

INSPECTION REPORT

STOCKSFIELD AVENUE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne

LEA area: Newcastle upon Tyne

Unique reference number: 108477

Head teacher: Mrs G Pritchard

Reporting inspector: Miss WLR Hunter
3277

Dates of inspection: 30th June – 1st July 2003

Inspection number: 246795

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	St Cuthbert's Road Newcastle upon Tyne
Postcode:	NE5 2DQ
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor T Cooney
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a large school with 423 pupils and a further 48 children attending the nursery on a part-time basis. The school is popular and oversubscribed, which means that some of the older year groups are larger than usual. It serves a very mixed area, some of which is undergoing development through local regeneration schemes. The school's population reflects this broad mix. There are pupils from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds with English as an additional language, including 16 pupils who are at the early stages of language acquisition. The level of free school meals is similar to the national average. Sixty-one pupils have been identified with special educational needs, ranging from learning difficulties to specific needs, which is below average. Only one pupil has a statement of special educational need, and this is low for a school this size.

Mobility of pupils is becoming an increasing factor for the school. Increasing numbers of pupils are joining the school partway through their education as a result of other school closures, reorganisation and regeneration of the local area. Most children who start in the nursery stay in the school. When they join the school, their mathematical skills are fairly typical for their age but their speaking and listening, and personal and social, skills are often weaker than expected. This weakness is becoming more noticeable each year with each new intake.

The school occupies a very large site, with two separate buildings, one of which is shared with a unit for schoolgirl mothers. Since the last inspection the head teacher has been out of the school for two years, but she has returned following her secondment to a post in the local education authority.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school. Pupils are given an excellent range of experiences and are taught very well. As a result, their learning is very good and they develop very positive attitudes. There is a lovely atmosphere in the school and relationships are excellent. Pupils achieve very well and the school's standards reflect this. The school is led and managed very well and it gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Children in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception) get a very good start to their education.
- This is a very inclusive school. Pupils are achieving very well because their individual needs are carefully identified and met, and assessment is very effective.
- Teaching is very good throughout the school and pupils develop their key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) particularly well.
- The curriculum offers an excellent range of learning experiences. Key strengths are the way that links are made between subjects and the way the local community is used to support pupils' learning.
- Pupils' personal development is excellent and the school's ecology based work is a strong feature of its success.
- The leadership and management are very strong. This is a large, complex school that is running very well and giving pupils a very good quality of education.

What could be improved

- Attendance is too low due to some repeated absences but mainly because too many pupils are

taken out of school for holidays.

- Teachers' marking could be giving pupils even better support for their learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement since its last inspection in 1998. The religious education curriculum is now secure and standards have risen. The curriculum in other subjects has continued to develop, with literacy and numeracy becoming well established, and links with the community and other schools adding greater value to pupils' experiences. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is much better than it was and now comes through the curriculum as well as assemblies. The school has made huge strides in developing its assessment and monitoring systems, which are now very good. There have been big improvements to the school buildings, including a high quality computer suite and the development of a music room and library.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	D	C	B	A
mathematics	C	B	A	A
science	B	B	B	A

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

The school's standards have improved over recent years at a faster rate than the national trend. In 2002, the school's performance was above average in English and science and well above average in mathematics. This performance was actually well above average in all three subjects, when compared to schools with a similar level of free school meals. Although the current Year 6 pupils have achieved very well for themselves, their overall performance has not been as strong as previous year groups and this was shown when the targets set for these pupils were lower than previous years. However, inspection evidence shows that standards in Year 6 are still above the levels expected for pupils' ages in English, mathematics and science, and match what is expected in information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education. Some pupils in Year 5 are now working at similar levels, with many showing potential to reach higher standards when they are in Year 6.

