

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **SACRED HEART CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Byermoor, Gateshead

LEA area: Gateshead

Unique reference number: 108393

Headteacher: Mr D Godfrey

Reporting inspector: Mrs C McBride  
2810

Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> –19<sup>th</sup> March 2003

Inspection number: 246790

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Byermoor Burnopfield Newcastle upon Tyne
Postcode:	NE16 6NU
Telephone number:	01207 270396
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Mongan
Date of previous inspection:	October 1997

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2810	Mrs C McBride	Registered inspector	English Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology English as an additional language	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Leadership and management Key issues for action
11084	Mrs J Hughes	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
30954	Mr B Ashcroft	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Music	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
1065	Mr J Hagan	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Geography History Special educational needs Educational inclusion	Teaching and learning

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is set in a semi-rural area serving several local villages and beyond. Although it falls within the Gateshead local authority, a large percentage of pupils travel in from the Durham district. The population of the surrounding area is of mainly white, British background and only very occasionally does the school admit pupils whose first language is not English. Pupils' backgrounds vary widely, but the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (currently 11 per cent) is smaller than in most schools. With 86 pupils between the ages of 4 and 11 years currently attending, the school is much smaller than most; there are roughly the same number of boys and girls. Pupils are taught in 3 mixed age classes in Years 1 to 6; reception children are taught as a single age group. Although there is no nursery, most pupils have attended the pre-school playgroup housed in the school before entering reception; their attainment on entry is broadly in line with that expected for their age. An average number of pupils (13 per cent) is identified as having special needs; these are mostly moderate learning difficulties with pupils finding it harder than most to learn skills in literacy and numeracy. In some years however, the school admits a higher number of pupils with special educational needs than in others. The school has a smaller proportion of pupils with statements of special need than seen in most schools.

In 2001, the school's good performance in national tests was recognised with a Department of Education and Skills Achievement Award; it gained 'Investors in People' status in 2001. The present headteacher has been in post since September 2001.

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

Good teaching ensures that all pupils progress well and standards overall are above average in reading; they are average in writing and mathematics. Pupils reach high standards in their personal development, although they could achieve more in some subjects of the curriculum. The headteacher and governors lead and manage well, but the influence of other staff in developing subjects requires strengthening. Given the school's size and modest budget, set against its success in remaining viable and popular, it gives good value for money.

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

- Standards in reading are above average;
- Children get off to a flying start in the reception class;
- Pupils achieve really well in their personal development;
- The school takes very good care of its children.

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

- Pupils' achievement in some aspects of the foundation subjects; \*
- Provision for outdoor play for the reception children;
- The robustness of the school's systems for monitoring teaching and learning.

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

\* Foundation subjects of the curriculum are: art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education.

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made a satisfactory response to its last inspection in October 1997; the rate of improvement against issues identified has accelerated in the last eighteen months. Some areas, such as the school's provision for information and communication technology (ICT), have improved significantly whilst others have been slower to improve. Although ground has been made up in issues related to planning and assessment of work, the school still has some way to go to ensure that its approach results in better achievement, particularly in the foundation subjects of the curriculum. Standards in mathematics have risen because the school has revised its ways of teaching the subject

and has now fully implemented the national guidelines. Given the headteacher's leadership, the strong support of governors and commitment of the staff to school development, the school has a very good capacity for future improvement.

## 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				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	A	A	C	E	well above average A above average B
mathematics	E	B	D	E	average C below average D
science	C	A	B	C	well below average E

The school sets itself challenging targets year on year and it is mostly successful in meeting them. Caution is needed, however, when interpreting the data from test results in small schools. The effect of one additional pupil on a school percentage in test scores can be considerable, whereas in larger schools, the effect is less marked. In 2002, of those taking the tests, many more than usual were identified as having special educational needs. Whilst school records show that they had achieved well in relation to their difficulties, they did not all reach average test levels and results dipped.

Inspection findings show that standards in reading are above average at both key stages. Standards in writing are above average in Key Stage 1, but closer to average in Key Stage 2 where there is some scope for improvement in handwriting and presentation. In previous years, standards in mathematics have not been as high as they should be, but the school's efforts to improve provision are paying off and standards are beginning to rise.

Pupils reach average standards in ICT, science and history, but in the other subjects of the curriculum, the picture is more mixed. In music standards of work in composing and performing music are much better than usually seen, whereas in some aspects of other subjects, standards reached are not as high as they could be. Higher attainers and especially able pupils are sometimes held back from achieving more. This is largely because the school has ploughed the bulk of its energy and resources into driving up standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT over the last four years. Other subjects have consequently taken a back seat. Standards dipped in the Year 3 /4 class when the school found it difficult to recruit a permanent member of staff. This situation has been remedied and pupils are now back on track.

At the end of the Foundation Stage (the reception year), pupils meet the expectations for this age group in all areas of learning. They achieve well except in their physical development where the school's lack of appropriate outdoor play facilities hampers progress.

Pupils with special needs achieve well in learning basic skills; given good extra support, they keep up with the same work as the rest of their class and maintain their self-esteem.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent in the Foundation Stage and very good throughout the rest of the school. Pupils enjoy school, are well motivated and keen to please their teachers.



Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils get on really well with each other and their behaviour is good at all times; the school has a calm, orderly atmosphere.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to make a contribution to the life of the school, and they become increasingly mature and responsible. Relationships between themselves and with adults are excellent.
Attendance	In line with that of most schools. Pupils arrive for school on time.

Pupils reach high standards in their personal development. This is a close-knit community where excellent relationships and the supportive atmosphere enable pupils to make the most of their time in school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good	Good

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

Teachers' have very good relationships with their classes and manage them well; this establishes a busy, purposeful atmosphere in lessons and pupils feel valued and supported. Lessons are well planned and teachers carefully explain what it is that pupils can expect to learn. When children set about their tasks they therefore understand what they need to achieve. Teachers use questions very effectively to build on previous learning and to stretch the thinking of pupils of all abilities. Resources are also used imaginatively and effectively, and teachers place a strong emphasis on practical activities to make lessons interesting. Very good teaching of pupils with special educational needs enables them to learn well in relation to their abilities. Both teachers and teaching assistants provide high quality support to help these pupils reach their individual targets.

Teaching in the reception class is very good; it is particularly strong in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding, and creative areas of development.

The teaching of mathematics has improved and pupils now make faster headway in learning a good range of ways for working out answers to number problems. Literacy lessons are of good quality overall; reading and writing skills develop at a good pace. Whilst musical composition and performance is taught exceptionally well, teachers have less subject knowledge in some other aspects of the curriculum. Pupils progress at a more uneven rate in these areas, which include art and design, design and technology, geography and physical education. Teachers are not clear enough about the targets to set for pupils; this makes it harder for them to guide the next stages of learning in some subjects and to increase the challenge for especially able pupils.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. It is very good in the Foundation Stage. In the other key stages, all subjects are covered, but foundation subjects are not always taught in sufficient depth.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The school helps them to thrive and gain confidence; the work with adults in small groups boosts pupils' development of basic skills really well.

Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school makes every effort to encourage pupils to settle and make friends. Teachers give extra support in lessons to ensure that language is not a barrier to learning.
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Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Pupils are taught to recognise their own 'specialness' and the individuality of others. The school encourages them to reflect on the impact of their actions on others and to respect the views and beliefs of different groups in society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. There is an excellent relationship of trust between staff and pupils. Adults respond sensitively to pupils' worries and concerns and children's welfare, health and safety are of paramount importance.

The school's efforts to promote racial equality and raise pupils' awareness of the cultural diversity of modern British society are sound. The school has a good partnership with parents, who feel that they can approach the head and staff with worries and concerns.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher's leadership and management are good; he gives a strong steer to the work of the school. Teachers with responsibility for leading foundation subjects are starting to get to grips with their responsibilities; there have been limited opportunities for them to monitor teaching and learning and to co-ordinate developments.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are actively involved in setting a clear direction for the work of the school. They use their skills and expertise well to support the staff.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Key areas for improvement have been identified and plans have been set in motion to address them.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Accommodation and resources are managed efficiently. Principles of best value are applied well.

