attain the expected levels for their age. Teaching is satisfactory but has some weaknesses. Much of this work is planned by the staff and there are too few opportunities for children to communicate their own ideas, thoughts and feelings. Paint is presented in ready mixed form and this restricts opportunities for children to learn how to mix paints to an appropriate consistency for

themselves. In music, children enjoy singing rhymes and songs but have limited access to musical instruments to explore sounds.

Summary

72 The provision is satisfactory overall and sometimes good but does have weaknesses. There are too few opportunities for pupils to learn through exploration and structured play activities, particularly in reception. Staff in nursery and reception classes work effectively together to plan activities to meet children's needs across all areas of learning. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and there have been improvements in the teaching of early reading skills.

ENGLISH

73 Standards in English are well above national expectations at the end of Year 2. Last year's seven year olds achieved standards that were well above average in national tests in reading and writing. The results were also well above those achieved by similar schools. The number of pupils attaining at the higher levels in reading and writing was above national expectations and when compared with similar schools. There are no national comparisons for standards in Years 3 and 4. However, inspection evidence indicates that attainment is above expectations and pupils achieve good standards in all aspects of English. Since the last inspection the school has taken steps to improve the quality of teaching and has introduced rigorous procedures for assessing children's learning and monitoring progress. As a result, standards have risen. Teaching is good and results in pupils learning well. The standards of work in lessons are above expectations and pupils with English as an additional language, gifted pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress.

74 Standards in Years 1 and 2 are above average in speaking and listening. Pupils are confident speakers and readily engage in discussions. They listen to teachers and to the views and opinions of others in whole class teaching. The use of paired discussions is effective in encouraging all children to share their ideas with others. Drama activities also present pupils with opportunities to use language in different ways. Pupils acting out the Three Little Pigs story were able to articulate well. Pupils in Year 2 can ask appropriate questions of a teacher role-playing the character of 'Lao Lao'. They are keen to read aloud their work to others and are beginning to use appropriate intonation when reading speech.

75 Standards in Years 3 and 4 are above average in speaking and listening and pupils readily share their thoughts with other children and with adults. Earlier work in school is successfully built upon. Pupils are taught, and can use, appropriate vocabulary, not only in English but also in other subjects such as science, mathematics and music. Pupils willingly give well thought-out answers in response to teachers' questions. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language are well supported in lessons and teachers are sensitive to their needs. During the inspection, a pupil who speaks German was encouraged to share his language with the rest of the class, enabling pupils to learn from each other and gain insights into another language. Pupils are given opportunities to speak in a wide range of different situations. During lessons, teachers ensure that the behaviour and attention are good so all can listen during direct teaching and when other pupils are speaking. Pupils know that their teachers and support assistants will listen to them and that their views and opinions are welcomed and respected. This is a reflection of the very good relationships evident in classrooms throughout the school.

76 In reading, pupils' attainment in Year 2 is above national expectations. The school has improved the quality and range of reading materials available to pupils since the last inspection. Teachers introduce pupils to a range of fiction and reference books by different authors beyond the school's structured reading materials. Pupils in Year 2 are developing a range of strategies for working out unknown words. Pupils can break down words into sounds, use clues from the pictures and self-correct when the text does not make sense. Small group work with the teacher, for example to teach comprehension skills, is particularly effective in encouraging them to read for meaning and with expression. Pupils enjoy reading and can talk about what they have read. Their skills in using the contents page, index and glossary of a book to find information are effective.

77 In Years 3 and 4, pupils' attainment in reading is above what would be expected for this age group and they make good progress. Teachers continue to develop pupils' reading and research skills and an increasing range of suitable texts is used to develop skills. Good quality reading materials are used not only to stimulate pupils' interest in reading but also to improve the quality of their writing. Pupils can talk about favourite authors such as Roald Dahl, J K Rowling, Jacqueline Wilson and Enid Blyton. They can retell important aspects of what they have read and read with accuracy and fluency. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language are making good progress.

