

INSPECTION REPORT

SUGAR HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Newton Aycliffe

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114207

Headteacher: Mr F Ridley

Reporting inspector: Mrs L Clark
25431

Dates of inspection: 7 - 10 May 2002

Inspection number: 245871

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 - 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Sheraton Road
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County Durham

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs L Swift

Date of previous inspection: June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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25431	Mrs L Clark Registered inspector	English English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are the pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
11368	Mrs K Lee Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
21024	Mr R Robinson Team inspector	Mathematics Provision for children in the foundation stage	
21045	Mrs S Walker Team inspector	Geography History	How well is the school led and managed?
14851	Mr G Laws Team inspector	Music Physical education Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
28200	Mr P Stevens Team inspector	Art Religious education Equal opportunities	
21094	Mr J Brennan Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sugar Hill Primary school is larger than average, having 468 pupils on roll aged from three to 11 years. Seventy-eight children attend the nursery part-time. The school, situated near the centre of Newton Aycliffe, is on the edge of a large industrial estate where the recent closures of newly established industries have contributed to high unemployment locally. Sugar Hill Primary serves the local residential area, which is a mixture of rented and privately owned corporation housing. The pupils' attainment on entry to school is well below average. Although the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average at 12 per cent, the socio-economic backgrounds of pupils do not reflect this: a large proportion of parents have several part-time jobs and few have higher education qualifications. Twenty-seven per cent of pupils have special educational needs which is above average; half of these have moderate or specific learning difficulties and a small proportion have emotional, physical or behavioural problems. The proportion of pupils with statements of special need is very high at nearly four per cent. Almost all pupils are white. A small number of pupils come from other European countries and elsewhere but although English is an additional language for them none are at an early stage of language acquisition. The vast majority of pupils have attended the school's nursery. The school is involved in many local and national initiatives such as piloting a further reading project. It is recognised as an Investor in People and in Children and recently received a local award 'Celebrating Success'. The school is currently over-subscribed.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school. Pupils achieve very well. The quality of teaching is good or better in a high proportion of lessons. Very good leadership and excellent financial management ensure an orderly and secure environment which is very well resourced for learning and in which pupils can flourish. This is achieved at a cost per pupil which is average in comparison with similar schools: accordingly the school gives very good value for money

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve very well.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to work, they behave very well and their personal development is also very good.
- There is much excellent and very good teaching, particularly in the upper junior classes.
- The leadership is very good and financial management is excellent.
- The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
- The curriculum is very good and provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

What could be improved

- Standards in mathematics, information and communications technology (ICT) and art and design by the end of Years 2 and 6 and in English by the end of Year 2.
- Make better provision to meet the needs of the more able and talented pupils

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 good progress since it was last inspected in June 1997. All the issues raised at that time have been conscientiously and thoroughly tackled, with a very marked improvement in

the quality of the curriculum and procedures for assessing pupils' work, which are now very good. The development of pupils' independence and their capacity to research information on their own is satisfactory overall: there is very good provision for pupils in Years 4 to 6 to work independently. The leadership and management provided by the governors, headteacher and senior staff have also improved and the quality of financial planning for educational priorities is now excellent. The quality of teaching has also greatly improved. The accommodation has improved significantly and provides a stimulating and vibrant environment for learning with very good resources and library facilities. As a result of these improvements pupils achieve very well. The school has made good improvement overall.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	D	C	C	C
mathematics	C	C	D	C
science	A	B	C	B

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

Standards in English, mathematics and science of this year's eleven-year-olds are in line with those achieved in the national tests of 2001. Pupils' overall performance in these tests in English and mathematics was close to that of pupils in similar schools, that is to say in schools with similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals. It was above average in comparison with similar schools in science. The trend in the school's results is broadly in line with the national trend. The school sets itself challenging targets, particularly in Year 6, which it is likely to meet.

Standards among the current seven-year-olds are well below average in reading, writing and mathematics; in science they are below average. In reading and writing standards are below those achieved in last year's tests. This is largely because of the greater proportion of lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs in this year group.

Children enter school with well below average attainment. They achieve well, and although by the end of the reception year they attain below the level expected of their age in all areas of learning, they have made good progress. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall in Years 1 and 2, although there is insufficient challenge of the very small group of higher attainers and very few pupils are expected to exceed the level expected of their age. Pupils achieve very well in Years 3 to 6. This pattern of achievement is also similar for pupils with special educational needs.

Standards in ICT are below average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Throughout the school pupils' skills and use of ICT in other subjects are underdeveloped and their achievement is inconsistent. Standards are above average in religious education by the end of Year 6. Pupils achieve very well for they find the subject interesting and talk about what they know with enthusiasm. Standards are at the expected level in religious education by the end of Year 2. Standards are broadly average in design and technology, geography and history by the end of Years 2 and 6. They are below average in art. Standards are in line with expectations in physical education by the end of Year 2. No judgements could be made on standards in music throughout the school or in physical education by the end of Year 6 because no lessons were seen. Standards are above average in swimming by the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 because pupils benefit from opportunities to swim in the school swimming pool. Pupils' achievement overall across the different range of subjects by

the time they leave school is very good compared with the level at which they started.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils' have very good attitudes to learning which improve as they get older. Their responsiveness plays a large part in helping them to make very good progress. Pupils are very friendly and polite.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils respond well to the high expectations of staff and to the school's policy of equal opportunities for all.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils willingly undertake a number of responsibilities. The Year 5 and 6 pupils who have been elected as school 'MPs' sensibly put forward their ideas for the school. Opportunities to take the initiative in lessons are limited, however. Pupils get on very well with each other and with their teachers.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The attendance rate is in line with the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	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 in the nursery, reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes and very good overall in Years 3 to 6. Very good teaching was seen in many classes throughout the school and a high proportion of the teaching in the Year 5 and 6 classes was excellent. The teaching throughout the school has many strengths.

In the nursery and reception classes, the teaching is very well organised and challenges higher attaining children as well as offering lower attainers many opportunities to learn through constructive play or working alongside an adult. Activities are well thought out to develop the children's independence and they have many opportunities to choose what they do. In Years 1 and 2, strengths lie in teaching basic skills in literacy and to a lesser extent in numeracy. Lesson planning is often good and teachers conscientiously prepare work which interests the pupils. The management of pupils is good and the teaching methods are effective. The teaching of reading is good though the reading books for higher attaining pupils are not very interesting. In English, mathematics and science, teachers in these year groups do not challenge potentially higher attaining pupils sufficiently well.

The teaching in Years 3 to 6 is very good overall, though in Year 3 it is better for pupils who have special educational needs and for lower and some average attainers than it is for the very small number of higher attaining pupils. The quality of teaching in Years 4, 5 and 6 is rarely less than very good and in Years 5 and 6 it is often excellent. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is very good and teachers are particularly adept at challenging higher attainers. There is a high level of expectation of all pupils and as a result lower, average and higher attaining pupils learn very well. Some of the teaching is outstanding.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The wide range of opportunities for learning is exceptionally well planned. The school has introduced numerous organisational strategies to meet individual needs and to develop pupils' strengths and remedy weaknesses through adapting the curriculum appropriately. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The provision is tailored very well to meet individual pupils' needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The provision for pupils' personal development is very good and is well supplemented by house assemblies, where important issues are discussed. Strengths lie particularly in the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. The procedures for health, safety and welfare are very good and there is very good monitoring of pupils' academic progress.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Satisfactorily. However, there is a need to involve parents more in their children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and senior staff. Their skills complement each other. The headteacher gives a very good lead to the organisation of the school and has created a very strong team which works together in an efficient managerial structure.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. The governors too are part of the 'team' and serve the school well. They fulfil their responsibilities effectively and provide a good level of support for the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. There are good procedures for monitoring performance though there is scope for further development. Some of these procedures have yet to become an established part of the school's systems and to be evaluated for their effectiveness.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. The headteacher ensures that finances available to the school are maximised and targeted to support developments identified in the school development plan. This has resulted in impressive improvements to accommodation and resources which have benefited pupils' learning. Meticulous financial records are kept and the best possible use is made of all available funds. All spending is evaluated in terms of its impact on standards and provision.

The school is very well staffed to meet the needs of all pupils and to teach the rich curriculum. There are excellent procedures for the induction of new teachers and the training of student teachers. Support staff make a worthwhile contribution to pupils' learning. The quality and range of resources are very good overall. In particular, the swimming pool and library offer very good facilities. The interior and exterior of the buildings are imaginatively decorated to a high standard, including professional murals chosen by the pupils; however, there are few examples of pupils' work on display in classrooms and around the school.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. Their children like coming to school. Parents feel comfortable to approach the school with any questions or problems. The teaching is good. Their children behave well and the school is well run. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The range of extra-curricular activities. The level of homework. More information about their children's progress and close links with the school.

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. The school has in fact identified the need to involve parents more in their children's education. While the school keeps parents informed of school matters through regular letters and newsletters, parents have little information on the curriculum to be studied during each term. The annual reports to parents on their children's progress could be written more plainly, for some contain too much educational jargon. There are open evenings each term when parents can discuss their children's progress with the class teacher and also informally at the end of the school day. The range of activities out of school is good for as well as sport pupils can use their 'passports' to attend clubs in other schools in the town. The school sets a similar level of homework to that of other schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards by the end of Year 6 are close to the national average in English and science and below average overall in mathematics. Inspection judgements match the results in the national tests in 2001. Pupils achieve very well in relation to their attainment when they begin school. At the end of Year 6, pupils' performance in English and mathematics is comparable to that of pupils in similar schools; it is above average in comparison with similar schools in science. By the end of Year 2 standards, as observed during the inspection, are well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. These standards are lower than those achieved in the 2001 national tests in reading and writing, largely because of the large proportion of pupils who are lower attaining or who have special educational needs in this particular year group. Standards have remained similar to those attained in the national tests in mathematics. At the end of Year 2 standards are below average in science. By the end of Year 2, pupils attain comparable standards in writing to those attained in similar schools; their performance was below that of similar schools in reading and mathematics in 2001. The school has identified boys' underachievement as a significant factor affecting attainment. Two-thirds of pupils with special educational needs are boys and in last year's Year 2 this affected the results in reading in particular. During the inspection, no significant difference was noted between the attainment of boys and that of girls. The trend in the school's results is broadly in line with the national trend. The school sets itself challenging targets, particularly in Year 6, which it is likely to meet.

2. Children's attainment upon entering the nursery is well below that expected of their age. They achieve well because they are taught well. The teaching is well organised and the nursery and reception classes function as a cohesive unit in which the children receive a good balance of teaching and learning through finding out for themselves. The children make good progress during their time in the nursery and reception classes, although by the end of the reception year their attainment is still below the level expected for their age in the various areas of learning: personal, social and emotional development, in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development.

3. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall in Years 1 and 2. Although these particular year groups have a high proportion of pupils who are lower attaining or who have special educational needs, there is insufficient challenge of the very small group of higher attainers and very few pupils are expected to exceed the level expected of their age. This affects attainment in English and mathematics and science. In English and mathematics, most pupils achieve well in Years 1 to 2 because of the good teaching of basic skills; however, the very small group of potentially higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they could because teachers' expectations are not high enough. Unlike older pupils, pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not have individual targets for learning and so they do not challenge themselves to learn at a faster rate. In science pupils do not know enough about materials and physical processes and have few opportunities to carry out scientific investigations. The very small group of higher attaining pupils do not achieve enough because the work in science does not challenge them sufficiently. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, who form the majority, make good progress in all three subjects.

4. In Year 3, pupils continue to achieve satisfactorily. Again, much of the work is directed at lower attaining pupils or those with special educational needs. This successfully brings their learning on but the relatively small proportion of higher attaining pupils does not attain as well as they might because teachers do not expect enough of them. In English, pupils achieve better in reading than they do in writing because they have access to the very good range of books in the library and higher attainers' reading comes on apace. Achievement in writing is satisfactory for the majority of pupils but not for higher attainers. In mathematics, pupils' achievement in Year 3 is

satisfactory on balance but higher attainers are not challenged sufficiently. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because work for these pupils is planned carefully and they receive good adult assistance both in the classroom and during times when they are taught in separate small groups by teachers and other members of staff.