The school has adequate resources to meet pupils' needs except in the Foundation Stage and in some foundation subject areas. The way in which the curriculum is managed and subjects are developed requires improvement.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils are expected to work hard and they make good progress at school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The range of after school clubs and activities;</li> <li>The amount of homework;</li> <li>Information about pupils' progress and the way mathematics is taught.</li> </ul>

The inspection endorses the parents' positive views about the school. Although the school is mindful to increase the number, there are currently satisfactory opportunities for pupils to take part in out of school clubs and activities. The amount of homework given to pupils falls within that recommended for their age, and the range covered is similar to that given in most schools. The school has recognised the need to improve the quality of information to parents about how numeracy is taught; this is included in its action plan for raising standards in mathematics. In other respects, information provided about pupils' progress is of good quality.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Although test results in small schools can offer a clouded view of achievement, it is possible to draw some conclusions when several years of results are put together. In this case, the average points achieved by pupils in the school in national tests over the last four years show a pleasing picture. At Key Stage 1, pupils' scores have consistently been ahead of those in all schools and most notably in writing. At Key Stage 2, scores have also exceeded those in all schools in English, but have been more erratic in mathematics and until the last two years, in science.
2. The most recent tests indicated that at Key Stage 1 the school had maintained very high standards, but at Key Stage 2, it had slipped back. The explanation for this is that of the 17 pupils who took the tests at age 11 in 2002, 6 were pupils with special educational needs. Having achieved well, some only narrowly missed the average level by a mark or two, which represented a tremendous achievement for them. Even so, this depressed the school's overall test results and placed them in a very low position compared to similar schools.
3. Pupils' achievement generally follows a steady course through the school. They get off to a flying start in the reception class, and by the time they are ready to enter Year 1, they are achieving what is expected for children of this age. The school's poor outdoor play facilities and minimal levels of staffing in the reception class mean that in physical development all pupils and especially higher attainers could achieve a little more.
4. These achievements are built upon well in Key Stages 1 and 2, where inspection findings show that pupils are continuing to make good gains in their literacy and numeracy skills, and in science and ICT. The school has taken firm action to raise standards in mathematics at both key stages; currently the vast majority of pupils are on course to achieve, and in some cases to exceed average standards. Also, with a sharper concentration on investigative and experimental work, science results have improved at Key Stage 2. Inspection findings show this to be a much stronger area of pupils' work than it was. There is still work to be done to raise standards of handwriting at Key Stage 2.
5. Pupils develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills well in other subjects of the curriculum. There are plenty of opportunities for them to apply their knowledge, for example in researching information from books and computers. Their knowledge of number is put to good use in science and design and technology, where they are able to improve the outcomes of their work by calculating and measuring accurately.
6. In some cases, staffing changes hamper pupils' progress and achievement. This has affected, for example, the current Year 3/4 class. Although they are now making up ground well, there was a long period last year when they were without a permanent teacher and the quality of teaching held back aspects of their work.
7. Standards of work and pupils' achievement in foundation subjects are variable. This issue is the main focus for the school's future improvement, as it recognises the cost of investing most of its attention in driving up standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT over the last four years. Development in other subjects has been on hold and curriculum issues raised by the previous inspection have not been fully addressed.

8. Coupled with varying degrees of staff confidence and expertise, this results in unevenness about standards achieved. At times this is within a subject. In music for example, very high standards are achieved in the composing and performing aspects, which are taken by an outside specialist; pupils' achievements are far less in listening to and appraising music, which is taken by class teachers. Average standards are achieved in history but in geography they are below average, where teachers' confidence is less marked. In art and design, pupils do not achieve as much as they could because skills and techniques are not taught in a planned or systematic way. In design and technology, and physical education, pupils achieve more in some aspects than in others and again, standards could be higher for all pupils.
9. Higher attaining pupils and those who are especially talented could reach much higher standards but they are not extended well enough in their work in the foundation subjects.
10. Pupils with special needs achieve well, given their difficulties. This is largely due to the good and often very good support that the school gives. Pupils are able to work at the same tasks as others and receive extra help in small groups to improve literacy and numeracy skills.
11. The very small number of pupils whose first language is not English are given good support in lessons; they settle well into the school and achieve well, particularly in literacy.

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

12. Pupils throughout the school have a very positive approach to school coupled with very good attitudes to learning. There is a warm, family feel in school and children respond well to this. They concentrate hard in lessons and make sure they complete the interesting tasks they are set. Attitudes of the youngest children in the school are excellent; their excitement is palpable as they bounce into class each morning, eager to see what their teacher has planned. They throw themselves into activities with great gusto and enjoyment.
13. Standards of behaviour are very good among all age groups and this enables pupils to make the most of their time in school. There is a very clear code of conduct and pupils demonstrate a familiarity with it as they go about their daily lives. They know that teachers will always treat them fairly and with respect and they, in turn, behave towards others in similar fashion. This is a close community where problems are discussed and immediately addressed. Pupils learn well from the very good role models set by staff and they add to the supportive atmosphere in school. Older pupils quickly see the need to look after the younger children and the 'Buddy' system is very effective. There have been no exclusions from school during the past year.
14. The whole school community works hard to create a supportive and Christian approach to daily communal life. Children see very positive examples each day of what it means to be part of a caring community and this helps them to become useful members of the school.
15. Pupils' personal development is very good because teachers offer them many opportunities to show maturity and to take responsibility for their own actions. Pupils respond very well to the adults' expectations that they will always try their best, and they make the most of any opportunities offered by the school. Elected pupils take

their duties on the School Council or as prefects or 'buddies' very seriously and they make a noticeable impact on the quality of life in school.

16. The school has rates of attendance that are broadly in line with the national average; they are often slightly above it. Rates of unauthorised absence also correspond broadly to the national average. Most pupils come to school on time and there is a very prompt start to the day.

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

17. Pupils' achievements and progress over time are a reflection of the quality of teaching in the school. In literacy, numeracy, science and ICT, the solid base of good teaching means that pupils are learning at a good rate in most lessons; and the school's performance in turn reflects this with high enough standards. Where the rate of learning is patchier, and standards could be higher in the other subjects, lessons are of a more ordinary quality. This is a result of the way in which the school organises its curriculum; teachers are sometimes not clear in their own minds about what skills they are trying to teach and miss out important parts. As assessment procedures at the end of each topic are weak, teachers' understanding of what pupils know or can do is sometimes too sketchy. Consequently, some work is not matched well enough to pupils' needs.
18. Teaching in literacy, numeracy, science and ICT enables higher attaining pupils to learn at a good pace and achieve well. However, it is not strong enough in the foundation subjects to take them the 'extra mile' in their learning. Art lessons, for example, do not help very able artists to fully exploit their skills and talents.
19. Teaching in the Foundation Stage (the reception class) is of a higher quality than elsewhere because the curriculum is well planned and appropriate for the children's needs; the teacher's subject knowledge and expertise is also strong, enabling all areas of learning to be taught confidently and skilfully.
20. The school's paramount aim of providing a secure, family atmosphere permeates each classroom. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are strong. Pupils are unafraid to speak out, question or contribute their ideas; they are not worried about 'getting it wrong' and in particular, those with special needs receive very good support and encouragement from all adults.
21. Teachers are well prepared and organise their classes well; this means that lessons get off to a brisk start and no time is wasted. At the start of each lesson, teachers tell pupils what they are going to learn and how they are going to go about it. These explanations are given carefully so that pupils understand clearly what it is that they need to achieve; teachers will often display these points for pupils in a prominent place at the front of the class. During lessons, they recall pupils' attention to these objectives; everyone's attention is therefore focused on the most important tasks and the lesson stays on track.
22. This successful feature of teaching is most apparent in literacy and numeracy lessons, where teachers break down work into chunks. At the end of each part they refer back to the main lesson objectives and check whether pupils feel that they have achieved them. In a Year 5 /6 lesson, which typified this, pupils were learning about the difference between writing formal and informal letters, and documents. Having explained what they were expected to learn, the teacher showed pupils several examples of formal invitations, and recapped the key features of formal writing. She noticed that when the class started to write their own invitations however, that they

tended to lapse into more informal language. She quickly returned to the earlier part of the lesson and went over the key features she was looking for again. This gave the class the reminder that they needed to keep them on the right lines. The approach works well in literacy and numeracy lessons, which are often over an hour in length. Pupils are able to take stock of how well they are doing and don't lose sight of the main things that they are trying to achieve.

23. Teachers' subject knowledge in reading and writing is strong and they are taught well. The quality of lessons in mathematics is now much better since teachers started to follow national guidelines more closely. The level of challenge for pupils of all abilities is better and work is matched to their needs more closely. The rate of pupils' learning in the range of ways they go about calculating answers to number problems has shown a marked improvement.
24. Teachers use questioning skilfully to help pupils think through problems using what they already know. Sometimes these are written, so that pupils refer to them as they proceed with a task. During a Year 3/4 design and technology lesson, for example, pupils were considering the design features of photograph frames. The teacher had provided a series of questions to help with this, such as 'How well does it stand up?' 'How well can you see the picture?' and 'What kind of picture is it for?'
25. Good use of resources in lessons grabs pupils' interest and helps to maintain their motivation. Teachers often make the most of new technology available to add sparkle to activities. This was seen in a Year 1/2 literacy lesson when the teacher showed a story text to the class, which enabled them to read the words and listen to the story at the same time. They enjoyed the stimulating colours and pictures but were also keen to follow the words of the story and predict what might happen next.
26. Good and, at times, very good teaching of lower attainers and those with special needs helps to maintain the school's pleasing test results and performance; most pupils do not fall far short of the average level. They are given concentrated attention for short spells of time from specialist staff and are also supported well by their own teachers during class lessons. All adults are keen to help these pupils to remain positive in their attitudes to work, and to boost their confidence and self-esteem. Close co-operation between all those who work with the pupils ensures that they are able to carry through the new skills that they learn in their 'booster' sessions to their work in class. Conversely, where class teachers spot weaknesses or the need for further practice, this is accommodated when they are given special attention.