When children start in the nursery, they have weak speaking, listening and personal and social skills. These shortfalls have been rectified by the end of their time in the Foundation Stage. Children achieve very well in all areas of learning and most reach the levels expected in all areas of learning before they move into Year 1. Pupils continue to achieve very well in the infant classes and, by the end of Year 2, their work is often beyond the levels expected for their age. Throughout the school, pupils' key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT develop particularly well.

A strength of the school is the way pupils' individual needs are identified and met. Pupils with special educational needs get very good support and achieve very well. Similarly, pupils with English as an additional language get focused support to develop their language skills, which is very successful. Pupils that have joined the school late are carefully tracked to make sure they achieve sufficiently. Gifted and talented pupils are also recognised and are given every opportunity to realise their potential. This inclusive approach means that all pupils achieve very well and contribute to the school's good performance.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very proud of their school and are keen to be involved in everything it does.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well and look after each other.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils gain a real understanding of citizenship and their personal contribution to life from the school's rich curriculum. The Eco-committee and School Council are particularly strong features, where all pupils eagerly grasp the chance to become totally involved in the school and local community.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Attendance is below the national average because of recurrent absence by a few pupils and mainly because too many pupils are taken out of school for holidays.

Pupils' excellent personal development means that they have a very good sense of their own worth and the importance of their own ideas and opinions. The school's problems with attendance affect pupils' learning and its performance, especially when they miss sitting the national tests because they are taken out of school by their parents to go on holiday.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is very good throughout the school. English and mathematics are taught very well, and the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are given particular emphasis. This is a very successful and these key skills support pupils' learning and help them achieve very well in other areas of their work. For instance, when using their numeracy skills to work out measurements for models of bridges in design and technology, when using ICT to create work in the styles of famous artists, and when using their literacy skills to write persuasively in science to convince someone that air really does exist even though you can't see it.

Teachers use their assessments carefully to make sure that work is matched very well to pupils' different needs. They use questions particularly well to challenge and inspire pupils, which takes advantage of the excellent relationships and pupils' confidence in voicing their own ideas and opinions. Teachers also use resources very well and this makes learning interesting, relevant and fun.

The quality of display is excellent and pupils gain massive benefits from knowing that their work is valued. However, although teachers regularly talk to pupils about their work, they do not always give sufficient written feedback through their marking. This means that pupils are not always clear enough about what they do well or what they need to do next to make their work even better.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Excellent. The school gives pupils an exciting range of experiences that go way beyond the National Curriculum. It has rightly received Achievement Awards for its curriculum for the past two years.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils are carefully identified and supported. Classroom assistants work very well to help these pupils succeed.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. Pupils' language skills are developed systematically to make sure that their learning in other areas is not hindered.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. This is embedded into the daily life of the school and literally drips out of the school's curriculum. Pupils are given plenty of meaningful experiences that encourage their development as caring citizens in the school and local community.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school does this very well. It has well-established systems and procedures that work effectively. Systems for encouraging and monitoring attendance are very good but parents are not supporting the school well enough here.

A significant strength of the school's curriculum is the way that educational visits, visitors to the school and work in different subjects are linked together to give pupils exciting and meaningful activities. The local area and community are used particularly well to bring history and geography to life, while pupils' work on environmental and ecological issues support and weave through many other areas of their work.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Very good. The head teacher leads the school extremely well. Senior staff provide very good support and there is a strong and effective team approach among all staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors play an active part in the life of the school and keep a close eye on its work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Staff and governors have a clear understanding of how the school is performing and why. They aim high and strive to achieve this.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Money is used very well to give pupils the widest possible range of experiences. Pupils' own views are taken into account all the time and the outcomes are carefully tracked and evaluated to make sure that 'best value' is achieved.

The very strong leadership by the head teacher and governors is a key factor in the school's success. They know precisely how they want the school to develop, and are taking active steps to make sure this is achieved.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like school.• The school has high expectations for their children.• Teaching is good and their children are making good progress.• They feel the school is approachable and welcoming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A small number of parents are not happy about the arrangements for homework or for keeping them informed about their child's progress.• A similar number of parents feel the school does not provide enough activities outside lessons.