5. Pupils achieve very well in Years 4 to 6 where much of the very good and excellent teaching is directed at raising the attainment of average and higher attaining pupils. As a result, pupils make very good progress in these years and their achievement relative to the level at which they started is very good. They clearly respond very well to the high level of expectation and their attainment improves to reach close to average standards in English and science. Although it is below average overall in mathematics, most pupils, apart from those with special educational needs are likely to achieve the level expected of their age but a lower proportion to that expected nationally is likely to attain more highly. Standards are slightly higher in English and science because the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels is proportionately higher. This is the result of very good teaching in Years 4 to 6 and good teaching of basic skills lower down the school. In science, lively and challenging teaching in Years 3 to 6 develops pupils' scientific knowledge and skills in scientific enquiry. Teaching throughout in the junior classes is good, so that by the end of Year 6 pupils' attainment is average, and a significant proportion of pupils reach higher than average levels of attainment.

6. Other factors contribute to the higher achievements in Years 4 to 6. The results of the national tests have been analysed very carefully and areas which cause difficulties are integrated into a programme of work so that teachers can revise or teach again certain aspects. Pupils are encouraged to measure their own progress through checking it against their individual targets. The quality of teachers' marking is very good and so pupils are quite clear what it is they have to do in order to improve the standard of their work. Much of the marking in Years 1 to 3 is less evaluative and so pupils are unaware of how they can improve their work. There is a very good level of support both in the classroom and for groups who require some intensive teaching. This helps considerably to raise attainment of pupils who border between below and average attainment in Year 6 as well as those with special educational needs or who are higher attaining. Perhaps the most important factor in raising pupils' achievement in Years' 4 to 6 is the teachers' belief that all pupils are capable of attaining at least average standards, despite their prior attainment. Equally, an important factor in the discrepancy in achievement between Years 1 to 3 and Years 4 to 6 is that not all co-ordinators monitor pupils' books throughout the school to check that pupils are achieving as well as they should.

7. About one in four pupils with special educational needs has an individual plan to meet his or her special educational needs. These plans set realistic, challenging targets. Most pupils make good progress towards these objectives particularly in listening and speaking. A substantial proportion experiences problems with handwriting. Although pupils write well when practising letters in isolation, they are often unable to produce the same quality of presentation when writing at more length. Spelling is another area of concern, particularly for boys. In Years 1 and 2, pupils need constant practice to reach their basic targets in mathematics. These often involve single-digit numbers. Throughout the school, reading and comprehension skills improve as pupils benefit in particular from the very good individual attention they receive from classroom support teachers and assistants. Pupils with physical difficulties are making substantial progress. Social skills improve immeasurably. The levels of confidence and high self esteem reached by these pupils provide a solid basis for improvement in academic standards.

8. Standards in ICT are below average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Standards have declined since the last inspection because pupils do not have enough opportunities to use ICT and teachers do not fully understand how best to teach the subject. Resources for learning are better for pupils in Years 3 to 6 than they are for pupils in Years 1 to 2 in terms of up-to-date computers. Throughout the school pupils' skills and use of ICT in other subjects are underdeveloped and their achievement inconsistent. Although pupils make good progress in Year 4, for example, where ICT is used to help learning in English and mathematics, pupils' achievement overall is unsatisfactory in other classes because ICT is not integrated fully into pupils' learning. Pupils with special educational

needs, who also make good use of ICT in English, make satisfactory progress in this area.

9. Standards are above average in religious education by the end of Year 6. Pupils achieve very well and have above average knowledge of different world faiths. They find the subject interesting and talk about what they know with enthusiasm. Standards are at the expected level in religious education by the end of Year 2. Standards are broadly average in design and technology, geography and history by the end of Years 2 and 6. They are below average in art. Standards are in line with expectations in physical education by the end of Year 2. No judgements could be made on standards in music throughout the school or in physical education by the end of Year 6. Standards are above average in swimming by the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 because pupils benefit from opportunities to swim for part of each year in the school swimming pool under the instruction of a specialist swimming teacher. Pupils' achievement overall across the different range of subjects by the time they leave school is very good compared to the level at which they started.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils' attitudes to their learning and their behaviour are both very good and continue to be strengths of the school. These attitudes improve as pupils get older and their response in lessons plays a large part in the very good progress pupils make in the junior classes. As a result of the very good teaching and interesting lessons, pupils listen carefully in class and work very hard with much concentration and effort. For example, in a literacy hour, Year 5 pupils listened intently, enthralled by their class teacher's superb reading of a Harry Potter story, and so were able to give very good descriptions of the differences in character between Harry and Dudley. Most pupils attend school regularly and on time and most parents are in agreement that their children enjoy coming to school. Attendance is in line with national averages.

11. Pupils behave very well in class, in assemblies and in the playground, responding well to the high expectations of staff. They walk sensibly around school and change classrooms without fuss so they settle quickly and lessons start promptly. Parents are right to be pleased with the high standard of behaviour. In a small number of instances, exclusions were used rightly to deal with challenging behaviour in a small number of pupils to ensure the safety of others in school. So far this year there have been no exclusions which is a result of the very good management of pupils and relationships within school.

12. Pupils are very friendly and always extremely polite. In lessons and assemblies, they are very appreciative of the success of others and often celebrate achievement with applause. For example, in a science lesson, Year 4 pupils all exclaimed 'Wow' and clapped when shown a picture of a seal drawn by a pupil to illustrate her 'fact file' on the animal.

13. Pupils willingly undertake a number of responsibilities for school routines, which contributes to their very good personal development. Year 6 pupils act as librarians, for instance, and check books in and out using the computer. The Year 5 and 6 pupils who have been elected as school 'MPs' are pleased that they have the chance to put forward their ideas for the school. Pupils are less able to take the initiative in lessons because they are not given many opportunities. Older pupils are becoming more aware of their learning and progress because class teachers make sure they know the levels they have reached in English, mathematics and science and how they can improve to attain the next level.

14. Pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes towards their work and in the daily life of the school. They are particularly supportive of one another. A pupil in Year 2 with reading problems of her own showed real empathy for a classmate, showing her how to break up words and praising her with 'Good girl' every time she got a word right. These pupils play a full part in whole class discussions and often make a telling contribution to the lesson. In reporting back to a Year 5 class, a boy had devised an advertisement saying that his hamburger was 'a double-decker that will drive you wild.' This encouraged other pupils to think more deeply about the impact of language, including pun and alliteration. They know they are valued by all adults and other pupils in the school. As a result, they are fully integrated into all activities. They respond by playing a full part in working to meet their individual targets and supporting other pupils.

15. Pupils' respect one another; they do not refer to any differences between them in arguments. Furthermore, they are active in acknowledging one another's achievements, sometimes spontaneously applauding success. Pupils respond to the school's policy of equal opportunities for all by behaving very well and doing their best. They state that they are well supported by teachers, assistants and other pupils when in difficulties. Pupils and teachers make all newcomers feel welcome.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. The quality of teaching is very good overall. The teaching is never less than satisfactory and in three-quarters of the lessons it is good or better. In two fifths of lessons it is very good or excellent. Teaching is good in the nursery, reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes and some of it is very good. The quality of teaching is very good overall in Years 3 to 6. A high proportion of excellent teaching was seen in the Year 5 and 6 classes. The teaching throughout the school has many strengths and parents are justified in thinking that their children are well taught. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection and this is mirrored in the quality of pupils' learning which is very good in the later years.

17. During the inspection, two classes were taken by temporary teachers and a number of lessons were taught by students from a nearby training institution. The temporary teachers clearly found the pupils challenging. This served to highlight the very good organisation and management of pupils in most classes by the permanent staff. Teachers who shared their teaching with students gave them excellent support and students learn very well from their very good methods of teaching.

18. The teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good in English and literacy, geography, history, physical education and religious education and pupils achieve well. Teaching is satisfactory in mathematics and numeracy. Not enough teaching was seen in the other subjects of art and design, design and technology, ICT and music to be able to make a judgement overall. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 in English and literacy and in mathematics and numeracy is very good overall, some of it outstanding teaching in Years 5 and 6 in these subjects in which pupils learn at a very good rate. The quality of teaching is good in science, design and technology, history and religious education and pupils learn well as a result. No judgment was made on the quality of teaching in art and design, geography, music and physical education, apart from swimming in which the teaching was good, because too few lessons were seen in these subjects. The quality of teaching in ICT although it was satisfactory in the lessons, has some unsatisfactory features largely relating to the use of resources and some of the teaching methods to ensure that pupils have enough practice in using their skills. ICT is rarely taught through other subjects and this too is a weakness and results in unsatisfactory learning. No teaching was seen in ICT in Years 1 and 2, which indicates the low profile of the subject for this particular age group.

19. Pupils with special educational needs are usually taught in the second 'set' in each year group. They receive particularly helpful guidance from the well-qualified team of classroom assistants, who know the pupils' targets well. This formidable team is fully involved in lesson planning and its members prepare their contribution in considerable detail. Classroom teachers value their advice and expertise when planning to meet the needs of these pupils, many of whom have profound learning difficulties. Throughout the school, teachers consciously attempt to ensure that work is matched to the right ability level. This is achieved more successfully as pupils move through the school. The best match is achieved when pupils are withdrawn in small groups. Then the assistant can target needs much more precisely. All members of staff demonstrate immense patience and determination with these pupils. Expectations are realistically demanding and no pupil is allowed to coast. The careful assessment of need and attention to detail when assessing the impact of teaching strategies is a major strength.

20. The teaching of children in the nursery and reception year is good. The teachers, nursery nurses and support assistants share the supervision of activities very well to help the children to learn. Activities are well thought out to develop the children's independence and they learn to play and to work co-operatively. Teachers manage the children particularly well and the children are kept happily and busily occupied as they rapidly learn new things. Very good use is made of time. Introductory and concluding sessions are used very productively to establish the work of the day and to reinforce what the children have learnt. For example, at the end of the afternoon, the teacher brought out a box containing articles which the children had brought in beginning with the sound of the week –'sh'. The children listened most attentively as a child showed a baby's 'shoe' and another explained that in the pictures he had brought there was a 'shower of rain' and a 'boy shouting'. As well as reinforcing the children's recognition, understanding and use of the sound, it also developed the children's confidence, and their skills in speaking and listening and helped to link learning in school with home.

21. The teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good overall. Strengths lie in the teaching of basic skills in literacy and to a lesser extent in numeracy. The pupils are taught in upper and lower groups for English and mathematics in Year 1 and in all subjects in Year 2. This is to cater for the large proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or who are lower attaining in that particular year group. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly and conscientiously prepare work which they know will interest the pupils. Pupils are well managed and as a result of effective teaching methods the pupils learn well and most achieve well at this stage in relation to their previous attainment. The teaching of reading is good and additional and extra reading support is used successfully to help lower attainers and those with special educational needs to learn. There is a comparative weakness at this stage in teachers' expectations of pupils. There is a tendency to teach all pupils within the class to the same level. This is a weakness in mathematics, less so in English, where tasks are more precisely differentiated according to pupils' levels of attainment. There is a tendency, though, to underestimate what the small number of potentially higher attaining pupils can achieve and so teachers do not always push on their learning as rapidly as they might.