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

### **The curriculum**

27. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is very good; it is interesting and motivates the children to work hard. Most areas of learning are provided for really well with the exception of pupils' physical development; there are no facilities for outdoor play at present, and although pupils have opportunities to run, jump and develop spatial awareness in the hall, other large scale physical activity is restricted. The curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory. The school has adapted nationally recommended schemes of work in most subjects to meet the needs of the pupils and to relate them more closely to the pupils' experiences. Although the curriculum meets its statutory requirements and covers all areas, this is not in sufficient depth in some of the foundation subjects.

28. The school uses a two-year rolling programme of curriculum themes to cope with the mixed age classes. However, this causes problems in the coverage of foundation subjects because the topics are taught at the same level when they are revisited. Planning for topics focuses too heavily on the activities to be undertaken rather than the skills to be taught. This leads to gaps in pupils' learning; for example, in geography, mapping skills are developed well in the infant classes but are not taken on further in the juniors. Although this was an issue at the time of the last inspection, the school's focus since then has been mainly on improving provision in the subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT rather than in the rest of the curriculum. The issue has therefore not been addressed with sufficient rigour and it is only within the last eighteen months that the school has started to make any noticeable headway by tailoring schemes of work to meet its particular requirements as a small school.
29. There are sound strategies in place for promoting literacy and numeracy. The mathematics curriculum has been improved; the teaching of basic number skills is given sufficient attention and pupils are developing a good understanding of number throughout the school. The school's approach to teaching reading is successful and produces good results; its approach to the teaching of writing is more successful in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2, where methods do not always motivate pupils enough and handwriting requires a more rigorous approach. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. They are supported well, particularly in small groups and make good progress in relation to their abilities. The school ensures that both lower attaining pupils and those with special needs are given plenty of opportunity to benefit from extra help; it uses several means to give extra support and to help them catch up with the others. Some of the work they undertake in small groups for example is of high quality.

### **Extra curricular activities**

30. A significant number of parents expressed concerns in the questionnaire about the range of extra-curricular activities available to their children. However, for the size of school, there is suitable opportunity for pupils to participate in a reasonable number of activities that enhance the curriculum; a good number of children participate in the programme of extra-curricular activities offered by staff. Many are very keen to attend the gardening club at lunchtimes and have won awards at local flower shows for the quality of some of the plants they have grown. The school also runs football and netball clubs, and a computer club. Other clubs have been run for limited periods depending upon staff availability; an art club and science club for example, ran until the end of the autumn term. Other schools are sometimes able to rely on parental involvement to help with their extra-curricular programme but, unfortunately, this is not the case at Sacred Heart, mainly because pupils rely on buses to get to and from school.

### **Personal, social, health and citizenship education**

31. There is a very good programme for pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) that has evolved over the years in response to the demands of the 'Healthy Schools Award' scheme. The school has achieved this award for the past six years and it provides the ideal platform from which to launch any PSHCE programme. The co-ordinator has a very clear overview of what is happening across the school and provides focused direction for the programme each year; regular, external reviews help her to do this. The programme is available to all pupils and incorporates all the required elements of sex, drugs and relationship education, citizenship and healthy eating. Recently, water coolers have been installed around the school so that pupils have access to water throughout the day. Healthy eating has



been a continuing focus of the programme and after deliberations within the School Council, it was agreed to introduce the 'Fruity Friday' feature. Pupils started to bring fruit instead of sweets and crisps for snack time on Fridays and this has been so successful that now it takes place on three days each week. Pupils also regularly spend time in class, sitting in a circle and listening to the views of their peers on different topics of interest or concern.

### **Community links and links with other schools**

32. Good links are established with the local community. The school plays an important part in local life and, in return, helpers from the Parish come into school to listen to readers. They also offer welcome support to pupils as they prepare to take their First Holy Communion. Local clergy are regular visitors and the school makes its facilities available to parishioners. The 'Mums and Tots' group meets regularly in the school and this helps young children to become familiar with the school environment. Community service providers such as the police and fire service also come in to talk to pupils about aspects of safety; pupils have participated in the 'Healthy School Roadshow', which was very successful.
33. Local sporting contacts also help to enrich the curriculum for pupils as, for instance, when members of a local Rugby Union club taught rugby skills to pupils in Years 5 and 6 over a two-month period. Good partnerships are maintained with a number of local schools and colleges and these make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Students from Durham, Newcastle and York Universities come on teacher training placements and there is also a well-established relationship with the Byermoor Pre-school Group that helps children to settle more easily in school.
34. A good area of enrichment of the curriculum is the opportunity given to the Year 6 pupils to learn French. This also provides a good link with the local secondary school, as a member of staff visits each week to take the session. Pupils visit the local secondary schools to make use of the ICT and design and technology facilities during the year. Links with another primary school are also helping with the professional development of staff, and this is having a positive impact on the school's arrangements for assessment of pupils' work. Carefully considered transfer arrangements are in place between schools which ensure that Year 6 pupils move to secondary education with some confidence and familiarity with these new settings.

### **Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

35. The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and this underpins much of the work of the school.
36. Very good provision for pupils' spiritual development is embodied in the plentiful daily opportunities for reflection and meaningful prayer offered to pupils. Throughout the busy day, they are given opportunities to stand still and thank God for different blessings in their lives. Even the very youngest children are encouraged to think about their own feelings as, for example, they are invited to draw how they feel during morning registration.
37. Pupils are surrounded by wonderful examples of the beauty of the natural world as classrooms burst with scented plants and flowers grown by the children and the school itself nestles in spectacular countryside that provides an uplifting natural backdrop for learning activities. Special moments of awe and wonder are planned into

activities, such as the moment when pupils in a science lesson gasped as they saw their fingernails magnified for the first time. 'It looks like a snake,' observed one boy.

38. Sensitive displays around school offer guidance and comfort to pupils, including as some do, special photographs and memories of sadly missed loved ones. Staff do not shy away from the most difficult issues and some are even motivated to undertake additional training to more fully support pupils with particular emotional needs.
39. Equally impressive provision is made for pupils' social and moral development. Teachers are particularly good at sprinkling moral and social issues into lessons as, for example, during English when pupils learn more about the nature of friendship, how to treat others well and to how to truly nurture friendships as an asset to be cherished. The School Council is an active part of school life and helps pupils to understand the nature of democracy and its value in today's world. Residential visits based loosely around environmental themes allow pupils to extend their social skills as they experience new settings. The PSHCE programme also plays an important role in developing pupils' awareness of the expectations of society. During lessons, staff offer opportunities to pupils to extend their leadership skills, by leading the warm up during physical education lessons, for example.
40. Pupils are encouraged to react with sensitivity to people less fortunate than themselves and money is regularly raised for a number of different charities. Staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour and children have a very clear understanding of the differences between right and wrong. Pupils learn to take responsibility for their environment and know what is allowed. They are confident in this knowledge, and will not, for example, let strangers into school when they knock on the door. They learn how their actions can impact on the lives of others.
41. The school makes good provision for pupils' cultural development overall. Pupils have a good knowledge of their own locality and culture and this has improved since the school adapted various programmes of study such as geography to feature specific local examples found around Newcastle and Sunderland.
42. The school maintains links with schools in Italy and Greece through its participation in the 'Comenius Project'. Pupils e-mail each other and learn more about their relative countries. Staff also promote pupils' understanding of different faiths and beliefs through religious education lessons. Even so, there is still further scope to increase the range of opportunities provided for pupils to develop an appreciation of the diversity of modern British society through links with other schools and communities.

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

43. This is a school with very high standards of pastoral care, which is a very strong part of its provision. Children feel secure and highly valued in its welcoming climate for learning.
44. Very effective child protection procedures are in place; these are the responsibility of the headteacher. He has undertaken recent training to familiarise himself and the staff with the updated local authority guidelines. Adults working in the school clearly understand their duty of care and any concerns are addressed immediately. Appropriate links are maintained with a raft of outside support agencies that are invited to offer expert help as required.