78 Teachers assess reading thoroughly and monitor their progress regularly. Pupils needing additional support are identified early and appropriate support is provided. The work of the support assistant providing Early Literacy Support for pupils in Year 1 and Additional Literacy Support for pupils in Year 3 is very effective. Teachers keep good records to monitor pupils' reading progress. The use of reading diaries, which act as a good two-way dialogue between home and school, is effective in ensuring that most children get regular practice and keeps parents informed about their child's progress. The school library is an attractive but small area with an inadequate supply of books. The school is aware of the shortage of books and is seeking ways to address this.

79 Attainment in writing is good in Years 1 to 4 and children make good progress. Teachers develop pupils' basic skills by involving them in purposeful work. For example, in Year 2 pupils write stories for other classes and produce non-fiction books for the class library. A strength of the teaching throughout school is the provision of appropriate support materials, such as word banks and writing frames, which pupils use to enable them to develop independent writing skills. Pupils use these materials to support the writing process without becoming over-dependent upon them. Pupils in Year 1 can spell simple words correctly and their handwriting is clear with well-formed letters. In Year 2 children are beginning to spell more complex words and some are beginning to produce clear, legible and joined handwriting. Throughout school, good work from pupils spanning a range of abilities is used as a model for others. Older pupils are able to develop their writing over several days. For example, the writing based on 'War of the Worlds' seen in Years 3 and 4 during the inspection week gave pupils an opportunity to develop their writing throughout the week. The pupils clearly enjoyed, and were proud of, their work and produced writing of a high standard, for example, "I stood still like a stone statue, afraid to move in case I was spotted. Fear invaded and ran down my back." They can write for different purposes and higher attaining pupils in Year 4 develop and sustain their ideas using more complex grammatical structures and effective vocabulary to reach a conclusion which hold the reader's attention.

80 The quality of teaching is good in all year groups and enables pupils to make good progress and to enjoy their learning. Teachers know the subject well and explain to pupils what is to be learned and how to be successful. Lessons are well planned, with appropriate activities for higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Teachers use a lively approach, provide stimulating resources to engage the pupils' interest and use effective

questioning to probe their understanding. Time at the end of lessons is used to reinforce the main teaching points and to refine pupils' work. A calm working environment is established and this enables pupils to concentrate on their work. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their work and check it against the success criteria. Pupils are involved in their own learning through the effective use of group and individual targets which help them to improve their work. However, reference to these targets by teachers is not consistent throughout the school. As a result, some pupils are able to talk confidently about the next stages in their learning whilst others are not. Work is marked regularly, but the quality is inconsistent. When marking is done well, pupils are given specific guidance on how to improve their work. Sometimes, however, there are no comments about how the work could be improved. Pupils use their literacy skills effectively in other subjects such as history, geography and religious education. However, computers are not used widely as a tool in literacy lessons. Classroom assistants are used very effectively to support small groups of lower attaining pupils, enabling them to make good progress.

81 The management and co-ordination of English are good. The co-ordinator has worked effectively with teachers, pupils and parents to raise standards. Some monitoring of classroom teaching has been undertaken to ensure the effective implementation of the literacy strategy. Data has been analysed from national and school-based tests and strengths have been identified and weaknesses addressed. Assessment information is used well to track the progress of individual pupils and the progress of each year group. Parents are actively involved in their children's education. They are kept informed about what is happening in school and how they can support their children's learning. Homework is used effectively to support the work done in school and makes a significant contribution to raising standards. Resources for the subject are satisfactory, overall, and are generally used well. However, there are too few library books and the school is working to address the shortfall. The literacy strategy has been implemented and is now being effectively modified to meet the needs of the pupils and raise standards still further.

MATHEMATICS

82 Pupils achieve very well in mathematics. The Year 2 test results have been in the top five percent of all schools since 1998 and are very high when compared to the average for similar schools, based on pupils' entitlement to free school meals. In 2001 all the pupils achieved the expected level 2 and over half the pupils achieved the higher level 3. There has been no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls over the last four years, with both achieving well above the average for their peers across the country. The optional national tests for Year 4 pupils also indicate attainment well above the average for schools nationally.