22. The teaching in Years 3 to 6 is very good overall. Very little teaching was seen in Year 3 because one class was taken by a supply teacher and the other by a student and so only a limited number of observations could be made. From these and from close scrutiny of pupils' books, particularly in English, mathematics and science, it is clear that the quality of teaching in this year group is good for pupils who have special educational needs and for lower and some average attainers but it is not sufficiently challenging for higher attaining pupils. The quality of teaching in Years 4, 5 and 6 is rarely less than very good and in Years 5 and 6 it is often excellent. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is very good and teachers show considerable skill at challenging higher attainers. There is a high level of expectation of all pupils and consequently lower, average and higher attaining pupils learn very well. The national strategy for literacy has been modified well to suit the needs of pupils of different levels of attainment and the concentration on writing in literacy lessons is effecting marked improvements in pupils' written accuracy and use of interesting vocabulary. Resources for learning are used very well in both English and mathematics. Teachers' very good understanding of the national strategies for both literacy and numeracy means that they find inventive ways to consolidate and extend pupils' learning at a brisk, manageable pace, generating a high level of interest in the pupils and resulting in a productive lesson where pupils' learning comes on rapidly. Some of the teaching is outstanding.

23. Where the quality of teaching is satisfactory, teachers use praise well to encourage pupils to learn and they target adult support appropriately to enable lower attaining pupils to make progress. They question well but need to find ways to involve a greater number of pupils by not just asking those who have their hands up. Where the quality of teaching is good, teachers provide a range of suitably different tasks well matched to the different levels of attainment in the class. Resources are well prepared, what pupils are to learn is made clear and pupils are encouraged to work independently. Where the quality of teaching is very good, teachers use time particularly well. They set high standards and often find imaginative ways to involve the pupils so that they are learning almost without realising it. Where the quality of teaching is excellent, teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to promote learning of a very high quality. There is a real empathy

between teachers and pupils in their shared involvement in their work. In an outstanding lesson in Year 5, a variety of approaches including reading out loud, discussion and drama, supported the essential part of the lesson, the writing, to make this highly enjoyable as well as instructive. The pupils then used what they had written to determine the characters of the actors and the lesson ended with a question which crystallised what they had learnt, showing that through these means 'it makes you learn more, it helps you work out what people are really thinking and feeling, it makes you act out their emotions and fears.'

24. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. There is now a far greater proportion of very good and excellent teaching. Parents' views that the teaching is good are amply justified.

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

25. The broad curriculum offered by the school meets all statutory requirements. National recommendations for the Foundation Stage are fully met. The heavy emphasis on literacy and numeracy recognises the need to develop basic skills and raise standards throughout the school. The breadth of the curriculum is maintained by providing for all subjects in the National Curriculum and religious education. However, the time allocation in creative subjects, such as art and music, is low, to subsidise English and mathematics, which accounts for 60 per cent of teaching time throughout Years 3 to 4.

26. Curricular design and planning are a strength. Over the past two years, substantial changes have been introduced. Following the guidelines established by the curriculum co-ordinator, long and medium-term planning provides very good guidance for daily lesson plans. Weekly reviews ensure that the curriculum constantly reflects current needs. This rigour and flexibility ensure a comprehensive coverage of key elements in all subjects. Foundation subjects follow nationally recommended guidelines. All planning is firmly based on learning objectives and target setting.

27. The school has introduced numerous organisational strategies to meet individual needs. In Year 2, pupils are taught in two classes for all subjects according to their levels of attainment. This is to help the large proportion of pupils who are lower attaining or who have special educational needs. In all other years, pupils are taught in separate classes for literacy and numeracy according to their levels of attainment. This makes it possible to focus intensively on particular aspects, to develop strengths and remedy weaknesses by adapting the curriculum appropriately.

28. The National Literacy and Numeracy strategies have been implemented successfully. In addition, the school is involved in a number of projects such as early and additional literacy support. As a pilot school in a national initiative to develop literacy skills, it is developing imaginative schemes to promote extended writing and to involve parents fully in the process.

29. The very good provision for pupils with special educational needs is underpinned by the commitment of all teachers and support staff. Suitable modifications are planned when small groups are withdrawn, and full attention is given to needs identified in individual plans. 'Booster' classes provide extra help in Years 5 and 6. A 'Basic Skills' group has been formed in Year 6. The curriculum content for this group is suitable, but the opportunities provided by a time allocation of eighty minutes per session has not yet been fully exploited. In all other lessons content reflects fully the invaluable support offered to the school by a range of outside agencies such as the educational psychologist, speech therapist, occupational therapist and hearing impaired service.

30. The school's curricular and extra-curricular opportunities provide equal opportunity for pupils to make the most of their personal talents. However, there are areas such as art and drama, which are not as well developed as other subjects. The school recognises all pupils' achievements in the

classroom and in assemblies, but less so through displaying their work. House meetings include preparation for all pupils to become good citizens

31. The provision for personal, health and social education (PSHCE), including drugs awareness, is very good. The comprehensive class-based programme is supplemented by an imaginative House based programme. In this, groups of pupils from Years 3-6 work together on topics such as relationships, the environment and the community. The planning for this is thorough. Sex education is in place, with the school nurse fully involved in the programme. Citizenship elements are enhanced by a system of pupil MPs democratically elected by other pupils to put forward their views in the school 'parliament'.

32. There are strong links with the community and other educational institutions. The school participates in a 'Building Curriculum Bridges' initiative with local secondary schools. Well established liaison ensures that information about pupils with special educational needs is transferred effectively when they move. A variety of community organisations, including clergy, the police and Community Rangers participate in the PSHCE programme. Local engineers come in to support the teaching of design and technology. Theatrical groups visit the school at least twice each year. During the inspection week one of the governors came into school to talk to a Year 4 class about Hinduism.

33. Pupils have opportunities to use literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. The stringent planning processes ensure that due attention is given to this. The use of ICT is less effective, particularly in Years 1 and 2, where the art curriculum is also too narrow.

34. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good. There is a full range of team sports, available to both boys and girls. Coaches from Darlington AFC and Middlesbrough AFC lead training sessions. There is a small recorder group in Years 1 and 2 and a school choir that sometimes performs in the community. Former pupils return to hold dance and netball clubs. The computer club is popular but the 'Family Learning' initiative was sparsely attended in the week of the inspection.

35. A particularly strong feature of curriculum design is the school's action plan, which is updated every term. The priorities in these documents are entirely appropriate and there is a clear sense of progression from term to term. Identified objectives give useful pointers towards the construction of the school development plan.

36. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Provision for spiritual development is very good. Teachers give pupils opportunities to explore the impact of people's beliefs on their lives. Pupils' poetry shows sensitivity to nature, such as when writing about fog 'sticking to windows and following us when we are walking, following us when we are driving.' Teachers respect pupils, and expect them to show equal respect to others. This was vividly shown by an instance where a pupil, himself with considerable personal problems, gave very caring assistance to a fellow pupil in swimming. Pupils' responses to education in spiritual development are very good. They discuss injustice in detail, and are sensitive to mystery. They also show their amazement when a visiting 'mad professor' smashes a frozen banana, fascinated by the effects of liquid nitrogen.

37. Provision for moral development is very good. The school has consulted with the pupils in order to establish a clear code of conduct. Pupils have responded very well in their attitudes and behaviour. The scheme of work for personal, social and health education addresses moral and social issues very thoroughly. Pupils express their views through their 'members of parliament' and learn the processes of democracy through being responsible for who is elected. Teachers show in their lessons how important it is to treat everyone equally, and expect pupils to show care for the school and other people. Provision for social development is very good. The headteacher and staff create a strong sense of community within the school. At the same time, pupils become involved in ways to contribute to society by performing locally or collecting for charities. Assemblies, team games, the range of school clubs and the residential course all provide good opportunities for pupils

to learn to live and work together. Every day lessons give many opportunities for pupils to collaborate. Provision for cultural development is not as strong as the other aspects, but is still good. The library is well stocked with resources about the arts and about different ways of life, here and in other countries. Pupils listen to music from other countries and sing songs from different cultures in assemblies. Pupils discuss in their personal, social and health education how people need to learn to be tolerant. 'House meetings' are a very good vehicle for teachers and pupils to address cultural as well as moral and social issues.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. The school takes very good care of its pupils, being particularly security conscious to ensure the welfare, health and safety of all pupils. The daily organisation of school routines takes account of the very clear health and safety procedures and child protection arrangements are appropriate and effective. This shows very good improvement since the time of the last inspection.

39. There is very good provision for pupils' educational and personal support and guidance. All adults have very good relationships with pupils and promote a purposeful working atmosphere in the classroom which encourages hard work and effort. The school gives lots of verbal praise and recognition for good work, behaviour and effort which promotes pupils' self-esteem and confidence well but there are fewer examples of pupils' work on show to celebrate their achievements.

40. Pupils with special educational needs are identified at an early stage. This is important since there are substantial numbers of pupils who require extra help. Teachers and support assistants know their pupils very well and maintain comprehensive records of progress and need. Those who have physical problems are fully catered for, and disabled access is available to all ground floor rooms. Individual plans are devised to inform the extra support that these pupils receive. Class teachers and their assistants are fully involved in reviews and regular updating of individual targets. Teaching assistants maintain detailed records of achievements, not only of pupils' academic progress, but also of such qualities as co-operation and independence. For example, in Years 1 and 2, assistants keep a record of daily interaction with pupils, indicating which key words have been recognised with indicators about the child's level of enthusiasm and determination. Records of particular strengths are also maintained. This ensures that a full picture of each individual child emerges.

41. In order to ensure equal opportunities, the school takes care to assess all pupils' attainment to see if there are any trends amongst groups. For example, it is addressing the differences between the achievements of boys and girls in some areas of the curriculum. Teachers and pupils take great care with those having physical difficulties and are very sensitive to their needs. For example, they have given strong support to a pupil who would otherwise find swimming a problem.

42. The procedures for assessing pupils' work and attainment are now very good, showing considerable improvement since the last inspection. These start when the child starts school in the nursery, continue into the reception class and now on through the school. Pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science is checked carefully through a variety of school and national tests. This information is then used well to form classes and plan lessons to ensure that the work in class meets the needs of pupils. The school has appropriate plans to make provision to identify gifted and talented pupils to make sure that all pupils reach their full potential. The school uses a simple but effective system of monitoring the progress of individual pupils in English, mathematics and science by highlighting in their books when they have achieved the next level in their learning. This ensures also that pupils have good knowledge of how well they are doing and know what to do next to improve. The school has begun to assess progress in the other subjects of the curriculum in a similar way to enable the school to have a fuller picture of attainment and progress from year to year.

43. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is based on the staff's good knowledge of

pupils which teachers pass on to the next class. The very good programme for personal, social, health education and citizenship is taught well through house assemblies. This enables pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 to mix and work together on a wide range of topics from bullying to environmental issues. In the 'Good Children's Award' celebration assembly for younger pupils, teachers make a point of stressing the importance of being kind and working hard to be a 'proper Sugar Hill pupil'.

44. The procedures for registration and for monitoring attendance have improved since the last inspection and are now good. The school monitors attendance well using a computerised system and action is quickly taken on any concerns noted. Registration procedures now meet statutory requirements. The very good behaviour in school is a result of the very good procedures for the monitoring and promotion of good behaviour. Pupils know the effective 'School Values System' which they follow throughout the day. Older pupils are convinced that it is fair and that bullying is not an issue in school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. On the whole, the school has a satisfactory working partnership with parents. Most parents are supportive of the school but some have concerns about aspects of its work. For instance, most parents agree that their children like school, that the school expects them to work hard and that they make good progress. The inspection team agrees with all these positive points raised by parents. Some parents are not happy with the range of extra-curricular activities or the level of homework set. The team finds that the range of activities out of school is good but with an emphasis on sport. Pupils do have the opportunity, however, through their 'passports' to attend clubs in other schools in the town. The school makes a satisfactory use of homework, similar to that of other schools.

46. Most parents are convinced that the school is approachable if they have concerns but some do not think that the school works closely with them or feel well informed of their children's progress. Appropriately the school has identified the need to involve parents more in the children's education as one of its areas for development. There are regular open evenings when parents can discuss their children's progress with the class teacher and parents do have the opportunity to talk informally to teachers at the end of the day. The written annual reports contain reasonable information on what pupils can do and have good comments on pupils' personal development but some are written in too much educational jargon. They include phrases such as 'multi-genred work' and 'higher order punctuation', which do not help to give parents a clear picture of their children's progress. The reports do not include any targets for improvement which could be shared with parents and so give them guidance on how to help their children at home. While the school keeps parents informed of school matters through regular letters and newsletters, it misses the chance to update all parents on the curriculum to be studied during each term. An example of good practice is the notice board in the reception class which tells parents of the current topic and the 'sound of the week'.