45. Appropriate health and safety systems are well considered and ensure pupils' welfare in all areas. Regular emergency drills are run and pupils are very familiar with the routines. The school buildings are very clean and well maintained by the caretaker, headteacher and governors who have a good understanding of health and safety issues. Lunchtime supervisors have undertaken first aid training and kitchen staff are aware of pupils with specific food intolerances.
46. Staff, including lunchtime supervisors, consistently upholds the concise code of conduct; this ensures that very good behaviour is the norm to which all pupils aspire. The school functions as an extremely orderly community and pupils clearly understand the rules. They value the reward systems operated in school and are proud of the awards they receive. Children in reception are further encouraged to behave well through the concept of 'Golden Time'. Each Monday they all vote on what activities they would like to pursue on Friday afternoon. They discuss what can sensibly be tackled in an afternoon and, if they behave well all week, they are able to spend their 'Golden Time' on Friday on the most popular activity chosen. Parents feel behaviour in school is very good.
47. Lunchtimes are pleasant, social occasions where older and younger pupils mix well together and show mature levels of mutual support. A large proportion of pupils (more than three quarters) bring a packed lunch and express a clear dislike for the cooked meals on offer. These are brought in from another school and do not appeal to the children. The school works hard, in line with its 'Healthy School Award', to encourage parents to pack nutritious lunches for their children.
48. There are effective procedures in place to promote pupils' regular attendance. The school monitors individual attendance records regularly and immediately highlights any dips or concerns and follows these up with parents. The headteacher provides a clear message to parents about the importance of keeping children in school and discourages term time holidays as much as possible. As part of the school's impressive stance on pupils' well being, staff are also very clear about how imperative it is for more vulnerable children to be in school.
49. All staff know these children very well and this helps them to make the best possible provision for their well-being. Teachers provide a clear overview of academic abilities and personal qualities when they speak to parents and in their written comments in the annual reports. It is because they have such a clear understanding of their pupils' personal qualities that they can offer such an appropriate learning environment that exactly matches what children need in order to grow as individuals. All the staff are very caring and sensitive to the individual needs of all the children. They treat them all as part of one large family and the pupils respond very well to this approach and make the best of their time at school.
50. Staff canvass pupils' opinions annually on a variety of school based issues and this provides the school with a clear picture of pupils' likes and dislikes. This is a proactive school that encourages pupils to express their feelings and staff work together to find a solution to any problem areas.
51. There are sound assessment systems in place in the core subjects and these provide teachers with a reasonable overview of what pupils can do. However, at both key stages, assessments in the foundation subjects need further refinement to provide staff with enough detail to target individual pupils with work that will consistently offer adequate challenge.

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

52. Parents have mainly positive views of the school and rising pupil numbers indicate that the school enjoys a good reputation locally. At their meeting with inspectors, parents spoke appreciatively of the work of the school although in questionnaire replies, some concerns were expressed, mainly about homework and the range of extra-curricular activities.
53. The headteacher and governors publish a range of good quality information for parents about life in school. Both the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents provide an interesting overview of school events, routines and standards. There is a very well considered induction programme to school for reception age children and parents have ample opportunity to visit the school and talk with the class teacher. Parents receive a copy of the revised Home School Agreement and they support the school in its various aims. Due to the small number of pupils in the school, staff know families well and are able to offer appropriate levels of support when problems arise. Regular parents' evenings and curriculum meetings are well advertised and offer topics of interest to the majority of parents. The school website is an alternative source of useful information for parents and this is becoming increasingly popular. Regular newsletters and half-termly updates about class activities are sent to parents so that they have a reasonable idea of what is happening. The school secretary is a good ambassador for the school and provides a helpful contact point for parents, particularly concerning attendance and illness.
54. High quality written reports are sent to parents at the end of the year and these provide detailed information about children's academic progress and personal development. Evaluative comments on all curriculum areas ensure parents know exactly what their children can do. They also provide targets for development in relevant areas. Some parents raised concerns about the amount of information they receive from the school but inspection findings do not support these concerns.
55. Parents of children with special educational needs are kept well informed of their progress and are involved in any reviews and target setting. This helps such children to make good progress in their learning.
56. Parents make a good contribution to the life of the school, mainly through the energetic efforts of the 'Friends of the School'. They organise a significant number of fundraising and social events and monies raised make a significant contribution to the school's resources and pupils' learning. For example, parents have funded the new roof and ongoing educational visits also benefit from parental generosity. On some occasions, parents are able to offer more specific areas of expertise. One mother, who is a dental nurse, has been able to support the school's dental health topic by providing learning resources and information for the dentist's role-play area.
57. The school invites parents to offer their opinions on a range of issues each year. The headteacher takes heed of parental views and recently the toilets were refurbished and dining arrangements were altered. A number of parents support sporting fixtures and many attend special curriculum evenings on subjects as diverse as ICT and religious education.
58. Some aspects of parental involvement are more difficult to organise here as the vast majority of pupils come to school by bus; few parents accompany or collect their children each day.

59. A significant number of parents expressed concerns about the range of extra-curricular activities available to their children and inspectors looked carefully at the provision. They find that these concerns are unfounded as there are several options available to pupils during the course of the year. Inevitably, with such a small school and few teachers, opportunities are more limited as such a small teaching staff cannot offer a range similar to that found in a school with far more staff. Some parents however, recognise that their children benefit in other ways from being part of a small rural school, not least in the amount of support they receive in their personal development overall.

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

60. Since his appointment eighteen months ago, the headteacher has led the school well in taking forward the key issues remaining from the last inspection. Although some progress had been made in addressing them prior to his arrival, the fresh input injected has meant a much faster rate of improvement. He has led by example in spearheading the raised standards in mathematics through introducing new teaching approaches and supporting staff in areas where they lacked confidence. He is also using his own expertise in ICT to guide the school and to provide support for staff in planning lessons and teaching approaches. Whilst bringing about change, he has successfully maintained the goodwill of the staff and the close family atmosphere, which characterises the school.
61. The headteacher has also placed strong emphasis on staff development at all levels and this has been instrumental in bringing about the improvements in standards. A good example of this is in ICT, where staff confidence and competence has been significantly increased through the training undertaken. As a result, pupils are learning at a faster rate and standards are now in line with expectations. Performance management is also being used effectively to bring about improvements, with appropriate whole school and individual performance targets being identified, and support and training provided to help staff achieve these. New staff are provided with very good support from the headteacher and other staff. Support is also sought, where appropriate, from outside the school.
62. Despite the best efforts of the governors and headteacher, in the school year 2001-2002, the school had difficulty in recruiting a permanent member of staff for the Year 3 /4 class. The quality of teaching during this period hampered the progress of pupils. The problem has now resolved itself; the school's better test results at Key Stage 2, its increased roll and higher profile within the locality have made it much more attractive to job applicants. The vacant post was successfully filled, and teaching for this year group has improved significantly.
63. The leadership and management of foundation subjects have not been strong enough in the past, but the teachers are now starting to get to grips with their responsibilities. There have been limited opportunities for them to monitor teaching and learning and to co-ordinate developments. The headteacher and staff are currently addressing this issue; the role of subject leaders is being carefully defined and together they are trying to implement workable ways of overseeing the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Current systems are not robust enough to pinpoint areas that require improvement in the foundation subjects.
64. The leadership and management of special educational needs are good, Effective systems and procedures are in place, with documentation being reviewed regularly and kept up to date. The special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has very good

knowledge of all pupils. Consultation with teachers, teaching assistants and parents, ensures that individual plans are clearly written and relevant to individual needs.

65. Governors support the work of the school well. Over the years, they have been highly instrumental in ensuring that the school's roll remained buoyant and that numbers were maintained at a viable level. Their creative use of the school's accommodation to provide pre-school facilities for families in the area has done much to encourage a steady flow of children into the reception class. The generosity and commitment of the parish, for which the school is a strong focal point, has also enabled the school to manage essential repairs and improvements. Most governors are long serving and they take a keen interest in ensuring that the school fulfils its aims. They use their skills and expertise well to support the staff and take an active interest in developments. One governor, for example, has given unstinting assistance in developing the school's work towards the 'Healthy Schools' award over several years. Governors fulfil their role as 'critical friend' to the school well; they are knowledgeable about the school's performance and although they are kept well informed by the headteacher, they seek explanations for the school's results and achievements. Working closely with the headteacher, governors are keen to hear and act upon parents' views. They keep a keen ear to the ground and questionnaires are sent out to seek opinions; parents feel comfortable in approaching the school with concerns or suggestions. Their concerns about the number of extra curricular activities for example, have been a recent point of extensive discussion for staff and governors.
66. Financial planning and monitoring are good. A careful check is kept on spending, particularly as funds are tight. All spending is weighed carefully against projected benefits. The school's main financial priorities are to maintain staffing levels and provide adequate resources to support teaching and learning. All extra grant funding is used effectively, for example to improve ICT and employ extra staff to provide support for pupils with special educational needs. The improved standards in ICT and high quality support for pupils indicate that money is spent well. The school runs smoothly from day to day; the office administrator is very efficient and carries out her role very well. She provides a welcoming and helpful first point of contact with the school. She gives very good support to the headteacher and staff to enable them to carry out their work with the minimum of interruption.
67. Overall, the school has made a successful switch from making too little use of computer technology to a position where it now taps the potential of many different forms. For example, school records, such as those for attendance are now held on databases; teachers' planning is produced on computers and parents are able to read newsletters on the school's web site.
68. Learning resources are adequate in most areas, with the exception of outdoor play facilities for the reception class, and resources for teaching geography where standards are below average. The school's accommodation is adequate and well maintained.