83 The pupils currently in Year 2 are working above expectations with many pupils attempting work intended for nine year olds across the different aspects of mathematics. Given that their attainment at the start of Year 1 is close to average they are achieving well. Their ability to work with numbers is good. They can work out answers in their heads speedily and can add, subtract, multiply and divide accurately when working on paper. Pupils make use of a variety of strategies when calculating, for example looking for 'near tens' to simplify adding and subtracting and when adding larger numbers they use partitioning in different ways: $14+23 = 23+10$? $33+4 = 37$ or $23+17 = (20+3)+(10+7) = (20+10) + (7+3) = 40$. Almost all have a good understanding of odd and even numbers and can identify and continue number patterns. Their knowledge of shapes is good and includes symmetry and right angles as well as the names and properties of two-dimensional and common three-dimensional shapes. They can estimate and measure accurately using centimetres and

metres. They are able to collect information and record what they have found using bar charts and can interpret graphs produced by others.

84 The oldest pupils in school who are in Year 4 are achieving very well. Most of the lower attaining pupils are working around the expected level and higher attaining pupils are working at levels well above what is usually expected for their age. All have developed good working habits and are able to check their answers using inverse operations, for example using subtraction to check an addition. They multiply numbers in their heads and use their knowledge of number facts successfully with large numbers. Higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of place value, including decimals, calculate accurately with large numbers, work out equivalent fractions and handle mixed numbers. They apply their mathematical knowledge well when solving problems, choosing appropriate operations and approaches. Their knowledge of shapes is good and they use a variety of graphs, including line graphs to present information they have collected. They are weaker on other aspects of statistical work, such as their understanding of the mean, mode and median. Average attaining pupils are working at similar levels. Lower attaining pupils calculate effectively with tens and units and have a secure understanding of place value involving hundreds, tens and units. They understand fractions and work out fractions of whole numbers and round numbers, including those with decimal parts. They have similar skills in measuring to the other pupils and understand about rotation around a point and co-ordinates.

85 The teaching of mathematics is good overall and varies between satisfactory and good in Years 1 and 2 to good and very good in Years 3 and 4. A strength in virtually all the teaching is the match of work to pupils' levels of attainment. This is helped by the setting of pupils in each key stage and teachers are also careful to identifying groups within each set. Lessons almost always have clear objectives that teachers follow closely, ensuring that there is a sharp focus to what is taught. Very occasionally, planning does not take enough account of what pupils can already do and as a result does not challenge them sufficiently. This was the case with some higher attaining Year 2 pupils who were given work to do on paper that many could already work out in their heads. In many lessons, particularly in Years 3 and 4, teachers carefully explain the objectives for the lesson to the pupils and this works well in guiding their efforts.

86 Resources such as number squares and lines and counting apparatus are used very well to support explanations about calculating with numbers. At other times, teachers make very good use of well-chosen aids to develop new ideas, such as sorting hoops to successfully promote an understanding of intersecting sets or large visual displays to focus class discussions on appropriate scales to use for line graphs.

87 In many lessons, teachers' challenging questions and consistent use of technical language ensured that pupils clarified their thinking and deepened their knowledge. In these lessons, teachers also maintain a demanding pace that kept pupils' involvement high and resulted in considerable amounts of work being completed in lessons. The pace in some lessons in Years 1 and 2 was sometimes a little slow and this led to some pupils losing concentration and not being as fully involved as they could have been. Occasionally, when individuals were off task this was not picked up by the teacher and these pupils did not benefit from the lesson as much as others in the class. However, in almost all lessons teacher managed pupils' behaviour very well and all used praise very effectively to promote positive attitudes and good working relationships.

88 A very positive feature of teaching is the regular, purposeful use of homework to give pupils' opportunities to practise skills, such as measuring, and to strengthen their knowledge of aspects of mathematics, such as shapes, as well as of number facts. Homework, as well

as class work, is regularly marked and teachers often provide useful comments to help pupils improve.