Inspectors agree entirely with parents' positive views. However, parents are wrong to criticise the school's range of extra-curricular and other activities outside lessons, which are extensive and add much to pupils' learning. The school's arrangements for homework and for passing information to parents are good and parents have ample opportunities to meet teachers and discuss their child's work.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Children in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception) get a very good start to their education.

1 Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good. Teaching is very good in both the nursery and reception classes, and children are learning very well. As a result, the majority of the children are reaching the levels expected for their age by the time they leave the reception classes, and this is very good achievement when compared to what they could do when they first started in the nursery. The curriculum is very well planned to give children a broad and exciting range of experiences, but the key to their success is that teachers and support staff work very hard to meet their individual needs and make learning fun.

2 Children do a lot of literacy work, which helps to develop their basic skills well. They learn to shape and write their letters correctly, and begin to spell simple words like “cap”, “pig” and “cat”. This is taken a stage further when they begin to identify missing words to complete a sentence, such as “A horse in the stable” and when they un-jumble sentences, like “I see a sheep will” to make a proper sentence including the full stop. Children also get a good range of mathematical activities. They learn to recognise numbers, count and carry out simple sums. Higher attaining children cope well with questions such as “Can you put a box on the 7th step?” and learn to double numbers, recognise odd and even numbers, and begin to tell the time. Other children learn to recognise numbers and put them into sequence, for instance by placing missing numbers onto a number-line or lining numbers up in the correct order to be eaten by the “Hungry Caterpillar”. A lot of work in mathematics focuses on developing children’s language and this supports the effort to improve their speaking skills very well.

3 Children really benefit from the school’s outdoor environment and the links that teachers make across the different areas of learning. For instance, children collect mini-beasts from different parts of the school’s grounds and they plant and grow flowers and vegetables. An area of the school’s grounds has been set up as a “Dragon’s Lair”, which is used very well to support learning. For example, children work in this area at different times of the year to identify signs of the different seasons, including observing baby birds, watching willow grow and seeing flowers bloom in Spring. The outdoor areas are used just as well to help children learn about the features of their own environment. For example, they have carried out surveys of traffic on the main road into Newcastle to identify different kinds of transport, and have looked at the geography and location of their own school and the different parts of the buildings and grounds. Visits to local farms, churches and other places of interest help to broaden children’s knowledge of their surroundings and these are used very well as a stimulus for their learning.

4 Children get plenty of opportunities to work creatively and to express themselves. For instance, following a visit to a local farm, reception children made models of the pigsty, hen house and stable. They have also used oil pastels to make pictures of sunflowers with a good replication of Van Gogh’s style and use of colour. Nursery children visited a local lighthouse then made “starfish” and “sea urchins” using glue, sand and seeds to give them texture before painting their models attractively. A pair of tights stuffed with newspapers has been transformed into an octopus, which children animatedly talked about.

5 Children in the nursery gain a genuine interest and develop their curiosity when using computers. They begin to make marks and shapes by drawing lines using a “paint” package and use the computer to match objects, for instance the correct size of shoe to fit the picture of a caterpillar. In

the reception classes, children develop their skills further by beginning to use ICT to support work in other areas of their learning. For example, by using drawing packages to record how their plants have grown, by creating simple sentences linked to pictures and by making pictograms to show the results of the survey they did on transport.

Children experience imaginary play regularly based around a changing theme. For instance, the current play area is set up as a Garden Centre where children have made flowers on sticks to “plant” in pots, have created a mini-beast museum, and have written about “ladybirds”. Children use these themed areas very well and move into their own imaginary worlds as they work and play together.