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

69. To support the school's further improvement, the headteacher and governors should now draw up an action plan to include the following:

- (a) Increase pupils' achievement in the foundation subjects by:
  - organising the curriculum so that all subjects are covered in sufficient depth, and key skills are taught systematically;
  - providing training and support for staff in subjects where they lack confidence or subject knowledge;
  - improving arrangements for assessing pupils' progress.(paragraphs 7,8,9,17,27,28,51,63,131-145)
  
- (b) As funds allow, provide outdoor play facilities for pupils in the reception class.  
(paragraphs 3,27,75,90)
  
- (c) Improve the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation procedures in the foundation subjects by:
  - strengthening the influence and contribution made by subject leaders.(paragraphs 63,131-145)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	24
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	16

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	3	9	11	0	0	0
Percentage	4	13	38	46	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	86
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	10

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	11

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.0

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2



National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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*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)***

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2002	7	4	11

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90(91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	7	10	17

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (93)	71 (93)	100(93)
	National	75 (75)	73(71)	86(87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	n/a (85)	n/a(93)	n/a (93)
	National	73(72)	74 (74)	82(82)

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

***\* Please note. Test and examination data is excluded from inspection reports if there are 10 or fewer pupils. This also applies to year groups of boys and girls separately.***

## Ethnic background of pupils

## Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	85	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

*The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

## Teachers and classes

## Financial information

### Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16
Average class size	22

### Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	51

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	214,980
Total expenditure	181,243
Expenditure per pupil	2,107

## 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	3
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	86
Number of questionnaires returned	55

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	24	7	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	33	2	2	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	44	2	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	60	11	0	2
The teaching is good.	62	29	4	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	33	18	0	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	25	7	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	33	4	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	42	35	16	0	7
The school is well led and managed.	53	33	9	2	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	38	9	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	13	27	29	13	18

*Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer and may not total 100.*

## **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**

70. There are 19 children in the Foundation Stage (the reception class). They enter school in the September of the school year they are five. A qualified teacher, who has support from a classroom assistant for two and a half days per week, teaches the class.
71. All of the children have attended either the pre school provision, which is provided on the school's premises, or a nursery school. When children enter the reception class their attainment across all areas of learning is broadly similar to that usually seen with children of their age.
72. The school has effective procedures for admitting children into the reception class. In the term before they start school the children and their parents visit and spend time in the reception classroom. Parents are given guidance on how learning will be promoted and how they can best support their child's learning. During the first week of the autumn term the teacher and her classroom assistant visit the children in their own homes. During the second week, for the first two days children attend for the morning session only. On the Wednesday they stay for lunch and for the final two days of the week they attend full time. This process helps children to get used to their new environment, feel comfortable and settle quickly into their class.
73. Relationships with parents are very positive. They are very happy with the provision their children receive in the Foundation Stage. They are given opportunities to support their children's learning at home and advice on how best they can help them, for example to improve their early reading skills.
74. The reception teacher is also responsible for the leadership and management of the Foundation Stage. She fulfils this responsibility very well. She has a very clear understanding of how well the children are doing and what they need to do next. She makes good use of external agencies to provide her with an objective view of the teaching and learning in her class; she uses the information well to bring about improvements. For instance, based on advice given she improved the provision in the construction area.
75. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. It is particularly strong in the personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding, and creative areas of development. A real strength of the teaching is the quality and detail of the planning. Very good links are made between different areas of learning. The learning intention for each activity is clearly established and shared with the children so that they know what they are doing and why. The activities are very well thought through and they arouse children's interest and imagination. Teaching is not as effective in some aspects of physical development. The lack of a full time classroom assistant and no designated outdoor area for the Foundation Stage reduces the opportunities and challenges the teacher can provide for the children.
76. Overall children make good progress over time. It is very good in some areas. The majority of the children are on course to meet the expectations for children by the time they leave the reception year in all areas of learning and approximately a quarter of them are on course to exceed these. Progress in some aspects of physical development is not as good as it could be. Children with special needs are really well

supported and this enables them to make very good progress. The teacher uses simple but effective strategies to support children who find it more difficult to behave or concentrate. For example, a 'magic mat,' is used to help them to sit and listen during whole class sessions. Such is the success of this approach that all children want a turn to see if sitting on the mat helps them to concentrate harder.

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

77. Children do really well in this area of learning because the teaching is very good. A strong emphasis is given to enabling children to develop their independence. The teacher has high expectations and demands a lot from the children. They respond very positively and clearly understand and follow the routines and rules for their class. On arrival each day they self register by placing their name card in the correct wallet on the wall. They plan which activities they wish to do and when they complete a task they record this by placing a mark next to their name on the chart provided. This enables the teacher to keep a careful eye on which areas of learning children are using and if necessary direct them to other activities to ensure they are getting all the necessary experiences. Children relate really well to one another. They share equipment sensibly and take turns. They help one another and respond immediately to their teacher's requests. When asked to tidy up they do so without any fuss or bother. Children develop their skills of concentration at a fast rate. They show an eagerness to explore new learning. The success of this is seen in the way the majority of them are able to stay on a given or chosen task for a prolonged period of time. The teacher is very good at developing a sense of awe and wonder in the children. She also impresses upon them what is right and what is wrong. As a result they are switched on to their learning and aware of how they should behave. The excitement and wonder that emerged during a hunt for the 'Giant's items' was very special. After they had collected the items and brought them into class one girl asked, 'Will the Giant mind us taking his belongings into our class?' Relationships between the teacher and the children are excellent. As a result the children are very happy, secure and confident within their environment. The teacher has very high expectations for the children's behaviour. She has helped them to draw up the class rules, which they signed to show their commitment to following them. They know exactly what is required of them and in virtually all instances meet these expectations. Children are developing really positive attitudes to learning, concentrating and staying on tasks for prolonged periods of time.

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

78. This is another area where children are making good and at times very good progress. They are given plenty of opportunities to explain their thoughts and listen to one another. The teacher values their contributions and places great importance on them listening quietly to one another. This helps them to become confident and be prepared to answer questions or share their views with adults and one another. The teacher takes every opportunity to engage them in conversation and prompts them to explain what they are doing, for example when they are playing in the, 'Giant's Castle.' During the time they are in this area children are regularly seen to use their language skills to imitate characters from the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk.' Higher attainers are able to express their thoughts and ideas using full sentences and demonstrate an increasing use of vocabulary. Effective questioning makes children think more deeply and express their feelings. For example they were asked, 'How would you feel if the giant was running after you?' One girl replied, 'I would be worried it might eat me up.'
79. All of the children can write their first name and some of them can write their surname as well. Good use is made of registration time to practise their skills. For example one

morning the teacher gave children a whiteboard and asked them to write their name on it. When she called the register they had to respond and show her their whiteboard. This gave them a valuable opportunity to practise writing their name as well as enabling the teacher to check how well they were doing. One child who wrote his full name but ran out of space towards the end realised he needed to write his letters a little smaller.

80. The teacher encourages the children to write and is really skilled at motivating and giving them a reason to want to write. For example, one morning she drew the class's attention to a very large envelope containing a letter from the giant. The children were spellbound as the teacher read the contents, telling them how the giant felt lonely in his castle and he had asked them to write to him. This was all the motivation they needed. During the morning most of the children spent time in the 'Office area,' writing their letters and sealing them in envelopes ready for posting to the giant's castle. Higher attainers wrote their own words independently and when stuck would go to the word wall to check how to write a word they wanted to use.
81. The teacher makes regular checks and records children's progress in reading. A strong emphasis is given to helping children to learn letter sounds. All of them can name the letters of the alphabet and know the sounds each one makes. The teacher is a really good storyteller and uses her skill really well to motivate and develop children's interest in stories and books. She makes very good use of a volunteer helper who visits the nursery twice a week to support children with their reading. Children love to go to the quiet corner to listen to stories or read their own books with their teacher or adult helper. They are becoming increasingly familiar with a range of stories and rhymes. The staff keep a careful check on how many of the key words (words reception age children are expected to be able to read) that each child is able to recognise. This information is used well to decide when a child is ready to start his or her own reading book. Most children are reading familiar words with some of the higher attainers beginning to read sentences and their first story books from the school's reading scheme.

### **Mathematical development**

82. Children achieve well in this area because the teacher constantly uses opportunities to develop their mathematical understanding. She provides them with tasks that are well planned to meet the needs of all the children. For example, the children were learning to recognise the value of different coins. The teacher set one group the task of searching the sand tray for hidden coins and asked them to sort them into two dishes, one for 1p coins and the other for 2p coins. Following this activity the children practised their counting skills to check how many of each coin they had found. For another group the teacher set a similar exercise but they had to find and sort 1p, 2p, 5p, 10p and 20p coins.
83. During registration the teacher asks the class to work out how many are present. 'If there are 19 in our class and one is away how many are there in today?' Most of the children can recognise and count numbers to 20 and some go beyond this to 30 or more. During one activity when the children had counted 15 coins the teacher asked them how to write this number. One boy said, 'with a 5 and 1.' The teacher recorded this as 51 and asked was it right, One girl said, 'No, it is the wrong way round. It should be the 1 and then the 5.' This simple but effective strategy helped this group to learn how to record the number correctly.
84. The teacher provides the children with an exciting and stimulating environment, which supports their learning of mathematics. Two children worked together to use the

beanstalk to measure how tall they were. Whilst one child stood against the wall the other checked which number the top of her head reached. They then recorded on to a post-it note her name and how tall she was and then stuck the note on the display. The children gain a very good understanding of the language of comparison and learn skills of measuring. They are able to name and sort a range of two-dimensional shapes. Good links are made between different activities to reinforce and support children's learning of shapes and sizes. After the hunt for the 'Giant's items' the children were encouraged to name the different shapes and discuss and compare them.