89 The assessment of pupils' learning in mathematics is very thorough and makes a considerable contribution to the high standards being achieved. A careful record is maintained of how individuals coped with new elements that are taught and this information is used to fine tune what is taught in subsequent lessons. Each half term more detailed assessments are made to check on pupils' progress over time and to see if any of them would benefit from changing sets. Annual assessments are analysed to identify strengths and weaknesses in order to modify the longer-term plans for each year group. Assessments are also used to identify targets for different groups of pupils to work towards in order to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills.

90 The subject is very well led by a very hardworking co-ordinator who has developed and continues to review and modify detailed schemes of work for each year group. She also undertakes analysis of test information and has set up much of the structure that supports assessment and record keeping. She has a good understanding of the effectiveness of teaching and learning through her observation of lessons and analysis of pupils' work. Considerable improvement has been made in the subject since the last inspection. Results are now excellent, teaching has improved and the curriculum and assessment practices have been completely overhauled.

SCIENCE

91 Standards in science are high. In the teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2001, all the pupils reached the expected level 2 compared with 89 percent nationally, and 51 percent went on to the higher level 3, which is more than twice as many as in most schools. The picture is similar for the oldest pupils in the school. The school's assessments of pupils show that virtually all achieve the level 3, which is expected for their age, and 31 percent reach level 4. This is well above average compared to all schools and much the same as results in schools in a similar context to Ponteland.

92 Pupils currently in Year 2 are producing good standards of work, but not quite as high as last year's assessments indicate. They have a good grasp of the facts in the work they have covered and a good understanding of the importance of inquiry in science. Pupils understand that an electrical circuit needs to be complete if it is to work and are beginning to use the correct symbols for circuit diagrams. In their work on living things, they have covered the requirements of a healthy diet and understand the need for eating a range of foods and taking adequate exercise. More able pupils are able to group foods into different categories and say what they contribute to the overall diet. Pupils know the names of a good range of materials including some different types of metals, and link their properties to the way they are used, for example a thick piece of wood is good as a table leg because it is rigid. In investigative work, pupils understand the need for tests to be fair, carry out investigations well, observe carefully and record their findings accurately.

93 Pupils make even better progress in Years 3 and 4 and many currently in Year 4 are working at levels that would be good for Year 6 pupils. They have good levels of scientific knowledge and even better understanding of scientific enquiry and skills in research. The work they do builds very effectively on that which is covered in Years 1 and 2. They develop their understanding of electrical circuits, for example, use conventional symbols accurately, understand the function of switches and begin to understand a series of circuits.

94 Their understanding is supported by links to other subjects, for example making a torch in design and technology and considering the water cycle in geography alongside work on vaporisation and condensation in materials. The strong emphasis given to enquiry and raising questions helps the pupils develop the ability to solve problems and apply their scientific knowledge in new situations. For example, pupils were able to explain where switches could be placed to control each of the bulbs in a complicated parallel circuit that they had not seen before.

95 Pupils have very positive attitudes to science and enjoy the challenge of finding things out. They listen attentively and follow instructions but are also increasingly independent and willing to raise questions of their own. In practical work they use equipment safely, collaborate well together and organise their work effectively.

96 Science is taught well and teaching is very good in the older classes. Lessons are planned carefully, with clear objectives and interesting activities. Teachers know the material well and are sufficiently confident to encourage pupils to raise their own questions and to answer them fully. Lessons are often lively and stimulating. Learning is made memorable, for example impaling an apple on a pick-axe to demonstrate the function of a canine tooth, and pupils are fully engaged by effective questioning in almost all lessons. Teachers know the pupils well and encourage individuals to do their best by matching questions to their particular level of understanding, receiving their answers sensitively and sometime probing for deeper understanding and further explanation.