6 Children learn to take responsibility for themselves and their actions. For example, they begin to register themselves at the start of each morning or afternoon session in the nursery, initially by finding their name and a picture that they recognise, but eventually by identifying their name only when the pictures are removed. Parents are very good at supporting this – they stand back and are willing to occasionally watch their children struggle but realise this is all part of their learning. The school does a lot to build up links with children’s families and this is having a good impact on their learning. There is regular contact between parents, carers and staff at the start and end of each day, and adults often help in classrooms by working alongside teachers and support staff. One way the school has involved parents has been through a “keeping up with the children” course, where teachers gave demonstration lessons and parents were invited to take part in literacy, numeracy and ICT activities. They then made games with their children that could be used to support their learning at home. This has been very popular and successful. The home:school reading record gives parents and carers clear guidance on how to make best use of the time that they spend sharing books with their child, and homework is also clearly explained so that children can be supported at home.

7 Learning in the Foundation Stage is fun. Children get an exciting range of activities that are brought to life by teachers’ imaginative use of resources. For example, in one lesson aimed at practicing the letter sounds “b” and “h”, the children sat entranced as Sooty the puppet peeked at them over the top of a carrier bag. When Sooty mispronounced the name of an object as “jammer” instead of “hammer”, the children laughed but were quickly encouraged to be helpful: *‘Don’t laugh – it doesn’t matter if he is wrong – you need to help him’*. The children’s response to this was very good; they were fascinated and really wanted to help Sooty by giving him the correct pronunciation of “hammer”, “helicopter” and “hat”.

8 Staff in the Foundation Stage carefully monitor and track children’s progress. Their assessments are very good and give a clear picture of what each individual child can do when they first come into the school, how they are progressing, and what they should be aiming for by the time they are ready to sit the first set of national tests at the end of Year 2. Children’s work is displayed well in the Foundation Stage classrooms and corridors. This helps children to realise that their work is valued and boosts their self-esteem. In addition, a large display of their model spiders in the main entrance foyer shows the range and quality of their work to visitors in other parts of the school, and makes them feel part of the whole school community.

9 The school has identified an emerging pattern over recent years. When children start in the nursery their speaking and listening skills are a specific weakness, and there are more children now with English as an additional language coming into the school. The support for these particular children is very effective and helps to boost their language skills at this early stage in their education. They are catered for very well and given sensitive and unobtrusive support. They take a full part in all the class activities and are encouraged to “have a go” even if their language and vocabulary gets in the way at first, for instance when learning to recognise that “b” is the same first letter of different words like “ball”, “boat” and “bat”. However, despite the school’s very good provision in this area, children’s language difficulties are compounded when they take extended absences, sometimes up to six weeks

at a time, for family holidays. This means that their speaking skills, and grasp of English, are weakened even further when they return. The school has responded very well to this and is putting a “speaking and listening room” in place in the Foundation Stage. This will be based on drama and imaginary play activities with the deliberate aim of giving a boost to children’s communication skills by the time they leave reception. This shows the careful thought that is put into practice by the strong team of staff in the Foundation Stage and underpins their commitment to give each child the best opportunity they can to succeed.

This is a very inclusive school. Pupils are achieving very well because their individual needs are carefully identified and met, and assessment is very effective.

10 The pupils get a very good deal at this school. Each child is recognised as an individual with their own particular interests, strengths and needs. In this way, teachers strive to provide the best opportunities they can to help each child succeed and to get the best out of their time at the school. Different groups of pupils are catered for very effectively, and their progress is carefully monitored and charted as they move through the school. Any deviation from what is expected, or any emerging patterns in their performance, are picked up quickly by the assessment co-ordinator and analysed carefully to decide what to do next. The school has a very good handle on what is happening and why, and is therefore in a very good position to respond appropriately when pupils’ needs change.