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

85. Through their regular visits to the computer suite children develop their confidence and skills to use computers. They are competent when using the mouse. They show good mouse control as they drag and click it to move pictures about on the screen. During time in class, children will often work in pairs using the computer to select and complete a program. For example, two girls took turns to control the mouse and complete a program that required them to choose the right coloured shoe to match the one the clown was already wearing.
86. The technology corner, or as the children prefer to call it 'the sticking and cutting area', is a hive of activity. Children are busily engaged in making their own models. They select which materials and equipment they want to use and set about making their models confidently and without adult support.
87. They learn about growth of plants through the opportunities they have to observe bulbs and plants grow. They use magnifying glasses to sort different types of seeds. Their skills of observation are developing well because of the opportunities they are given.
88. Good use is made of visitors to support children's learning and improve their knowledge and understanding of the world. One mother brought her newborn baby and talked to the children about the baby's needs. Visits from the police and fire services extend children's understanding of their world and the jobs that people do to help us.

### **Physical development**

89. In this area of learning children make better progress in developing their fine motor control and manipulative skills than they do in developing their gross motor skills. They have many opportunities to handle and use small construction apparatus, play dough or tools such as rollers and scissors to cut and shape materials. As a result, they develop their small-scale movements really well and can manipulate and hold tools and equipment correctly.
90. However, opportunities for improving large-scale movements are not as frequent or challenging. The provision for outdoor play is unsatisfactory. There is no designated outdoor area for the reception age children. Therefore, access is not readily available to wheeled vehicles or large climbing apparatus. It is difficult for the teacher to provide the children with a range of regular and challenging opportunities. Furthermore because the teacher does not have full time adult support it makes it difficult to provide daily opportunities for outdoor play for either individuals or small groups. During a lesson in the hall the teacher missed the opportunity to challenge children to use their skills in more difficult and demanding situations; as a result progress in this lesson was satisfactory for most, but not challenging enough for higher attainers.



## **Creative development**

91. The teacher is very skilled at motivating and developing children's enthusiasm. She fires their imagination. On returning to school after the weekend, she asked the class, 'Can you notice anything different?' She led them to see that the beanstalk had grown right around the classroom wall into the 'Giant's Castle.' She told them that she thought the giant had been around the school over the weekend and took them on to the yard to search for clues. The children started to hunt and unearthed a whole range of items, ranging from the giant's extra large sunglasses to his huge alarm clock and trousers. Children's imagination is aroused through the opportunities they get to participate in role-play. The 'Giant's Castle' is in constant use. Children work together using glove puppets to act out their own versions of the 'Jack and the Beanstalk' story. Towards the end of one morning session, one group acted out for the rest of the class their version of the story. The 'narrator' set the scene and the audience sat spellbound as the various characters performed their parts. This activity enabled children to use their imaginations and practise their speaking and listening skills through a very enjoyable activity.
92. Children have a fortnightly session with a qualified music teacher. She uses her expertise well to develop children's singing and music making skills. Following one of these sessions their teacher set the children a task to do at home. This involved them in making their own instrument that could be played by either scraping, tapping or shaking. The children responded very positively and their instruments are on display in the classroom and used by them during free play or teacher directed activities. This was a very effective use of homework that built on the children's experiences and required them to use skills such as making, cutting and sticking. During assembly times the reception children take part in them by joining in with the singing.
93. Children have plenty of opportunities to use a variety of media and materials to support their creative development. They are encouraged to experiment and learn for themselves. One activity required children to create three different shades of green. They experimented with the different paints, mixing them together and finished by completing three circles that showed three different shades of green. By the end of the activity the children had explored what happens when different colours are mixed and used their learning to complete the challenge they had been set. They explore and use a range of media and learn how to combine them. They had produced their own pig and wolf masks after listening to the story of the three little pigs. Children's drawing of plants, figures and animals show clearly recognisable features. They enjoy their opportunities to use these skills and record their own ideas. For example after a discussion about special gifts one child drew a picture of her rocking horse.

## **ENGLISH**

94. Standards in reading are above average at both key stages. In speaking and listening they are average. In writing, they are above average at Key Stage 1, but not quite as high in Key Stage 2. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are similar at Key Stage 1 to those in the 2002 national tests, when most achieved the expected level. At Key Stage 2, the majority of pupils are on course to reach at least the level expected for their age. Standards fluctuate in some years because of the small cohort numbers and the differing percentage of pupils with special needs in each year group.
95. Throughout the school, pupils build well on their speaking skills. The majority converse easily with adults and other pupils. Good opportunities are provided for

pupils to discuss their thoughts and ideas, for example in the shared sessions of the literacy hour and in worship time. By the end of Year 6, pupils use language to present their ideas clearly and coherently. For example, when working through a 'brain-teaser' set by the teacher at the start of the day, they were able to offer a logical explanation as to why they thought a particular animal was the odd one out between a whale, a dog and a frog. Pupils found the activity fun, but it also gave them the opportunity to practise their reasoning skills. As they presented their findings, the teacher constantly challenged them to refine and extend their explanations through questions such as, 'Why do you think that? What reasons can you give?' Pupils with special educational needs and those who are less confident are encouraged to take part by teachers and support assistants. For example, in a Year 1/2 literacy lesson, they were able to answer questions about the story, which the class was reading together because the teacher selected them deliberately and asked them what they thought; she waited patiently for their reply and praised their efforts.

96. Progress in reading is good throughout the school. Reading is given a high priority and from the reception class onwards, pupils are taught reading skills in a systematic way. They learn a good range of ways to approach their reading by sounding out or breaking down words, using contextual or picture clues and recognising whole words. This varied approach ensures that all children quickly gain confidence and achieve success. For pupils who find learning to read more difficult, the school gives additional help in each year group and opportunities for pupils to work in small groups. Adults working with the groups are not only skilled, but also develop extremely positive relationships with the children. This sets the scene for the excellent atmosphere of concentration and hard work that characterises the small group situations.
97. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy reading. By the end of Key Stage 1, the majority read with good expression and developing fluency. The teacher ensures that reading strategies are made explicit and teaches letter sounds and blends effectively. As a result, pupils are confident at working out unfamiliar words. The more able pupils, in particular, can accurately predict what might happen next in the stories they read, based on what has gone before. They are able to work out what characters are like from the text. Most pupils understand what context and index pages in information books are for and are able to use them to find out facts for themselves. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' research skills are well developed and they are adept at using books and the computer to find out, for example, information about other places in the British Isles for their geography work. Many pupils have developed very good reading habits by the time they leave the school and higher attainers read very widely and have strong preferences for particular types of books. For instance, Year 5 and 6 pupils enthusiastically debate the merits of fantasy novels as compared to those based on everyday subjects. They all demonstrate an obvious enjoyment of reading and are keen purchasers and borrowers of books. The school has concerned itself with ensuring that all pupils become 'switched on' to reading; old books have been discarded and the interests of older pupils who find reading difficult have been taken into account. Although there is still work to be done in bolstering resources, replenishment is part of a rolling programme linked to money available.
98. Good teaching at Key Stage 1 is reflected in the way that Year 2 pupils are writing independently, and many punctuate their sentences with growing accuracy. Higher and average attainers are beginning to develop a lively style of writing and they use a good range of more adventurous vocabulary and adjectives in their work. The teacher makes tasks interesting and purposeful, which encourages children to write enthusiastically. A Year 2 pupil's work was a typical example of this, as she started her story by writing 'As night fell the little pink pig snuggled up in his blanket as he was very tired.' Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are

supported well by adults and gain confidence in writing. They develop their spelling, handwriting and range of vocabulary at a good pace.