97 The science curriculum is very well organised, with the scheme of work based on national guidance adapted to suit local circumstances. This ensures that pupils cover the subject thoroughly and there is good progress as they move through the school. The co-ordinator is very effective and her leadership has ensured that there is a consistent approach, which emphasises enquiry and encourages pupils to develop understanding of science rather than just learn the facts. Pupils' work is assessed accurately and they are helped to understand what they need to do to achieve each level in the National Curriculum. Marking helps to encourage pupils, mistakes are corrected, but marking rarely sets targets for improvement. Resources for science are adequate. The subject contributes well to pupils' development of language and literacy skills through the use of specialist vocabulary, and the need to explain complex ideas orally and to describe accurately in writing how an enquiry was conducted. Numeracy skills are supported through the use of graphs and accurate measuring, particularly in older classes. Computers are used effectively in science to handle data and to research information, although the school currently has very little software specifically for science.

98 Progress in science has been very good since the last inspection.

ART AND DESIGN

99 Although no art lessons were observed, analysis of pupils' completed work and displays around the school show that standards are above expectations at the end of Years 2 and 4. Pupils achieve good results using a range of media, including art packages on computers, and they demonstrate a good understanding of the work of famous artists, such as Van Gogh, Lowry and Clarice Cliffe.

100 Pupils get off to a good start in Year 1 where, for example, they have produced detailed line work in their landscapes and in their pencil drawings of houses. They have drawn effective pastel landscapes in the style of Van Gogh and used Dazzle, a computer art program, to paint pictures of cats and dogs. In Year 2, pupils show well-developed skills in

mixing colours in their painted patterns and fine attention to detail in their texture patterns, using felt pens. They have also made their own printing blocks and used them to reproduce very effective decorative patterns in the style of William Morris. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have studied the decorative pottery designs of Clarice Cliffe very carefully and developed their own high quality designs that reflect Cliffe's work very well in the use of colour and pattern. Their carefully observed pencil portraits of each other have been very effectively extended into large stylised portraits in the style of Modigliani.

101 Pupils use sketchbooks well to practise techniques and to plan their work. The quality of the pupils' work, its range and the progress made in techniques, as pupils move through the school, indicate good teaching and a consistent implementation of the well-planned curriculum.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

102 Standards in design and technology are sound. Pupils follow a well-planned programme for the subject which introduces them to a good range of materials and techniques. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education in design and technology.

103 By the end of Year 2, pupils understand the importance of setting out their ideas before they start making things. They sketch their design ideas and often add notes to explain things further. The things they make are often reasonably well finished, reflecting care and some attention to detail. Pupils use tools such as scissors reasonably carefully, but have not had much experience of using tools, such as saws or drills, for working with harder materials.

104 Pupils continue to develop their skills and understanding appropriately in Years 3 and 4. By the time they leave school, they produce well-drawn design sketches, which show imagination and also some understanding of how different materials can be used. Practical work is carried out well and pupils take care to produce good quality work. For example, the wallets they have made from felt have been designed using ideas that the pupils have collected appropriately from commercially-made wallets that they have seen and from analysing what they wanted to achieve. Although they were restricted in the main material they could use, they have chosen colours carefully and also considered how the wallet would close. The material has been cut out carefully and most pupils have sewn it carefully and accurately, resulting in good outcomes. Designs for functional chairs to match characters are particularly imaginative and the finished products, made at home often with considerable support from parents, make an impressive display. Many of the techniques that have been used to produce the chairs could be introduced to all pupils and so extend their understanding of how resistant materials can be worked.

105 Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject and particularly enjoy making things. They often collaborate well and support each other with ideas and help during the making stages of projects. They understand the need to work safely and pupils, particularly the older ones, evaluate their work, saying how it matches up to the original intention and how it could be improved.

106 Teaching is sound. Lessons are planned well and teachers' own understanding of the subject is satisfactory, although some are less confident in using resistant materials than cord and textiles. All succeed in making the subject enjoyable and worthwhile for the pupils.