47. Parents are kept fully informed if their children have special educational needs. Many parents attend review meetings. Reading records indicate that some parents support their children's education by listening to them read. However, a significant number of pupils do not receive informed support at home for basic skills. The school is beginning to address this problem, for example, in the Further Literacy Support project. In this, a number of parents have contracted to support homework tasks at least twice per week. Some parents have enrolled for an adult learning programme run each term by the school, and there has been a moderately successful Family Literacy course. This sort of commitment would benefit other pupils who need constant practice in reading, writing and number work.

48. Parents are very willing to support the school's charity work, for example, donating lots of tins of food for the homeless, which helps pupils to think of others less fortunate than themselves. Some parents also give good support in class and many volunteer to accompany on class visits to

local places of interest, which enables the school to take many good opportunities to extend pupils' learning and experience.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and senior staff, who have complementary skills and expertise that blend together very well to form an effective team. The headteacher is well known and respected in the community because of his service over a number of years. With the very capable support of senior staff, he gives a very strong lead to the school's development and organisation. One of the key strengths in the leadership is the emphasis on teamwork. Delegation to senior staff, team leaders and co-ordinators has been very effective in creating an efficient managerial structure to oversee the very large staff and in creating and maintaining a strong team spirit among staff. The clear management, together with the workable systems and procedures that are in place bring about a consistency in important areas such as teaching, curricular planning and assessment. This provides a clear framework for teaching and learning in order to raise standards. As a result of this, teaching and non-teaching staff know they are valued and morale is high. Another consequence of the effective managerial style is the willingness of staff to reflect and to embrace new initiatives for the benefit of the pupils. The aims of the school are entirely appropriate, promoting the all-round development of the pupils, and the school meets them successfully.

50. The governors too are part of the 'team' and serve the school well. They fulfil their responsibilities effectively and provide a good level of support for the school, as well as being 'critical friends'. They are well informed of the school's work through the regular and extensive reports by the headteacher and through the committees that meet regularly before reporting to the full governing body. They are responsible for setting clear goals for the work of the headteacher and setting targets for raising standards. Several governors are actively involved in working in the school as volunteer helpers and all have defined areas of curricular responsibility so they know the school well. In addition, some of the governors are involved in local and national initiatives that keep them abreast of developments in the world of education.

51. The very good provision for special educational needs is ably led by a committed co-ordinator. In this large school, the needs of all pupils are addressed systematically. Classroom assistants and class teachers have a major role to play in this process. They also receive help from experienced support teachers who supply expertise that informs provision. More rigorous monitoring of individual educational plans would help to ensure greater consistency, particularly in describing the nature of individual need and in target setting. The governors are informed appropriately about progress and developments in this area.

52. School development plans take into account all pupils' needs so that they have an equal opportunity to reach their potential. They back up improvements with good resources so that all pupils are included in activities. The school makes excellent use of any grants to support the pupils for whom they are made.

53. Priorities for the future development of the school are formulated collaboratively by all staff, who undertake an audit in every subject to identify key areas for improvement. This system provides a strong sense of ownership among staff and ensures that all staff and governors are familiar with developments for the forthcoming year. Priorities are translated into action through the meticulous planning of the headteacher, who links the plan to the budget with great precision. There are clear time-scales, strategies for measuring improvement and thorough evaluation. A weakness in this system is that development planning does not extend beyond the current year to provide a long term strategic view of the school's development nor does it provide a focus for continuity in the future.

54. The school has good procedures for monitoring its performance though there is scope for further development. Some of these have yet to be fully integrated into the school's established systems and evaluated for their effectiveness. Co-ordinators for example, have begun to monitor standards in their subjects by looking at pupils' work and monitoring the content of lessons but as yet this is not always sufficiently rigorous to bring about real improvement. Data is used well to monitor the progress of pupils and to provide a basis for the grouping of pupils.

55. The school places a strong emphasis on improving the skills and expertise of the staff through training and development. All teachers attend in-service training events relevant to their subjects and there are good systems in place for teachers to collaborate and share ideas. The school has a strong commitment to teacher training and welcomes students from several establishments as well as newly qualified staff. The support and induction provided for the students and newly qualified teachers are very good indeed and give them a very positive start to their career in teaching.

56. Day-to-day financial procedures and longer term financial planning are excellent. The headteacher ensures that finances available to the school are maximised and targeted to support developments identified in the school development plan. This has resulted in impressive improvements to accommodation and resources, which has a very good impact on pupils' learning. The headteacher has a very good understanding of the principles of best value and how they apply to financial practices. Not a penny is wasted. For example, the headteacher investigated savings that could be made in water charges if different taps were used. Various options were considered and changes then made. Subsequent comparison of water charge showed considerable savings. Subject co-ordinators bid for funds on the basis of internal audit and this ensures that all spending is fully justified. The school sensibly operates with a small contingency sum. The number of pupils on roll remains steady, which leads to confidence in the level of future income. Governors receive a termly overview of spending in which the headteacher justifies spending decisions. Meticulous financial records are kept and the minor suggestions contained in the previous audit report of three years ago have been implemented.

57. The school is very well staffed to meet the needs of all pupils and to teach the rich curriculum. There are excellent procedures for the induction of new teachers. The mentor system in particular works very well and there are training opportunities available for all staff. Support staff work closely with class teachers and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.

58. On balance, the quality and range of resources are very good and they are used effectively in lessons. The exceptions are the poorer quality of the reading books and computers in the infant classes. While the school has a modern computer suite, it is not easily accessible to pupils in Years 1 and 2. The swimming pool on site is used very well to provide lessons for this school and others in the area. Library provision is very good, especially for junior pupils. This library is an attractive and stimulating resource with a broad range of fiction and non-fiction books and comics and computers with Internet access and CD ROMs. It is very well organised to encourage pupils to read and find out information for themselves. The school has made praiseworthy efforts to decorate the buildings inside and out, for instance with professional murals, but there are few examples of pupils' work on display to add interest for pupils and to show them that their work is valued. The buildings and grounds are spacious, well kept and maintained by the conscientious caretaker and his staff, who have an obvious pride in their work.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to bring about further improvements the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (i) raise standards in mathematics, ICT and art by the end of Years 2 and 6 and in English by the end of Year2;
- (ii) make better provision for the needs of the more able and talented pupils.

In addition, the following minor areas for improvement should be considered:

- (i) write the annual reports using less educational jargon to give parents a clearer picture of their children's progress and find further ways to involve them in their children' education;
- (ii) ensure that pupils' work has a greater prominence in displays in classrooms.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	64
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	27

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	6	20	23	15	0	0	0
Percentage	9	31	36	24	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.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR –Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	39	429
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	n/a	53

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR –Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2	14
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	4	116

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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	38	22	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	31	29	31
	Girls	18	18	19
	Total	49	47	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	82 (78)	78 (90)	83 (87)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	33	32
	Girls	18	19	19
	Total	48	52	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (83)	87 (82)	85 (80)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	30	31	61

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	21	19	24
	Girls	29	22	30
	Total	50	41	54
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (78)	67 (71)	89 (95)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	21	23	25
	Girls	29	24	28
	Total	50	47	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (75)	77 (75)	87 (88)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	0
Any other minority ethnic group	4

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR –Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	17.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	29.6
Average class size	30.6

Education support staff: YR –Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	200

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	39
Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	85

Number of pupils per FTE adult	9.8
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

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	4	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.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-02
	£
Total income	938,454
Total expenditure	913,668
Expenditure per pupil	1,957
Balance brought forward from previous year	-17,723
Balance carried forward to next year	15,063

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	511
Number of questionnaires returned	218

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	55	42	1	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	48	4	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	47	2	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	54	13	1	1
The teaching is good.	51	45	0	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	45	17	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	36	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	44	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	29	51	15	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	53	41	0	3	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	48	2	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	44	20	2	12

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

59. Children have a good start to their education in the nursery and reception classes because the teaching is consistently good in all their areas of learning. As a result, pupils achieve well relative to their overall well below average level of attainment on entry to the nursery. The children, by the end of the reception year, are below the level expected of their age in personal, social and emotional development, in communication, language and literacy, in mathematical development, in knowledge and understanding of the world, in physical development and in creative development, although they make good progress in all these areas. The school has maintained its good provision for these pupils.

Personal, social and emotional development

60. Children enter the nursery and reception class in a pleasant and orderly manner. They are happy and confident. The children are welcomed into the school by their teachers, and parents have ample opportunities to discuss day-to-day matters with the staff. Children know the routines of the classes; for example, they knew where to put their homework folders and how to register their attendance, as teachers have established good systems which encourage children's independence. There is lovely involvement of children with severe physical disabilities by both staff and other children. Members of staff ensure that children with special educational needs take an active part in lessons wherever possible. Older children settle very well to their lessons and work very productively in small groups. Some of the youngest children in the nursery find it very hard to sit still for even a short period of time; for example, at snack time some of the younger children get up and wander aimlessly around. Children in the reception class and older children in the nursery behave very well when supervised because teachers are very skilled at organising interesting activities which capture the children's interest and involvement. Occasionally, in physical education a few pupils misbehave and need the close supervision of teachers.

Communication, language and literacy

61. In the nursery, teachers provide exciting opportunities to prompt children to communicate verbally, for the majority respond initially with only one-word answers or gestures. In the role-play area, for example, adults and children pretended to be firefighters and through skilful questioning and dramatic play the teaching extended the children's responses. When the children saw a real fire engine, they commented on the various tools, saying the cutting equipment was 'like scissors'. In discussions, about half the children find it hard to listen attentively and the teaching is frequently interrupted by children who have not yet learnt to refrain from calling out.

62. In the reception class, very efficient organisation and management of children into different groups according to levels of attainment enable teachers to help children to learn quickly at an appropriate level. As a result, higher attainers begin to read, talking about the pictures enthusiastically and working out unfamiliar words using sounds, and average attainers recognise some simple words and letters. The teaching skilfully uses games, repetition and working independently so that in just fifteen minutes, for instance, children mimed different words and their sounds for others to guess and then began to write these down. Although most children require much assistance to write down initial letters and sounds, the small group of higher attaining children worked out how to write 'shark' and 'sheep' following their teacher's clear enunciation. Parents and teachers use the home/school book very well to help children to make progress with their reading. The children concentrate well and are proud of their work as a result of this well organised teaching. They begin to speak more clearly and often the pattern of their speech mirrors that of adults.

Mathematical development

63. In the nursery, teachers encourage children to use the wide range of resources of high quality to develop their mathematical understanding. Children lace cubes of different colours; most pupils recognise and name the colours but some are unable to copy a simple pattern of different colours. They are introduced to language such as sphere and learn that it looks like a ball. Higher attainers knew that a soap bubble they had blown earlier was a sphere. In the reception class, very efficient and effective organisation of children into groups of similar levels of attainment enables teachers to push children's learning on at a brisk pace. Teachers' planning is thorough and takes account of the needs of children at each level of attainment; for example, lower attainers put three fish in one jar, one fish in another jar and then counted up how many fish altogether. Higher attainers recorded on small white boards the results of a simple practical problem; this enabled the teacher to assess children's understanding quickly. Resources are used very well to assist children's learning and are of a high standard, both commercially produced resources and learning aids made by staff and governors.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

64. In the nursery and reception classes, children make good progress because of the interesting and relevant experiences teachers provide that widen the children's knowledge of the world around them. In both classes, a particular strength is the way in which stimulating first hand experiences form the basis of activities. Children in the nursery were fascinated by the things they saw on their visit to the fire station and grew in confidence in asking and answering questions about the fire engine. In the reception class children learned how to handle animals gently during a visit by a vet as part of their topic on pets. These first-hand experiences are very successful in enabling the children to widen their knowledge of the world and to develop their vocabulary. When baking biscuits, children in reception were able to predict confidently which ingredients would be needed to make the dough. With adult help, they were able to roll out the dough and cut into the shapes of animals before baking and eating them. All staff work productively with small groups of children and this organisation means that children are extended at a pace appropriate to their individual needs and they learn well. A key feature is the imaginative use of the wide range of resources, which enhance the activities well; for example, when children baked their biscuits there were plenty of baking utensils to enable all children in the group to actively participate.