99. Even allowing for fluctuations in the attainment of different year groups, the school has recognised, through analysis of test results that some pupils' writing skills at Key Stage 2 do not develop quite as quickly as their reading skills; this is in keeping with most primary schools. Teachers provide plenty of stimuli for writing and pupils in both key stages are given good opportunities to write in other subject areas such as history and science. In some lessons however, although teachers show pupils how to construct stories and reports for example, they do this on boards, which are then cleaned away at the end of the lesson. Pupils therefore have no clues left to latch onto when they continue with their work.
100. Assessments as yet, do not go far enough in identifying the next steps in learning for individual pupils. As a result, progress is not always as sharp as it could be, particularly on some occasions for a small number of more able pupils. It results in complicated groupings in some lessons; pupils are split by year group rather than on the basis of previous work and several groups are formed. This divides the teacher's attention too thinly and holds up progress; it is a harder situation to manage than needs to be the case. Marking is used effectively to praise pupils' efforts and to point out where they need to improve their work.
101. Standards in handwriting are a weaker area throughout the junior classes and are just about average at the end of Key Stage 2. Until recently, there has not been a structured approach to the teaching of handwriting. When some supply teachers have taken a class for a long period, they have placed less emphasis on the importance of neatly presented work; for some pupils this has resulted in slack handwriting habits.
102. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. This is because their individual work programmes set very clear targets for them, broken down into small, achievable steps. These enable teachers to plan work for them with a high level of precision. Teaching assistants give very good support to these children, both in small groups and individually. They are very well briefed as to what the pupils are expected to achieve and understand their needs very well. They reinforce the main learning points of the lesson and encourage them to attempt tasks independently. As a result, these pupils often complete similar work to that of others in the class and take a full part in lessons. This raises their self-esteem and ensures very good attitudes to learning in almost all cases. National 'catch up' programmes are being used very effectively to accelerate the progress of those pupils at both key stages who find reading and writing more difficult. Boys and girl achieve equally well in lessons.
103. Good provision is made for pupils learning English as an additional language. Teachers are very attentive to their needs and provide extra support during lessons to ensure that they can follow the work of the class. They make good progress in learning to communicate and write in English.
104. Teaching and learning were sound or better in the lessons seen. Teachers manage their pupils really well and have very good relationships with them. As a result, they get down to work very quickly and concentrate hard throughout the lesson. Pupils also learn effectively in English because teachers explain clearly what they are to learn and why they are undertaking their various tasks. No time is wasted because children know exactly what to do and the standards expected of them. Classrooms contain plenty of prompts and visual clues to give pupils ideas for the content of their

work. Teachers use questions well to draw out what pupils already know. Most sessions begin with questions such as, 'What were we learning about yesterday?' Teachers are good at tailoring their questions to match the varied ability levels within the class.

105. The subject is well led and managed. Systems are in place for monitoring teaching and learning and issues have been raised through the drawing out of strengths and weaknesses. For example, the need for a wider range of resources to motivate older, less able readers was spotted and is being addressed.

## **MATHEMATICS**

106. Since the last inspection, standards in mathematics have improved. There has been an upward trend since 1999. In the most recent tests taken in 2002, the standards achieved by the pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 were very high when compared to the national average and well above those of similar schools. The number of pupils achieving the higher level 3 was also very high. At the end of Year 6, the standards achieved were below those expected nationally and well below those of similar schools. However, the cohort contained a larger proportion of special educational needs pupils than normal and because of the relatively small number of pupils taking the tests this had a detrimental effect on the results. Inspection evidence indicates that the attainment of pupils throughout the school is broadly average in all areas of mathematics.
107. The school is managing the improvements to the standards and progress well. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented; all the staff have received training and are knowledgeable with national recommendations. In the past there had been far too great a reliance placed on a published scheme. Teachers were not selective enough about using specific part of it for specific lessons and tended to follow it in order. As a consequence, pupils' skills were not developing properly. This has now been remedied by the co-ordinator who is managing changes effectively. New lesson plans have been introduced which are linked closely to the Numeracy Strategy. This is improving the curriculum and is helping to plug the previous gaps. Teachers now follow the structure of lessons carefully. Some teaching has been monitored to see where improvements could be made and results of tests are analysed to see where pupils could achieve better. The school identified that some aspects, such as ratio and interpreting graphs and charts, as well as answering word problems, were weak. Steps are now being taken to remedy this by more focused teaching on these topics. For example, in one lesson, Year 5 and 6 pupils were answering problems connected with subtraction instead of merely completing subtraction sums.
108. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in developing their number skills in relation to their abilities. This is because teachers plan work at the right level for them and they receive well- targeted support during the lessons. For example, in a typically good lesson in Key Stage 1, the lower ability Year 2 pupils were receiving good support when they were using money to buy various articles. Good questioning and practical activities organised by the teacher rapidly developed their skills of understanding the value of coins and how different amounts of money could be made. Their confidence and self-esteem was raised because they were taking a full part in the lesson and receiving praise and encouragement from the teacher.
109. In Key Stage 1, pupils develop a good knowledge of number. They learn to mentally add and subtract number to 20 and begin to try out different ways of calculating, such as counting on or breaking numbers into tens and units to make the addition simpler.

By Year 2, pupils accurately apply their skills to money calculations. They recognise o'clock and half past times and understand what a fraction such as 'one half' or 'one quarter' means.

110. By Year 6, most pupils have a good understanding of number processes and place value. They cope well when multiplying by 10, 100 and 1000 and converting percentages to fraction equivalents. Their knowledge of metric measures is good and confidently find the area and perimeter of different shapes.
111. Teachers know the pupils well and have formed good relationships with them. This motivates the pupils and makes them willing learners. They enjoy mathematics and work hard in the lessons. The varied activities planned for the pupils ensure that they are on task throughout. No time is wasted and they settle down quickly and quietly after the tasks have been explained.
112. The mental arithmetic part at the beginning of the lesson is used well and provides a good focus for counting, using number multiples and refining pupils' mental agility in handling number. Pupils use whiteboards to record their answers and this ensures that all the pupils are taking an active part. Pupils demonstrate their understanding when the teacher uses number sticks to help them understand. For example, in a Year 3/4 lesson, the teacher used the stick well to illustrate the seven times table. Good questions such as 'How many sevens in this number?' or 'What does this number represent?' ensured that the pupils had to look closely and follow the teacher's instructions. This helped to consolidate their knowledge of the seven times table.
113. A particular strength of all the lessons is the way in which what is to be taught in the lesson is shared with the pupils at the beginning. This helps the pupils to understand and teachers refer back to the objectives during the lessons to make sure that the pupils are on track. For example, in the Year 1/2 lesson, the teacher reminded the children of their success criteria when they had to partition the numbers to help them add them up – 'Are you achieving our success criteria?'
114. Pupils achieve well throughout the school because of the good teaching. They are taught a wide range of calculation strategies and are encouraged to explain how they have worked out their answers. Lessons are planned carefully and make use of varied activities to keep the pupils interested and move the learning on. The tasks are generally well matched to the different abilities of the pupils. Not all the teachers make the most effective use of the time at the end of lessons to assess and review what pupils have learned.
115. All areas of the mathematics curriculum are taught. Opportunities are given for the pupils to extend their mathematical knowledge while using their mathematics in different situations. In science, for example, they arrange information in charts and graphs. Too little use is made of ICT to support the learning in numeracy through using programs to consolidate the number work being done by the pupils. Pupils are however, able to extend their knowledge of data handling by constructing graphs and using spreadsheets during ICT lessons.

## SCIENCE

116. Standards in science have improved since the time of the last inspection. In 2002, the teacher assessments at the end of Year 2, were very high for pupils achieving the expected level and well above average for pupils achieving the higher level compared to all schools nationally. In the 2002 Key Stage 2 national tests, results were above average when compared to all schools, but in line with those of similar schools.
117. A review of pupils' work indicates that they achieve steadily throughout the school. All aspects of the science curriculum are taught. In the Year 1 /2 class they develop a good understanding of life and living processes; they know for example, that to be healthy they need to eat lots of fruit and vegetables and that sugar is bad for their teeth. They know from their work on materials that some changes can be reversed and others cannot. They study the properties of various materials and understand which are the most suited to do different jobs. Great excitement and interest was seen in the lesson, when Year 2 pupils were looking at different materials through a microscope that had been linked to the computer.
118. There were gasps when a child's little finger accidentally went under the microscope and the image was projected on to the screen – 'Oh it looks just like a snake!' they cried. In the Key Stage 2 classes, pupils have a good knowledge of electricity and forces. Their knowledge and understanding of science is developed well in preparation for the tests at age eleven.
119. Pupils' skills of experimenting and investigating science develop well throughout the school. Pupils enjoy the practical work and develop good attitudes towards learning science. They handle equipment carefully and work well together during investigations; they draw careful illustrations that are labelled clearly. In the infant class, the pupils are encouraged to predict, observe and record their findings. This was seen in a lesson where the pupils were investigating which number setting on the toaster would make the best 'golden brown toast', when they were learning about the characteristics of bread. Pupils understood what a fair test meant and during the lesson a pupil was heard to say, 'We must use the same toaster because the other one may operate differently'.
120. As they progress through Key Stage 2, the pupils are taught to think scientifically and give reasons for their predictions. This is why their understanding of 'fair testing' develops so effectively. By the age of eleven they can plan and carry out their own scientific experiments. Pupils use their numeracy skills well to measure and collect data, and draw effectively upon their writing skills to record their findings. A good example was seen in the Year 5/6 class lesson where the pupils were drawing graphs to illustrate the effects of exercise on their pulse rates. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have made good use of ICT to record and analyse their results as part of their 'Healthy Eating' topic when they made charts to show how much exercise they do.
121. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in developing their scientific skills in relation to their abilities. This is because they are given well-targeted support. In a good lesson in the Year 1/2 class, when the pupils were comparing bread after it had been toasted, good questioning gave less able pupils the opportunity to understand what they were doing. The classroom assistant was heard to say, 'Does it change colour?' and 'Tell me why it is crispier.' All the pupils were keen to join in the discussion.
122. Teachers skilfully question the pupils and build very well on earlier learning and the knowledge and understanding that the pupils bring to the lesson. Pupils in the Year

3/4 class were keen to answer and show their knowledge of habitats, plants and animals during a lesson. They worked well together classifying animals and organisms according to their observable features. The teacher provided interesting resources for the pupils to work with; these stimulated their imagination and brought the learning to life.