107 The subject is co-ordinated well and has improved considerably since the last inspection. The extensive and detailed scheme of work supports teachers well in their planning and ensures good progression across the school. There are good links with other subjects, particularly science through the projects on torches and insulated boxes, which help to reinforce pupils' understanding of science concepts, as well as providing a firm knowledge base for the pupils' design work.

GEOGRAPHY

108 Standards in geography are at the expected level by the end of Year 2 and higher by the end of Year 4 where many of the pupils are working about the level expected of Year 6 pupils.

109 By the end of Year 2, pupils have a sound understanding of how a map can be used to record a route and to show where different features are to be found. They build up a good grasp of the local area from first-hand experience by walking round Ponteland. From this, they recognise that facilities such as the main shops tend to be in the centre and housing towards the edges. Careful teaching ensures that they learn and use the correct geographical vocabulary and this is a useful foundation for later work. Virtually all the pupils have visited other places and are aware of some of the differences. This understanding is focused by studying the stories of the Isle of Struay, so that pupils develop a sound grasp of how physical features and people's lives differ in different localities.

110 Work in Years 3 and 4 builds on these foundations very successfully and pupils develop a good understanding of geographical concepts such as types of region and reasons for a settlement to develop. By the end of Year 4, they use a good range of specialist vocabulary confidently and correctly. As a result of the approach taken by the teacher, they have good skills in geography, use maps and atlases well and bring information together from different sources to answer questions. In a very successful lesson looking at the course of the River Tyne, pupils were able to match aerial photographs to their location on Ordnance Survey maps using a wide range of clues, for example matching forest areas, road bridges and buildings to find the correct spot.

111 Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject and respond particularly well to the enquiry-based approach that is adapted in many lessons. They enjoy searching for information and answering questions from what they have found. Their written work is often carefully produced and they take a pride in doing well.

112 The subject is taught well and very well in the older classes. Lessons have clear objectives, and are planned well, benefiting from the subject's clear scheme of work. Teachers place a strong emphasis on the correct use of technical vocabulary and this supports the school's approach to language and literacy well. Opportunities are also taken to make use of computers, including adding information on a study of the River Pont to the school's web site so that it can be used by other schools. This strengthens pupils' understanding of the subject as well as extending their computer skills.

113 The subject is co-ordinated well. There is good supporting documentation which helps teachers plan effectively. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are sound and resources are adequate. Overall, there has been very good progress since the last inspection.

HISTORY

114 Teaching of history was only seen in Year 1, where it was good and pupils achieved above expectations in these lessons. Pupils' completed work shows their attainment to be clearly above expectations by Year 2 and Year 4.

115 A strong feature in pupils' learning is their ability to use historical sources. This reflects the emphasis given to use of artefacts, photographs, documents and visits and visitors to school to stimulate pupils' interest and to provide a firm basis for their studies of the past. The pupils in Year 1, for example, have gained good insights into life in Victorian times through their exploration of flat irons, carpet beaters and dolly tubs. In Year 2, pupils have produced extended empathetic accounts of the life of people living and working at Cragside House, based on the information they gained during their visit. They have also made effective comparisons between life then and now using photographs and artefacts. They can recount the main events and achievements of famous people from Victorian times, such as Grace Darling, Florence Nightingale and Lord Armstrong.

116 By Year 4, pupils have developed a secure understanding of the chronology of the recent times. They have a good understanding of the main causes of the Second World War and which countries were involved in fighting it. Through their research and use of a range of sources, including contemporary newspapers, photographs and the recollections of local senior citizens, they have built a good understanding of what everyday life was like during the war including the Blitz and rationing. Their accounts of the life of Ann Frank show that they have developed insights into the nature of the Holocaust.

117 Evidence from pupils' work, as well as the two lessons seen in Year 1 classes, points to teaching being good. Pupils are given challenging tasks that require them to enquire, research and record in their own words and diagrams what they have found out. Teachers make effective use of national guidance to aid their planning and keep appropriate records of the progress that pupils have made. This information is shared with the middle schools to support continuity in their learning across the next phase of education. The subject is effectively led and managed by a co-ordinator who monitors coverage and makes appropriate contributions to the school's development plan.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

118 The school has improved the provision for ICT greatly since the last inspection. Pupils now cover the full range of the subject. Standards are at the expected level for pupils in Year 2 and higher by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4.