Physical development

65. The very good outdoor and indoor accommodation and plentiful resources of high quality enhance children's learning opportunities. In the nursery a wide range of wheeled toy vehicles and exciting fixed climbing equipment help the teacher to plan experiences for pupils to increase their control and co-ordination. The children pedal tricycles generally confidently and co-operate with others when riding on tandem tricycles. Children walk across a beam tentatively with the help of adults. In the reception class children sometimes need reminders of how to behave and teachers keep a firm hold on the class as a few misbehave and find concentrating difficult. The children shake their hands high, low and all around their bodies and they curl and stretch as a cat but a few children have difficulty understanding instructions. The children walk one foot in front of the other in small steps, though some children with special educational needs find this task taxing. Few children are able to respond in movement appropriate to music. They enjoy running around the hall but find dodging one another difficult. The children generally listen to teachers' instructions and make sound progress; for example, the children learned during a lesson how to leap from a spot from two feet and land on two feet. The children enjoy physical education activities but some children find difficulty agreeing who is their partner.

66. Most children in the reception class have satisfactory control when using a pencil and this shows good progress from their attainment on entry to the nursery. A few low attainers have poor pencil control, however, and find letter formation very difficult; they also find cutting materials difficult.

Creative development

67. In the nursery, children receive good opportunities to develop their creative skills. With adult help they made bubbles in paint mixed with detergent using a straw to make some effective prints on paper. The teaching gives clear instructions though some children are rather demanding and expect instant adult attention. Some of the activities can lead to very similar end results, as in the display of painted frogs with similarly folded paper legs. The children achieve well. In the reception class, children begin to co-operate well and almost half can paint recognisable animals and about a third add in background details such as the sea, sun and grass in appropriate colours. Higher attainers began to joke with their teachers as they painted, saying, 'Excuse me, do you have an elephant at home?' whereas an average attaining child solemnly explained as she painted over her painting that she was 'going to put my fish in a tank'. The teaching is very well organised. Children learn to sing, echoing words and their teachers' intonation and most succeed in making their voices go high and low or loud and soft, though not always tunefully. They all enjoy singing the 'Happy morning Song' and have learnt the daily prayer off by heart.

ENGLISH

68. Standards by the end of Year 6 are close to the national average in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Most pupils, apart from those with special educational needs, are likely to achieve the level expected of their age and approximately 20 per cent are likely to exceed those levels. Overall, their performance is close to the national average. This is similar to standards reported at the time of the last inspection. Pupils in Years 4 to 6 achieve very well because of the very good teaching they receive. They achieve satisfactorily in Year 3 where there is good achievement by lower attaining pupils and under-achievement by higher attaining pupils.

69. Standards by the end of Year 2 are well below average in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Although this particular year group has a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, which depresses the overall level of attainment, there is insufficient challenge of the very small group of higher attainers and very few pupils are expected to exceed the level expected of their age. Standards have declined for this age group since the last inspection. However, the majority of pupils achieve well in Years 1 to 2 because of the good teaching of basic skills but the very small group of potentially higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they could because teachers' expectations are not high enough.

70. There are several reasons for the very good achievement of pupils in Years 4 to 6 and the comparatively lower achievement of pupils in Years 1 to 3. The programme of work in Years 1 to 2 concentrates very much on teaching the basic skills of reading and writing. This is appropriate for the majority of pupils and is done well. Reading is developed well through additional and extra reading support and pupils are encouraged to take home reading books at an appropriate level regularly. Although the books are well organised according to different levels of attainment for pupils to choose for themselves, many of them are old and from different and outdated reading schemes and are less exciting to read than they could be. Although pupils in these year groups are also following a planned programme to develop skills in writing, it is less adventurously conceived than that in Years 4 to 6. Pupils undertake a limited range of writing activities, which effectively develops basic skills, but it means that higher attainers do not learn to write at length soon enough. The marking is often by way of a stamp saying 'beautiful' or 'tops' which is encouraging and appropriate for most pupils but rarely offers points for improvement. There are no targets for learning and so pupils have little concept of the progress they are making. Pupils with special educational needs receive good assistance but assistance within class is limited because of the limited number of support assistants. Often this means that pupils are expected to work independently who would in fact benefit from additional adult support.

71. Pupils' achievement is very good in Years 4 to 6 because the teaching is of a consistently

very good quality and much of it is excellent. Recent developments designed to improve Year 6 pupils' performance in tests are proving successful. Teachers analyse pupils' answers in practice papers and any areas causing problems are then included in the teachers' planning to be revised or taught afresh. Interestingly, the questions are taught and discussed so that when pupils encounter similar styles of questions in test papers they have the confidence to tackle them. Pupils whose attainment borders between average and below average receive additional lessons to boost their achievement. Higher attaining pupils benefit from work which is tailored to their needs within the upper set for English. The national strategy for literacy has been adjusted to favour writing over reading. Sharing writing through following a progressive programme of work designed to develop narrative writing, and additional weekly lessons used to help pupils write more extensively form an important part of the teaching of literacy. The teaching is very sharply focused and targeted towards specific areas of learning. Learning support assistants and classroom assistants help groups within the Year 6 classes in a planned programme of work which often involves teaching alongside teachers or working intensively with small groups or occasionally withdrawing groups for specialist teaching. The quality of this support is very good. Pupils who have special educational needs benefit from working in a special group designed to reinforce the learning of basic skills and this is helping to develop their confidence though their attainment remains very low.

72. The quality of teaching and of pupils' learning in Years 1 and 2 is good for the majority of pupils. Pupils become more confident speakers and they learn to listen more attentively to their teachers. Higher attainers speak in sentences and most pupils make good attempts to express themselves plainly. They begin to work well on their own and in groups and are eager to answer questions though rarely at length without further questioning to develop their responses. Quite a large number of pupils though have a limited concentration span and some are inclined to fuss. Pupils enjoy reading out loud together and many say that they like to read. They respond well to the brisk pace of lessons and the teachers' lively manner. The few higher attaining pupils begin to scan texts for information and can quote from a book to support their point of view. Average attaining pupils read simple texts, though often with almost imperceptible breaks between words as they follow beneath with their finger. Most understand what they read and begin to answer questions about the book. The standard overall is well below average for reading as it is for writing because of the large proportion of lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs. The teaching is well organised and pupils take home words each week to learn to spell to support writing in literacy lessons. The range of writing is quite limited for lower attainers, and although it is broader for average and higher attaining pupils and includes poems and factual writing as well as comprehension questions, some of the subject matter is unimaginative. Sometimes ungrammatical writing such as 'I won him' or 'the cow what gives milk' goes unchecked. Strengths in the teaching in Years 1 and 2 include good organisation, detailed planning, good management of pupils and good relationships so that pupils want to learn. This means that pupils behave very well and have very good attitudes to their work.

73. The quality of teaching and of pupils' learning is very good overall in Years 3 to 6. It is satisfactory overall for pupils in Year 3, very good in Year 4 and often excellent in Years 5 and 6, where the best teaching was seen. In Year 3, the teaching of pupils who are lower attaining or who have special educational needs is at least good. The teaching of reading is better than writing in this year group because higher attainers have access to a wide range of books of very good quality both in class and in the library. Higher attainers in Year 3 do not achieve as well as they should in writing though because teachers' expectations are too low. All junior pupils have targets to meet and their progress in meeting them is noted against expected national curriculum levels. In Year 3, however, the targets and national curriculum levels are inappropriate to the age and ability of many of the children; for example, pupils' work is compared to standards expected by the end of Year 2 rather than their own age group, even the work of pupils who had exceeded national expectations the previous year. Similarly, the range of opportunities for writing in Year 3 is very limited for teachers teach and expect a below average standard of work. While this is suitable for the many lower attaining and some average attaining pupils it does disadvantage higher attainers at this stage.

74. By the end of Year 6 pupils have achieved very well in relation to the level at which they started. Average and higher attaining pupils make particularly good progress in years 4 to 6 where teachers expect a great deal from them. The quality of teaching is often excellent and some outstanding teaching and learning was seen. As a result, pupils learn to speak confidently and fluently. In an outstanding lesson, pupils took on the characters of a family of four which the class had invented and fielded questions such as 'Tell us a secret about yourself' responding very well in their respective roles so that they became quite plausible. They learn to ask as well as to answer questions and are unafraid to say when they find something hard to understand. In an excellent lesson, pupils devised their own questions and awarded possible marks for them depending on the type of question, commenting for example, 'Three marks – it's got *explain* in it'. Teachers make many opportunities for pupils to contribute orally and often get a good level of discussion going. When examining a poem about an owl, for instance, pupils debated what 'bandaged the hills' might mean. They worked out that the owl was described 'as death itself' and was 'circling the hills' and finally a higher attainer concluded it was an 'image of bleeding, talking about death and killing the mouse.' The pupils rise to the high level of challenge and dynamic enthusiasm offered by the teaching. While average and higher attaining pupils often attain above average standards in speaking and listening, the relatively high proportion of lower attaining pupils means that standards overall are close to rather than above average.

75. Pupils attain close to average standards in reading and writing by the end of Year 6. They learn to read closely for understanding and to skim read rapidly for information. Planned lessons in the library benefit pupils' learning and a wide range of popular comics, chosen by the pupils, are sometimes used by teachers to teach specific literacy skills such as speech bubbles and speech marks. Teachers themselves read out loud extremely well. In an excellent lesson, the way the teacher read commanded full attention because of the extremely good characterisation through different tones of voice and accent. Pupils are very well taught to have an opinion and to write it down, giving reasons for their answer by referring closely to the text they have just read. This benefits both their reading and their writing. The teaching gives the pupils the vocabulary to express themselves such as 'author's intent', which the pupils then use in their own way saying, for example, 'The author's facts bring it to life.' Pupils undertake a wide range of written work and the best is well ordered, using paragraphs to good effect. They are taught to use effective endings; for example, this rounded off an amusing tale: 'It's not every day that you see a giant, green, marsh monster in your local swimming pool!' The teaching encourages them to use a wide range of punctuation and to use powerful language. Instructional writing has a certain flair as in this average attainer's account of how to make toast, explaining, 'For a final touch spread butter on one side...' Much of the work is carefully guided by the teacher but the pupils are achieving very well as a result and clearly find reading and writing highly enjoyable. The very good teaching makes very good use of all available time and while writing is made enjoyable there is also a real sense of purpose to it.

76. English is very well led and many changes have taken place in the last two years. As a result, the resources and library provision are very good and have a positive impact on pupils' learning. The teaching of reading separate from the daily literacy lesson has enabled teachers to concentrate on writing. The co-ordinator has taken over the full management of the subject recently and this has highlighted the disparity in the provision for higher attaining pupils in Years 1 to 3 and the rest of the school. The former system whereby responsibility for the subject was split between two staff made it harder to ensure policies were being carried out in the same way in the infant department as in the junior since each co-ordinator tended to oversee the teaching and to monitor pupils' work in their own separate departments. There is close liaison between the curricular co-ordinator and literacy co-ordinator and this is instrumental in formulating changes which run through the teaching of literacy from Year 1 to Year 6. The new programme for teaching narrative writing, just started in Years 3 to 6, is now being extended to Years 1 and 2. The skills of literacy are promoted well in other subjects.

MATHEMATICS

77. Standards by the end of Year 6 are close to the national average for the proportion of pupils achieving the level expected of their age or above; however, proportion of pupils on course to reach the higher levels is below the national average. Overall, therefore, pupils' performance in mathematics is below the national average despite very good teaching in Year 4 to 6. Improvements in standards since the last inspection in mathematics are satisfactory.