123. The subject is led and managed well and as a result of monitoring, changes have been made to areas found to be in need of improvement. For example, it was identified that too low an emphasis was being given to practical work. This has been remedied and a subsequent rise in standards and pupils' interest in the subject has been seen.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

124. The subject has a much higher profile within the curriculum than it did and it is now used more to enhance pupils' learning in other subjects as well as providing a valuable aid for teachers' planning and display work.
125. Standards are close to average at the end of both key stages and show a significant improvement since the last inspection when they were judged to be below average. At both key stages, the most prominent strengths in pupils' work are in finding things out and working with databases. Both infant and junior pupils show good levels of competence in finding information to use in their other work, such as history or geography. There is a purpose to their tasks and they can see a useful outcome for what they are doing. In a lesson with a Year 5/6 class for example, pupils used computers to research and find information out about their history topic. They increased their understanding about life on board ships in Tudor times and also made very good progress in developing their history skills of interpretation and enquiry.
126. Throughout the school, pupils progress satisfactorily in classifying information and handling data. At Key Stage 1 for example, they record information about themselves on graphs; older pupils learn about the importance of adding correct information to a database and how incorrect information can skew results. They develop a good understanding of correct vocabulary and terms. Pupils in Year 3/4 for instance, know the difference between a database 'field' and 'file'; in one lesson observed, they showed reasonable levels of competence in adding further records to a database about minibeasts.
127. Pupils make satisfactory progress in exchanging and sharing information and in learning to use different ways of presenting their work effectively. Pupils in the Year 1/2 class for example, use computers to generate pictures to which they add words after altering the image. These skills were put to good effect as they designed covers for their stories. Pupils in Key Stage 2 steadily increase their understanding of how to explore a variety of information sources, for example by searching the Internet for information. Pupils in the Year 5/6 class have established Internet links with a school in the Republic of Eire and send information about their own school by email. Older pupils also explore other ICT tools on their visits to a local secondary school where they are becoming familiar with the use of computer assisted design to present models of possible products for manufacture.
128. There is less emphasis in teaching on helping pupils to review, modify and evaluate work as it progresses or in developing ideas and making things happen. Pupils at both key stages currently undertake too little work on testing, refining and improving sequences of instructions to operate models or control events.

129. The school has invested a lot of money and effort in establishing a computer suite with sufficient resources to meet pupils' needs. With in-service training, teachers' subject knowledge and confidence has increased; this has been reflected in better quality lessons and the increased pace of pupils' learning. More help is needed however, to further boost the quality of lessons with greater technical or adult support. Teachers plan lessons carefully and organise pupils well, but 'technical hitches' occur and learning slows when they attempt to remedy faults on one or two computers as the rest of the class waits for attention. More resources are still needed; such as teaching aids whereby the class can all view a screen at the same time. The school is not yet as well equipped as schools where standards are above average.
130. The subject is well led and managed by the headteacher who uses his expertise to guide developments and provide support for staff in planning and arranging lessons. There is clear path of development outlined for the subject within the school's improvement plans, and finance has been allocated to increase resources at as fast a rate as the budget allows.

## **THE FOUNDATION SUBJECTS**

### **ART AND DESIGN, DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY, GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY, MUSIC AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION.**

131. Some foundation subjects have taken a back seat over the last four years because the school has directed the bulk of its work towards improving standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT. It is only in the last two years that the school has begun to get to grips with the complexity of managing several curriculum subjects between such a small staff. The school is similar to all small schools in that management of the curriculum and continual improvement in foundation subjects is a huge challenge.
132. The repercussions of this are reflected in the following ways, which in turn give rise to the key issues facing the school in teaching and learning:
- the curriculum is not yet organised well enough; all subjects are covered, but some parts of them are not covered in sufficient depth;
  - teachers' subject knowledge and confidence in some subjects, or parts of them, is not as strong as in others;
  - pupils do not always develop knowledge and skills in a continuous way, so that there are gaps in what they know and can do;
  - arrangements for assessment are not strong enough yet, so that checks on pupils' progress are not sufficiently precise to spot the gaps in their learning;
  - the school's way of approaching subject leadership is still developing and does not always pick up weaknesses in teaching learning.
133. These issues affect most foundation subjects, albeit to a greater or lesser degree. In art and design, the reasons above result in below average standards at both key stages, and pupils cover too small a range of work. A lot of work in the subject is related to the topics studied and relies on illustrating aspects of the topic, rather than systematically developing the full range of skills. Some pupils show high potential, but their learning is not being taken as far as it could be.
134. In design and technology, standards are close to average at the end of both key stages; pupils make sound progress with the best work being undertaken in the design and making processes. Tasks are purposeful and interesting, which makes pupils well motivated during lessons. In a lesson with a Y3 /4 class for example,



pupils were thoroughly absorbed in considering the design features of photo frames and adding annotations and labels to the diagrams. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 eagerly tested the effect of different fruit dyes on fabrics. These are typical of the activities undertaken that fire pupils' enthusiasm and help them to concentrate well. Progress is not as good in evaluating work; pupils spend too little time weighing up the pluses and minuses of finished designs and how they could be improved.

135. Standards in geography are typical for Year 2 pupils, but they are not as high as they could be for those in Year 6, as pupils do not make enough headway in developing skills. In Key Stage 1, mapping skills are developed well; children are able to draw their route to school and have drawn routes around for example, the Sunderland Quayside. These skills are not taken any further on in the junior classes, and there are not enough resources to support the teaching and learning of some aspects of geography. For example, there are insufficient ordinance survey maps to extend their learning in mapping skills.
136. Key Stage 2 pupils show a sound awareness of environmental issues. Children have looked at answering questions such as, 'Should the High Street be closed to traffic?' Their work shows that they have undertaken surveys and responded to the question but not in any great depth.
137. The disruptions in the Year 3/4 class caused by changes in staffing, have hindered children's progress and particularly so in geography where very little work was covered last year. The unsatisfactory quality of teaching is also reflected in history, where, for one-term, the work undertaken by children of every ability was identical. The lack of challenge and differentiation slowed pupils' progress.
138. In history, standards are average at the end of both key stages. History topics are covered in much more detail than those in geography. As a result children have a better knowledge and understanding of historical facts and an understanding of chronology. Older pupils understand abbreviations such as BC and AD and can place periods of time in the correct order. At both key stages, pupils' work is strongest in understanding how to use different sources to find out about the past; for example, through using computer research programmes or photographs and visits.
139. Teachers are more confident in teaching history than they are in teaching geography; the quality of lessons is better and therefore the rate of learning is faster. Educational visits have also supported learning better in history. A visit to a local museum has given children in Years 5/6 a very good understanding of Victorian times. In geography not enough use is made of visits to provide children with first hand experiences. There are no opportunities for fieldwork, so when undertaking work on rivers, pupils did not develop their skills through the practical experience of measuring the rate of flow or depth of a real river.
140. All the required elements of physical education are covered, but assessment procedures are not sharp enough to enable teachers to plan the next stages of pupils' work to ensure that they build on and develop pupils' skills systematically as they move through the school.
141. During the spring term pupils in the mixed age Year 3 / 4 class have a weekly swimming lesson. They thoroughly enjoy these sessions and make good progress over time. Records show that 19 out of 26 can swim. Some of the higher attainers have already met the expectations for children at the age of 11 to swim 25 m and most of the class are on course to achieve this standard.

142. Sports activities provided outside of normal lessons are limited because many of the pupils arrive and depart on the school bus. The small number of pupils participating in the after school football benefit because it enables them to practise and improve their skills in more demanding situations.
143. Standards in music are above average in composing and performing at the end of both key stages. These standards have been maintained since the last inspection. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory overall rather than good. Whilst there are plenty of high quality lessons that develop pupils' skills in composing and performing, there are few opportunities for them to extend this to listening and appraising. This aspect is not covered in sufficient depth and the co-ordinator has little opportunity to take a strong hand and influence on the subject.
144. The school draws on the specialist expertise of a teacher from the local authority music service, who works alongside the teachers in teaching music. Her very good subject knowledge and expertise, as well as her obvious enthusiasm for the subject, are used well to develop the pupils' singing and playing techniques. Her very good coaching lifted the quality of the singing in a lesson with pupils in the Year 5/6 class. The pupils improved their phrasing, clarity in singing high notes and two-part singing when they practised the song 'I wanna sing scat'. The teacher encouraged the pupils to think of ways they could improve by changing their posture and diction. The pupils were highly attentive, tried very hard and sang with evident enthusiasm and enjoyment. Their esteem was raised when the teacher was heard to say 'What a brilliant effort. Well done!'
145. The same good level of enthusiasm is shown when infant pupils play percussion instruments to accompany songs. In one lesson, Year 2 pupils showed a good knowledge of instruments when they were naming them and using them to make long and short sounds. One pupil demonstrated how a tambourine could make a short sound by tapping it and then how the same instrument could make a different longer sound by shaking it.