119 Pupils in Years 1 and 2 develop their confidence in using the computer well. They use the mouse readily to select objects on the screen and to operate the menus. In word-processing programs, they know how to change the style of letters and correct mistakes by deleting. Many do not yet know the keyboard very well, have to search for letters and this makes their writing slow. They use the painting program well and have produced work of their own design and also in the style of other artists, such as Mondrian. Pupils understand that computers can carry out a sequence of instructions and have used a Roamer floor turtle successfully, solving problems by keying in the correct sequence of movements to avoid obstacles and arrive at a chosen destination.

120 In Years 3 and 4, pupils develop their skills well, although many of them remain slow in their use of the keyboard, often using just one finger to work the keys. By the time they

leave the school, pupils are able to launch a program from the menus, operate it through the normal conventions and print out their work at the end. They understand that the computer can help them communicate information and handle data. Using word-processing programs and publishing programs, they have produced attractively laid out poems on the theme of winter, with background, borders and images added to strengthen the feelings they convey. They have produced different sorts of graphs to display their findings from a traffic survey and science enquiries and used painting programs to produce repeated patterns, choosing shapes and colours well. As part of a geography topic, pupils are adding new pages to the school's web site, giving information on the River Pont.

121 Pupils enjoy using ICT. They collaborate well together when they have to share a computer, taking turns fairly and discussing what they are to do. They listen carefully to instructions and work responsibly, even when they are not directly supervised.

122 The subject is taught well. All teachers have received training in the use of ICT through the national scheme and have at least appropriate skills. Many have well-developed skills and are enthusiastic about the use of ICT in the school.

123 The ICT curriculum is well planned with good progression from year to year. There is a strong emphasis on the development of basic skills and also some links to other subjects where the skills can be used, such as drawing graphs in mathematics. At the moment, the school makes less use of ICT in simulations or illustrations within subjects, such as, for example, life in Rome within history. The school has created a small computer suite out of a former cloakroom. This is well equipped with good quality machines and provides a very useful extra teaching space. Being able to work with groups of pupils in the suite has been a significant factor in raising standards in the subject.

MUSIC

124 Insufficient music was seen during the inspection to make an overall judgement about standards and the quality of teaching. In lessons, pupils in Years 3 and 4 can identify rhythmic and melodic patterns and match a clapped phrase to the rhythm written in standard notation. Pupils throughout school enjoy music and sing tunefully and with enthusiasm. The school enjoys a good working relationship with the Peripatetic Music Service and a number of pupils undertake weekly instrumental tuition. The work of the peripatetic teachers makes a valuable contribution to the school's music and pupils who have instrumental tuition are achieving well above expectations.

125 Evidence gained from listening to children sing in assemblies and in the school choir, discussions with the music co-ordinator and documentary evidence from the recent past, shows that music is a strong aspect of school life. By the time they leave school, pupils have had a wide range of musical experiences and have taken part in many musical events which develop their skills, abilities and interests. Events such as the 'Ponteland Proms', 'Singing for Pleasure', and choir performances for the local community give purpose to children's learning. Presently, the school choir is learning traditional songs from the North East in readiness for a concert for the local senior citizens. In addition, music is used to create particular moods to enhance learning in other areas of the curriculum, for example, to set the scene in assemblies, as a stimulus for pupils' writing and to create a relaxed atmosphere in art lessons.

126 There is a policy, a long-term plan and a scheme of work in place, which support the teaching of music. The music co-ordinator monitors planning and gives advice and support to staff. She is committed to developing music in school and has raised the profile of music

generally and singing in particular since the last inspection. There is an adequate number and range of musical instruments and taped music in school to support children's learning.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

127 Pupils make satisfactory progress in physical education and benefit from a broad and well-balanced curriculum which reflects all areas of the National Curriculum. Standards of attainment are in line with national expectations and have been maintained since the last inspection.