78. Pupils' performance by the end of Year 2 is well below average. The teaching in Years 1 to 3 is satisfactory, although the teaching provides insufficient challenge for higher attainers. Very few pupils are on course to reach the higher levels this year in Year 2 as the teaching does not push on higher attaining pupils' learning at a fast enough pace. Pupils are grouped in classes of broadly similar attainment levels but much of the work given to higher attainers is similar to that expected of average attainers resulting in higher attainers not achieving as well as they could.

79. Overall, pupils' achievement in mathematics is good because of the very good teaching in Year 4 to 6. Achievement in Year 1 to 3 is satisfactory on balance. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress relative to their prior attainments because work for these pupils is planned carefully and there is plentiful adult help for them both in the classroom and during times when they are taught in separate small groups by teachers and other members of staff.

80. In the best teaching in Years 1 and 2 lesson plans are thorough and teachers share with pupils what they are intended to learn. Pupils are well behaved and keen to learn when they work in small groups of similar levels of attainment; for example, higher attainers completed quickly and confidently a well-designed worksheet to enable them to practise and extend their use of multiples of two, five and ten. Average attainers recalled accurately, though slowly, multiplications of two, five and ten. Lower attainers enjoyed playing a game which helped them to count up in fives. Unsatisfactory features of otherwise satisfactory teaching occur when the teachers' planning does not clearly identify work for pupils of different levels of attainment. The questioning of pupils is to the whole class rather than to individuals based on their levels of prior attainment.

81. By the end of Year 2 higher and average attainers can tell the time to the nearest five-minutes. They cut shapes into quarters precisely. Pupils split two-digit numbers accurately into tens and units. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs add single digits to two digit numbers correctly. Most pupils find the axis of symmetry of a regular shape by using a mirror. They use, to a limited extent, ICT to assist their learning; for example, pupils used data they had collected of ways pupils travelled to school to produce graphs on the computer. The level of work is well below the expected standard for their age and pupils require a great deal of assistance to help them to learn for they find it hard to remember and to build on what they have learnt.

82. Teaching in Years 4 to 6 is of a high standard. The planning of lessons is very good resulting in a high pace of learning; for example, in Year 6 the teacher introduced the content of the lesson to the pupils very enthusiastically and pupils worked quickly and with considerable interest. Most pupils knew they were unlikely to throw a four when using a six-dice and gave valid reasons for their answer. They knew there was an even chance of throwing an odd number when using the dice. The teaching placed strong emphasis on the correct use of mathematical language and pupils gained an increased understanding of using the language of probability. The lower attaining group was ably assisted by a support teacher, who helped these pupils to keep up with the very brisk pace of learning in the lesson. Higher attainers answered correctly challenging questions, such as what the odds were of picking out another even number if two even numbers had been taken out of a pack of cards numbered zero to nine.

83. Resources are used particularly well to interest and to help pupils to learn at a fast pace; for example, an overhead projector was used very well to extend pupils' learning of fractions by enabling pupils to demonstrate and explain to others how to convert fractions to decimals. Higher attainers knew how to deal with recurring decimals. Most pupils used calculators appropriately,

such as for sorting out a group of fractions into ascending and descending order. In Year 5 the teacher's very good understanding of how to use ICT to assist learning in mathematics resulted in pupils building up a multiplication matrix to extend their understanding of the efficient use of a spreadsheet and methods of calculation.

84. The management of pupils is very good; for example in Year 4 the teacher's rapport with pupils engaged them totally in what they were doing. The teacher was very attentive to the pupils' needs, using structured questioning very well. Most pupils could multiply and divide accurately by 10 and 100 hundred two-digit numbers.

85. The marking of pupils' work is good, on balance. In Year 4 to 6, pupils have a clear understanding of how well they are doing because of the detailed teachers' comments in their books, and from the target sheets in pupils' books, which show their levels of attainment and what they need to learn to improve. The marking in Years 1 to 3 is usually just ticks or crosses and few teachers' comments are given to identify what pupils are doing well and what they need to do to improve.

86. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs in Year 6 provides good opportunities for pupils at differing levels of attainment to practise and consolidate basic mathematical work in a supportive atmosphere. They use money to help them to calculate, for example, 8p shared by 2. A few pupils worked out slowly how many bananas they could buy for 35p if each one costs 5p. They worked productively and were keen to succeed, and they behaved very well.

87. Pupils in Year 6 who are at the cusp of reaching the level expected of their age are given very good opportunities to make rapid progress through very good teaching in small, specially selected groups. In these lessons, teachers encourage discussion and pupils are very enthusiastic. Teachers expect pupils to use correct language and ensure that pupils understand the meaning of mathematical terms; for example, the difference between 'multiple' and 'factor' was explained clearly to pupils and after the explanation most pupils correctly stated the factors of 20 and the multiples of four and five. The pupils later logged onto the Internet to access a site set up to provide revision help for pupils. They selected areas of learning they wished to revise, such as analysis of data, and gained valuable instruction and practice of the meanings and use of the terms 'mode', 'median' and 'mean', for example. A high quality video recording was used very effectively to provide pupils with methods of division and multiplication using the memory function of a calculator to work out for instance, $(234 \text{ divided by } 3) + (0.8 \text{ multiplied by } 14)$.

88. By the end of Year 6, the presentation of pupils' work is of a high standard. Most pupils can add, subtract, multiply and divide decimals, although sometimes the division is inaccurate. They answer problems and puzzles well. Pupils can multiply accurately sets of two-digit numbers using different methods of calculation. They investigate the area of a triangle and calculate the volume of a three-dimensional shape correctly. Higher attainers interpret line graphs they have drawn precisely. They investigate well the angles of a triangle drawn within a semi-circle. They draw triangles with different angles accurately using a protractor. Lower attaining pupils add hundred, tens and units together appropriately. They make tally charts of the colours of card and then draw a bar graph. They multiply two-digit numbers by units, although sometimes inaccurately. Pupils convert decimals to whole numbers and tenths. They recognise and name shapes such as 'square', 'rectangle' parallelogram' and 'pentagon'.

89. The subject managers have identified areas for improvement and have implemented new initiatives well; however, many developments are recent and as yet have been in place for insufficient time to affect standards. Overall, the National Strategy for Numeracy has been introduced soundly. The commitment of staff to raise pupils' achievement is a particular strength of the school. ICT is used satisfactorily to assist pupils' learning in Years 4 to 6 but limited use is made of computers in Years 1 to 3 to help pupils make better progress in mathematics. The opportunities to develop mathematical skills in other subjects are rare. Pupils with exceptional aptitude for mathematics are not identified. The monitoring of the quality of teaching is well established but the checking of pupils' books by the subject leaders does not happen, which

restricts the management's monitoring of pupils' learning. A positive recent development is the tracking of pupils' progress to levels and sub-levels of the National Curriculum in order to check the achievements of individual pupils and groups of pupils relative to their prior attainment. The annual pupils' reports contain far too much educational jargon that may be not understandable to some parents. The accommodation is good and the range and quality of learning resources are of a high standard; both the accommodation and resources are used very well to benefit pupils' learning.

SCIENCE

90. Standards are below average at the end of Year 2 and close to average at the end of Year 6. At the end of Year 2 pupils' knowledge covers living things, materials and physical processes but in materials and, especially, physical processes they do not know enough. Pupils' ability to carry out scientific investigations is also underdeveloped. Higher attaining pupils in particular do not achieve enough because the work is not sufficiently challenging. By contrast lively and challenging teaching in Years 3 to 6 provides pupils with tasks that develop both their scientific knowledge and skills in scientific enquiry. Teaching throughout in the junior classes is good, so that by the end of Year 6 pupils' attainment is average, and a significant proportion of pupils reach higher than average levels of attainment. Pupils' rate of progress is slower in Years 1 and 2 but throughout the juniors the pace of learning quickens so that pupils make better than expected progress over these four years. Their achievement is very good by the end of Year 6. This pattern of achievement is also true for pupils with special educational needs. The two co-ordinators have made important improvements in providing guidance for teachers but they have not been able to keep a check on teaching in other classes or of the pupils' achievements. Plans for future development are vague. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not experience enough science and do not carry out enough scientific investigations. The co-ordinators are unable therefore to analyse performance with rigour.

91. By the end of Year 2 pupils know more about living things than other elements of science. They can sort healthy and unhealthy foods, list types of exercise and sequence human growth from newborn baby to adulthood. In contrast other elements of science are less well developed. There is a tendency to cover the work in too few lessons. For example, in Year 2 teaching on electricity was largely limited to making a simple circuit with no opportunities to experiment further with the circuit by adding a switch to break it or to explore everyday devices that use electricity. This pattern of short themes and one-off lessons is common in Year 2 and, as result, too little science is covered, which limits the opportunities to deepen learning. This inhibits progress. Much of the work tends to be the same for pupils of all abilities and the marking of pupils' work, particularly in Year 2, is limited to ticks and general praise rather than helping pupils understand what they need to do to improve.

92. In Years 1 and 2 pupils' ability to carry out scientific experiments is below expectation. In Year 2 pupils can explain the similarities and differences in animals and plants and although they can make predictions they have difficulty in giving logical reasons for them. They have poorly developed investigative skills. For example, they could make no suggestions as to how they might use the circuits they built to test the strength of different batteries. The quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall. Strengths include good subject knowledge and good use and development of scientific vocabulary. The teaching of the skills of scientific enquiry is weaker. For example, in a Year 1 demonstration lesson about gravity, the teacher was showing pupils what would happen to a scrunched piece of paper and a flat piece of paper when they were dropped. An opportunity to develop prediction skills was missed, because pupils were not asked what they thought would happen, but rather what had happened after both pieces of paper had been dropped.

93. In Years 3 to 6 teaching successfully links the development of scientific knowledge with the development of scientific enquiry. This ensures that pupils make gains in both these areas of science. By the end of Year 6 pupils' knowledge covers the whole range of scientific areas and shows that they can record their work systematically, higher attaining pupils being able to plan and predict what might happen in scientific investigations. In an energetic, ambitious and meticulously prepared science afternoon in Year 6, teachers and teaching support staff planned a range of

activities around the theme of materials. Prior assessment had shown this to be an area of weakness. Pupils took part in range of short, sharply focused practical activities that were highly investigative in nature. For example, one activity involved testing materials left at the scene of crime to reveal a murderer. These highly motivating activities led to increased knowledge of materials, their properties and how they might be sorted and to the development of scientific problem-solving. The afternoon had a very positive effect on pupils' attitudes with one pupil heard to say 'that was fab.' In all other years in the junior classes teachers plan carefully for scientific investigations, and as a result pupils are better able to carry out investigations. Lessons run smoothly and a good working atmosphere is maintained. A common feature of teaching is the close attention paid to using correct vocabulary which all adults use and expect pupils to use. Vocabulary is well displayed and referred to and, as a result, pupils used correct vocabulary. Marking, particularly in Year 6, not only gives praise but also points out inaccuracies, tells the pupils what they need to do to improve and on occasions gives the work a National Curriculum level. It is this good knowledge of the pupils' abilities that lead to such well-targeted work in Year 6.

94. Pupils work hard in science lessons, although there is a tendency in question and answer sessions for a significant number of pupils not to attempt an answer. From Year 1 to 6 teachers do not make enough attempts to draw these pupils into the lesson and this slows the progress of the more reticent pupils. Pupils are proud of what they achieve and when asked they work well in groups. The co-ordinators have introduced a scheme of work and are ready to evaluate its implementation. This will require a more systematic analysis of pupils' work including national test results. The co-ordinators are well placed to do this.

ART AND DESIGN

95. Standards by the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 are below national expectations. During the inspection week, there was little work in evidence. In one lesson, however, pupils showed that they found it difficult to translate their observations onto paper. They also could not use what they had seen to make satisfactory designs.

96. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment remains below expectations. Pupils still find careful observation difficult. Their drawings lack detail in pattern and line, and they have not learnt how to develop a sense of shape and form. They have not learnt to work in three dimensions. Nevertheless, their designs based on the Blitz show care and an awareness of the need to be bold. Pupils in other years sometimes show that they can work at an average level. Pupils in Year 5, for example, make effective painted observational drawings of daffodils having looked at van Gogh's 'Sunflowers'.

97. Standards have declined since the last inspection. There are a number of factors contributing to this. First, the way time is used across each term and year hinders the progressive development of key skills. It also prevents pupils remembering what they have learnt. Secondly, teachers are not helping pupils to learn the purpose of art, and how they can use it to make personal creative statements. Thirdly, pupils' artwork suggests that teachers lack subject knowledge, and therefore do not know what to expect of the pupils.

98. It was not possible to observe enough lessons to make a judgement on the teaching. In those lessons that were seen, teachers gave clear instructions, so that pupils knew exactly what to do. Teachers planned well to give the amount of support that matched pupils' needs. For example, when pupils in Year 2 were trying to use their observations to make designs, the least able were given templates to prevent them getting frustrated and not learning. The lessons thoroughly involved the pupils who responded by concentrating well. Teachers managed pupils very well, and pupils responded with good behaviour. In the summing-up sessions, teachers appropriately used pupils' responses to assess what they had learned. However, these general classroom methods are not allied to adequate subject knowledge and ways to develop pupils' skills.

99. The school covers what is expected, but the curriculum lacks richness. Nevertheless, pupils make interesting educational visits. These make a deep impression on them. For example, pupils in Year 3 were keen to talk about some sculptures they had seen. This also provided a good opportunity to learn about the science of materials, so that pupils knew how their qualities determined how they were used for art. There is also little celebration of pupils' achievements on display. Each year, the school properly assesses what pupils know and can do, but does not use what it learns to plan how to meet their needs. The school recognises that staff need further training, which is the main priority in order to raise standards.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

100. At the end of Year 2 and at the end of Year 6 standards of attainment in design technology are at expected levels. They are, however, relatively higher at the end of Year 6 than at the end of Year 2. Throughout the school pupils use a suitably broad range of skills to make a variety of products. Pupils' skills in designing and evaluating what they have made are better developed in the junior classes. Pupils achieve well overall. However, because of good links between learning and applying techniques and more purposeful teaching of design skills, progress is better in the junior classes. Pupils with special educational needs often succeed well and their progress is at least satisfactory, with some pupils in the juniors making good progress. Overall standards remain the same as the last inspection. No teaching was seen in Years 1 and 2; in Years 3 to 6 the teaching is good. Co-ordinators have made important improvements, which in the juniors in particular, have added to pupils' experiences in design and technology. The most urgent need is to give pupils in Years 1 and 2 more opportunities to apply key skills to their own designs to develop their independence.

101. In Years 1 and 2, teachers ensure that pupils make a suitable range of products and pupils become reasonably good at making things. They can carry out the necessary steps in the correct order to make puppets and cut, stick and measure with growing accuracy, to arrive at a finished product that looks like the original design. However, teachers do too much for the pupils, which limits pupils' originality and ability to make decisions. For example, pupils in Year 2 sequenced the steps needed to make land yachts and made these from materials provided by the teacher. As a result all the yachts were the same. For higher attaining pupils opportunities to apply what they had been taught and to reflect on how they might improve their models were missed so that these pupils did not attain as well as they should. In one task, Year 2 pupils made owls with wings that moved with a 'pull the tab' system. Two pupils were able to make alternative suggestions about how to move the wings and how these techniques could be used to make ears, legs or arms move. The teaching failed to exploit this ability, resulting in pupils all making the same owl and reducing individuality to decorating.

102. The teaching in the juniors is more successful in giving pupils greater independence and opportunities to use their initiative in their work and in enabling them to apply practical techniques. In one lively lesson in Year 3, confident teaching encouraged pupils to explore how a pneumatic system could be used to inflate a balloon to make model parts move. After spending some valuable time seeing how these systems worked, pupils became engrossed in applying the system to their own junk model monsters. Pupils worked with zeal and by the end of the lesson all groups produced a successful prototype. Such was their level of concentration and enjoyment that they did not want to stop for play. This pattern of teaching is common in all year groups in the juniors, resulting in good skills in making. Pupils' products are planned with clear designs, which indicate the steps to be taken and equipment needed. The weakest element of design and technology in the juniors is in evaluating the effectiveness of what they have designed and made. Opportunities are provided for pupils to evaluate but these tend to be too simplistic, asking pupils what they might do differently or whether they are happy with their designs. The exception was a project in Year 6 in which pupils made greenhouse structures and then evaluated their effectiveness in terms of cost and strength. Attainment in evaluating products varies, some pupils simply saying 'yes' and others making more judgemental comments. For example, in a well conceived project on making purses

in Year 4, comments such as 'a square shape would have been easier to sew.' were common. This reflects focused teaching. It is this relative weakness in evaluating products that in the juniors holds back the higher attaining pupils.

103. Pupils clearly enjoy the practical nature of this subject. They co-operate well and work well as part of a team. The co-ordinators have a good understanding of the subject and in the juniors in particular have helped to develop positive attitudes in other teachers. A scheme of work which allows pupils to systematically build skills, a consistent planning format and realistic and informative assessment procedures give the subject coherence. Although samples of pupils' work are collected, identification of strengths and weaknesses is limited and there is need for both co-ordinators to work together to produce a plan for future action.

GEOGRAPHY

104. Standards match those seen typically in primary schools at the end of Years 2 and 6 and pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. There is more variation in standards throughout the school than at the time of the last inspection because the school has rightly, been concentrating on raising standards in literacy and numeracy. As a result of this geography has not had a high profile in the curriculum. By the time they are eleven pupils have a good body of geographical knowledge but skills of enquiry, particularly generated by the pupils themselves, are not as well developed.

105. As they progress through the school pupils develop their geographical skills and knowledge appropriately. By the end of Year 2 pupils have begun to develop their sense of place and enquiry skills through simple practical activities in their locality. They recorded passing traffic, for example, and formulated questions to ask the lollipop lady. Mapping skills and knowledge of the local area develop further through a study of Newton Aycliffe in Year 3, in which pupils learn to record their route to school pictorially. By the end of Year 6 pupils have a sound understanding of the water cycle and higher attainers have good knowledge of rivers and their characteristic features. They have a good knowledge of the effects of erosion and explain confidently the different phases of a river on its journey to the sea.

106. It was not possible to make a judgement on teaching overall as only two lessons were seen; both very good lessons in Year 2. In both lessons there was an interesting practical activity that reinforced the characteristic features of town and country. Effective links were made with literacy as the class read aloud the text of the teacher's postcard from a holiday destination and key vocabulary was reinforced through the effective use of word cards. Pupils' library skills were developed well when small groups adjourned to the library with an adult to do their own research. This link with literacy is a common strength throughout the school, although less emphasis is placed on developing numeracy in this way and this is an area for further development. The activities in the lessons were effective because they were well matched to pupils' levels of attainment and tasks were carefully modified for pupils who find learning difficult. As a result pupils were engrossed in their tasks. Samples of pupils work show that this practice is not a regular feature of the teaching in all classes and there are occasions when all pupils pursue the same tasks, with no variations in challenge for higher and lower attainers. Although in both these lessons the class computers were used productively to extend pupils' skills, evidence in pupils' books indicates that this is not a common feature of the teaching and one that requires further consideration.

107. The range of work covered by the pupils reflects the national guidance the school has adopted as a framework for the curriculum, although this has not yet been refined to meet the specific needs of the school. The subject is well managed by two co-ordinators, who have recently begun to monitor standards. The monitoring process is set out in a clear cycle that is known to all staff but it has not yet had time to become firmly established so its effects have yet to be seen in

improving standards.

HISTORY

108. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils attain standards that match those expected nationally. This represents good achievement when account is taken of low levels of attainment in language acquisition and knowledge and understanding of the world around them when pupils start school. Pupils make good progress in acquiring knowledge of past events and in developing historical skills as they get older. Throughout the school teachers make lessons interesting through well-chosen practical activities that bring history alive. As a result of this pupils enjoy finding out about the past.

109. By the end of Year 2 pupils are developing an elementary understanding of the passage of time and some of the differences between the past and present. From scrutiny of a well chosen picture pupils in Year 2 suggested ways in which seaside holidays nowadays compare with those of Edwardian times, recognising differences, for example, in clothing. One pupil thoughtfully observed that in Edwardian times 'You got changed in huts but now you just get changed on the beach'. By the end of Year 6 pupils are able to talk knowledgeably about some of the topics they have studied and readily recall their experiences in history. Higher attaining pupils in Year 6, for example, described in some detail life in Egyptian times and discussed some of the social changes in Britain since Victorian times.

110. The quality of teaching is good overall, mainly because of the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject, their good level of subject knowledge and the imaginative range of activities they give to pupils. Pupils consequently enjoy their learning, listen attentively and make good gains in knowledge. In a good lesson in Year 4, for example, pupils came to understand, through their re-enactment of a battle scene, that different groups of people may have differing viewpoints of the same event. They carefully considered the differing points of view of Spartans, Athenians and Persians when preparing their role-play. The teacher skilfully supported this activity so that pupils knew exactly what was expected of them and they had a good understanding of the events they were depicting. As a result they were able to perform sensibly and confidently. In a good lesson in Year 5 about Doctor Barnardo, the student teacher's confident subject knowledge led to brisk and challenging questioning that promoted a good level of effort by the majority of pupils because they were very well motivated and keen to contribute. In the best lessons a range of written tasks is provided to cater for the different levels of attainment. By contrast, there are times when work for higher attaining pupils is insufficiently demanding for them, especially when the same photocopied work sheets are given to all pupils in the class. This limits the extent to which brighter pupils can make progress.

111. Throughout the school teachers make good links with literacy but they do this judiciously so as not to detract from the historical element of the lesson. There is very little use of ICT to enhance the teaching of the subject and this is an area for further development. A key strength is the way in which pupils gain a sense of the past through handling real objects and this enables them to make comparisons between life then and now. In an effective lesson in Year 1 the teacher made good use of old objects to capture the interest of the pupils. Through handling domestic items that are no longer in everyday use, such as an old-fashioned hot water bottle and a toasting fork, pupils were able to speculate sensibly about their purpose. Effective questioning led pupils to deduce for themselves how an old fashioned iron was heated. There are several interesting displays of historical artefacts throughout the school, helping to reinforce pupils' historical understanding.

112. The school gives appropriate emphasis to history in the curriculum and the subject makes a very worthwhile contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. Curricular planning is based on a national scheme of work, which provides a clear framework of topics for each year group to study, although the school has not yet considered ways in which the guidance can be modified to customise it to fully meet the needs of the pupils. The subject is well managed by the joint co-ordinators, who have considerable enthusiasm. They have recently begun a

programme of monitoring in the subject, following the school's newly established system. This promises to be effective in improving standards in the subject when it is fully and rigorously implemented. The school is well resourced and good use is made of local places of interest to bring the subject alive. The curriculum is enriched considerably by the range of visitors, who enliven the teaching with role-play and re-enactments of historical events. For example, junior pupils enjoyed the visit of a 'Roman soldier' and a 'Tudor lady' who talked in role about life in those times. Such experiences do much to promote enjoyment of the subject and to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

113. At the end of Year 2 and at the end of Year 6 standards of attainment are below average. Pupils' skills and the use they make of ICT in other subjects are underdeveloped. Pupils' achievement is inconsistent and although they progress well in Year 4, where the teaching is more successful in making use of ICT in English and mathematics lessons and links the development of computer skills to purposeful tasks, overall achievement is below average. Pupils with special educational needs, who also make good use of ICT in English, make satisfactory progress. Standards have declined since the last inspection because pupils do not have enough opportunities to use computers, shortcomings in facilities hinder teaching and teachers do not fully understand how best to teach the subject. The two co-ordinators responsible for the development of ICT have made some important improvements to its provision but lack of monitoring of teaching and learning has meant that future developments are not sufficiently clear.