128 In dance, Years 1 and 2 pupils successfully control their body movements to represent water flowing in different ways. In gymnastics, they can stretch, curl and roll. They can travel in a variety of ways and are starting to combine the movements to form a sequence. Pupils have appropriate awareness of space and are well co-ordinated. They work well in pairs and are beginning to be able to evaluate their work and are supportive of each other. Pupils work confidently and try hard to improve the standard of their work.

129 In games lessons, Years 3 and 4 pupils build upon their physical education skills. They can control a ball well, hitting it to a partner with increasing accuracy. The teacher gives very clear instruction about correct body position, enabling pupils to improve their performance.

130 Pupils enjoy physical education lessons and behave well. Pupils have positive attitudes and are prepared to give of their best and try hard to improve their performance. Relationships are very good and pupils co-operate well with each other whilst working with a partner. All pupils, including those with special education needs and English as an additional language, are making satisfactory progress.

131 The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations which are reflected in the pupils' rate of progress in acquiring skills. Appropriate use is made of demonstration and clear guidance is given enabling pupils to improve their performance. All lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives and good links are made with other subjects. For example, in dance, pupils use the work of the artist Monet as a stimulus for their work on flowing water movements.

132 There is a long-term plan and a detailed scheme of work which ensures progression of skills in all aspects of physical education. Resources are satisfactory. The accommodation is limited and is used for many other purposes. A good range of out of school activities gives pupils additional opportunities to develop their interest and skills. In Years 1 and 2, pupils can take part in country dancing and in the summer there is a football club for the older pupils. Photographic evidence provided by the school indicates that physical activity for health and enjoyment are very much part of school life; the pupils have taken part in indoor ice-skating, sponsored fun runs and gymnastics displays.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

133 Pupils achieve well in religious education. By Years 2 and 4, they are achieving better than is expected. Their learning is well balanced between finding out about the nature and characteristics of religions and their teachings. The school has decided to cover more major world faiths than the locally agreed syllabus suggests in order to better reflect the ethnic mix of the school. This is helping to develop pupils' understanding of religious concepts, such as holy books.

134 Pupils in Year 1 are already gaining an understanding of common features found in religions, including places of worship, special books and spiritual guides and can name those in the religions they have talked about, such as a synagogue, the torah and a rabbi in Judaism. They know about some major celebrations, including the Passover, and quickly related new learning in a lesson about the Seder Meal to this significant event in Jewish history. By Year 2, pupils are developing thoughtful ideas about the nature of God and of the meaning of the stories told by Jesus, including the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan and the Lost Sheep. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 continue to build effectively on what they have learned in Years 1 and 2. They understand that the Bible includes 66 books and is divided into two parts and that the New Testament tells of the life of Jesus. Their understanding of special books has extended to include an understanding that the Qur'an records Allah's revelations to Mohammed. Their recent work on Islam has also enabled pupils to gain a good understanding of the Five Pillars of Islam and how these provide a framework for Muslims' lives. Pupils are able to compare aspects of these with the guidance provided by the Ten Commandments to Jews and Christians. As in Years 1 and 2, pupils in Years 3 and 4 reflect on the meanings of stories from the Bible, including Jonah, the Tower of Babel and the parable of the Unmerciful Servant.

135 Teaching is good. Teachers are well prepared and knowledgeable. They plan lessons well: they have clear objectives that effectively build on earlier learning and ensure that teaching has a sharp focus. They make good use of artefacts and photographs to support their explanations. They show respect for the beliefs and customs of the religions that are being studied. They encourage pupils to be reflective and thoughtful through their questioning and the activities they provide. Pupils respond well in lessons and are developing a real interest in the beliefs and practices found in different cultures. This subject makes a strong contribution to the spiritual, moral and cultural development of the pupils.