114. No teaching was seen at Key Stage 1 and so no overall judgement about the quality of teaching can be made. However, technical difficulties in accessing the school's network, the over reliance on using single classroom based computers and the infrequent use made of the ICT suite limit the opportunities teachers provide for pupils. The use of a suite of older outdated machines benefits pupils' skills in using the keyboard and mouse. Tasks tend to be over simplistic and rarely move beyond exploring what can be done with computers. Teachers have limited expectations of what pupils can achieve. For example, Year 2 pupils' type their name and they experiment with changing the colour and font but the techniques learnt are not applied to any particular task. By contrast in Year 1 pupils studying their neighbourhood produced graphs about how they travelled to school. Here they not only learnt how to put information into a database but also learnt about how ICT could be used to add to other ways of finding out about their neighbourhood. The standard of teaching seen in Years 3 - 6 was satisfactory overall but significant weaknesses exist. In all lessons teaching is hampered by the lack of a large screen to help demonstrate the techniques that teachers identify clearly in planning. Teachers have to rely on using a small screen to show pupils what they want them to do or they have to write instructions for pupils to follow. This and other technical difficulties frustrate good intentions.

115. The best teaching occurred in a Year 4 class. Careful thought to the structuring of lessons in English and maths lessons led to good use of computers for developing basic skills. In a mathematics lesson, for example, careful classroom management of group work enabled half of the class to use the Internet to practise mental mathematics skills, whilst the other half completed other tasks at desks. Later in the lesson pupils were able to swap over so that all had access to a computer during the lesson. In a further Year 4 lesson an imaginative task linked the development of ICT techniques to creating published material for others. Books were made for Year 2 pupils using digital images from a trip to a Hindu temple. The teacher's good understanding of how computers should be used led to some lively talk about what font size and type would make it easy for younger pupils to read and to what sort of language would be needed. Pupils not only developed their own ICT skills but were beginning to make decisions about how to use the computer in more subtle ways.

116. In contrast too much of the remaining teaching does not successfully achieve this balance of developing techniques and the application of learnt techniques. Pupils in Year 6 for example use

the word processor to type up work they have previously written but do not often draft and redraft directly on the screen. The lack of rigour and limited use made of ICT results in too few opportunities to e-mail, to use the computer to control other devices or to use the digital camera and scanner. This lack of understanding and low expectation are the main reasons for the present level of attainment.

117. Pupils behave well in lessons; they concentrate hard and readily help each other. When working in pairs, however, a significant number of pupils do not take turns at using the computer. Important improvements have been made in ICT, co-ordinators having put in place a scheme of work, a common planning format and clear assessment procedures. There is an urgent need for both co-ordinators to work together to improve teachers' knowledge of how to teach ICT, to improve access to computers and to improve facilities so that teachers can more easily teach this subject.

MUSIC

118. Owing to timetabling restrictions it was only possible to observe only two lessons, one in Year 1 and one in Year 4. Little written work is undertaken, therefore judgements on standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 cannot be made.

119. Pupils in Year 1 respond well to working together in groups. They are able to suggest imaginative ways of making sounds and to use these in a sequence. The rhythmical element is not fully developed, but pupils are able to refine and perform their sequences. Twenty three pupils attended a lunchtime recorder group session, working through exercises using three notes. Timing was sound and they were all able to maintain a basic tempo. The more talented musicians understand basic notation and recognise 'repeat' signs. All have copies of the book containing the exercises to practise at home.

120. In a good Year 4 lesson the class demonstrated that they could sing with good control of breathing and dynamics. Discussion showed that the principle of texture in music is well understood. When listening to music from Indonesia, they recognise how different instruments create different effects. Listening skills are developing well as pupils identify different sounds and a musical 'joke' used in an extract from Carnival of the Animals.

121. The teaching takes into account the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Planning is good and teachers' subject knowledge is sound. The recent introduction of the 'Lively Music' scheme is helping to provide challenge and shape to lessons. The well chosen extracts in the Year 4 lesson, for example, highlighted instruments that all pupils could identify if they listened attentively – which they did. The success of this lesson was guaranteed by the teacher's consistent focus on the musical learning objective.

123. In discussion with pupils in Year 6, it is clear that they are aware of the principles of pitch, rhythm and tempo. They can identify a range of musical instruments and have a fair idea which section of the orchestra they belong to. Percussion instruments have been used regularly for group performances. Pupils are able to describe elements of music from different countries, such as Spain and India. They know a range of songs and understand how a 'round' is constructed. Their appreciation of composition and improvisation is shaky.

124. The co-ordinators of the subject are well informed and committed. They lead the subject with enthusiasm. They have gathered together a good range of resources including percussion and keyboards. Computer software has also been introduced. The new course is a very helpful basis for teachers' planning. Teachers are encouraged to 'team teach', offering different expertise to a wider audience. In addition, they sometimes take another teacher's class if they have a particular skill that is needed to teach an element of the course. This is an effective use of staff. A portfolio of work is being developed to establish criteria for moderation of work. Assessments are conducted every half term. This does not include a self-assessment element.

125. A few older pupils take advantage of the opportunity to learn the violin. Two pupils were practising in a recorder quintet with a peripatetic teacher and two former pupils. The school choir attracts girls in the main. They sing rhythmically with associated movements. These pupils sometimes go out into the local shopping centre to entertain customers. Their enthusiastic and tuneful rendition of Abba songs is well received in homes for senior citizens.

126. Many of the positive elements recorded in the last inspection report are still evident. Teamwork is still a strong element in planning and pupils continue to respond positively to the musical stimuli offered. They listen well and co-operate fully in group work. Assessment strategies have been introduced. Opportunities for performing and composing are less evident this time. Singing remains a strength.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

127. Standards in physical education are average by the end of Year 2. It was not possible to observe lessons in Years 5 and 6 therefore no judgement can be made by the end of Year 6. The teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good. Throughout the school, standards in swimming are above average. This reflects its high profile, and the continued maintenance of the pool on the school site. Owing to inclement weather, no outdoor lessons were observed.

128. In all lessons, teachers use 'warm ups' and 'cool downs' effectively. They encourage pupils to think about how their bodies work. Lessons are not just about activity. In a Year 1 lesson, for example, pupils were asked to think 'Why does the body need blood?' One pupil was able to offer 'oxygen' in the response. In a satisfactory Year 4 lesson, pupils were encouraged to consider links with games practised by the Greeks. They had been discussing these in their history lesson, and the teacher made good use of Internet material about Sparta brought in by a pupil.

129. By the end of Year 2 pupils are taking part enthusiastically in competitive games and have learned different methods of passing and throwing. In gymnastics they are aware of the need for variety when linking movements together. They explore mood and their own interpretation of music in dance sessions. Often girls stay within the parameters of the task better than boys. By the end of Year 4, pupils are able to use space very effectively. Work with a partner is undertaken with due seriousness. Boys and girls work harmoniously together in small groups, in which girls often influence boys to be more precise in their movements. Movements are becoming more refined and ball control is improving.

130. Swimming lessons are tightly organised. Activities are carefully sequenced and pupils are divided methodically into ability groups. In all lessons seen, progress was good, including that of pupils with special educational needs. At one poignant moment, a pupil with cerebral palsy was helping and encouraging an able-bodied non-swimmer with tips on how to improve. Pupils are encouraged to think about their technique. They look forward to their swimming lessons and participate enthusiastically.

131. In all lessons teachers pay due attention to hygiene, health and safety. Insufficient use is made of demonstrations by pupils to highlight points about technique. Pupils dress properly for their lessons and most children are able to dress themselves. Pupils with special educational needs play a full part in all lessons. All pupils employ the principles of fair play when participating in team events such as relays.

132. The subject is managed well by two enthusiastic and committed co-ordinators. The curriculum has been improved since it was audited at the beginning of the academic year. Younger pupils are following the Durham Scheme. 'Topsport' is being phased in for older pupils. There is a determination to improve pupils' listening skills through the revised dance programme. Assessments are conducted every half term. However, in lessons pupils are not expected to

evaluate their own performance. Adventurous activities are now being planned and there is a determination to broaden the programme. For example, a golf professional is now supporting 'Try Golf', an indoor golfing project. Resources have been greatly enhanced and there is a good range of small equipment for all year groups. In the next phase of development, the monitoring of teaching is being planned.

133. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities. Boys and girls are able to participate in soccer and netball teams. They take part in swimming galas and athletics competitions. In the weekend before the inspection, a pupil had been placed second in the Federation of Artistic Roller Skating championships held in Derby. Former pupils return to the school to help with the dance club and netball practices. Darlington AFC and Middlesbrough AFC send representatives to lead soccer coaching sessions. Visits to watch Sunderland play in the Premier League during 2001-2 were fully subscribed.

134. Standards are similar to those reported at the last inspection. Since then, resources have improved and the curriculum has been reviewed. The introduction of adventurous activities has been slow, but formal assessment is now in place. Extra-curricular activities remain an important element in the life of the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

135. Standards are broadly average by the end of Years 2 and above average by the end of Year 6. Overall, the school has maintained the standards seen at the last inspection, although there has been a decline in the level of knowledge and understanding gained by seven year-olds.

136. Pupils' attainment at the age of seven is in line with the expectations of the local syllabus for religious education. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of Bible stories and recount 'The Lost Sheep' in detail. Pupils know some of Jesus' teachings and what Christians believe, for example helping the sick and sharing what they have. They recall some basic facts about Buddhism and Judaism. Pupils know some features of a Christian church and can list a few services which are held there. The more able begin to understand the symbolic significance of bread and wine. However, their knowledge of Christian and other festivals is not detailed. They also find it difficult to ask questions about God and matters which are mysterious to them. Pupils have not learnt to record in any detail.

137. By the age of 11, pupils' attainment is above expectations. Their knowledge of what Christians believe progresses well to include details of Jesus' life including his healing. Pupils' knowledge of different faiths develops well. They produce writing which shows strong empathy and an advanced understanding of religion. This was shown when they re-constructed a conversation between two disciples who had seen Jesus after his crucifixion. Pupils interpret religion through devising their own symbols to signify abstract concepts such as despair and hope. They pose deep questions such as 'Does God answer prayers?'

138. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons begin with a lively oral session in which pupils appropriately revise facts before undertaking new learning. In one lesson about pilgrimages, for example, the teacher showed her detailed subject knowledge when recounting the story of Lady Richeldis' vision. By questioning, which skilfully included all pupils, she helped them to learn about the difficulties in explaining its significance. Pupils showed that they had understood by their keenness to offer well thought out suggestions about what Lady Richeldis would have said to persuade people. Teachers plan their lessons well, ensuring that all pupils know and understand what to do. In a lesson about the teachings of Buddha in Year 2, for example, the teacher used the idea of special places to help pupils learn the significance of a shrine. Then she provided different degrees of resource support, giving the least able a structured worksheet so that they could concentrate on their drawings. Consequently, all pupils thoroughly enjoyed what they were doing. Teachers use the end of lessons well to consolidate learning and to give pupils an opportunity to

assess what they have gained. Pupils are enthusiastic to demonstrate what they have achieved. There are variations in the quality of teaching writing. Some of it shows high expectations of thinking, while other work relies too much on worksheets. In addition, expectations of presentation are inconsistent.

139. There are a number of features which have a positive effect on standards. The teachers with responsibility for the subject provide good direction. The curriculum is rich and supported by interesting displays. A number of visits to places of worship as well as visitors, including a Hindu governor, provide pupils with a deep insight into faiths and associated ways of life. Pupils' writing shows the high degree of interest these generate. In an enthralling lesson taken by the governor pupils became sharply aware of the importance of religion to a Hindu when they learnt of the shrines in people's homes. It also illustrated the very good links the school has with its governors and their active involvement in its work. The school makes good use of literacy in religious education, which helps pupils to learn to organise their thoughts.