11 Pupils with special educational needs are catered for very well. Their needs are identified efficiently and plans are drawn up to show the degree and type of support each child requires. Parents are kept well informed during this process and are encouraged to work with the school to support their child’s learning. When pupils reach the stage that a formal assessment of their needs is required, and when this results in a statement of specific need, the school works well with the educational psychologist and other outside agencies, such as speech therapists. The special educational needs co-ordinator liaises very well with other teachers and support staff to make sure that everyone understands what is needed in each case. Sometimes this is as simple as a modified piece of work as the pupil works alongside others in the class, but on other occasions it involves specific focussed support by an adult on a one-to-one or small group basis. The school uses its money earmarked for special educational needs wisely and buys into the local education authority’s support service at the highest “gold” level, which gives access to an additional source of support.

12 Pupils with special educational needs are achieving very well because the school is supporting them very well. For example, when a group of reception children worked with a learning support assistant to copy the sentence, “The very hungry caterpillar”, they all worked hard and showed persistence to produce legible print with finger spaces between the words. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, additional support from the teacher helped a group of pupils realise that writing an array wasn’t as difficult as they thought, and by the end of the lesson they could all show $4 \times 2 = 8$ in the alternative form as a grid of 8 dots. In the current Year 6, a quarter of the pupils are identified with special educational needs. This group achieved very well in the national tests. For instance in mathematics (which is the only subject where confirmed results are available so far) most of them reached the level expected for their age and a few even exceeded this. Those that didn’t reach this level were very close and only missed by a few marks.

13 Pupils with English as an additional language are carefully assessed as soon as they arrive at the school to identify the precise stage of their language development. This means that teachers have a clear picture of the skills of each child and the targets that have been set for them to reach. Regular assessments help to show whether each pupil is on track and detailed observations and thorough recording of their progress shows the gains they are making as they learn to speak English. The school benefits from support for some of these pupils through the local education authority’s service. This is

used very well and is targeted where it is needed most, for instance in the nursery where there are increasing numbers of children starting school with language difficulties.

14 Pupils with English as an additional language achieve very well because the school is supporting them very well. For instance, in a nursery lesson, two children were supported by a specialist assistant who helped them to recognise the initial letters of different words. This was so successful that one of the children became very excited as they exclaimed, “*No, no – it’s a hat not a wat*”. By the time they reach Year 2, most pupils have acquired a good grasp of English and have secure speaking skills, which means they are making equally good progress to the rest of their group during lessons. For example, in a Year 3 English lesson, these particular pupils confidently read the letters they had written during the lesson to the rest of the class. Similarly, in a Year 5 science lesson, the pupils with English as an additional language had just as good knowledge of the different ways that seeds can be dispersed as the rest of the class, and could explain it clearly and fluently.

15 An increasing number of pupils are joining this school partway through their education. These “new starters” often bring limited information with them about their previous experiences, which means that the school has little information to work with. Teachers therefore carry out their own assessments quickly to ascertain what pupils can do, and where they may need additional help, and parents are encouraged to be involved at this point.

16 Pupils who join the school late achieve very well because the school carefully tracks the progress and performance of these pupils to make sure that any gaps in their previous experiences are plugged, and to capitalise on any experiences that have given them good knowledge and understanding. For instance, in a mathematics lesson in Year 5, the teacher specifically checked with two pupils that had recently joined the class, that they understood the idea of plotting co-ordinates before moving into an explanation of how to translate shapes. In the current Year 6, nearly half of the pupils did not start in the reception classes at this school. This is a high level of mobility that is not immediately obvious from the school’s good performance.

17 Higher attaining pupils are expected to do well and are challenged to reach their potential. Teachers plan carefully to stretch these pupils in lessons and make sure that they are given work that matches their abilities. For example, in a Year 2 ICT lesson where pupils had to create a branching database, most of the class were given initial ideas by the teacher, and some were given “magic envelopes” with prompts to help them, but higher attaining groups were expected to work it out for themselves and to phrase their own Y/N questions carefully enough to allow different minibeasts to be identified. Similar high expectations and challenge were shown in a Year 2 mathematics lesson when the teacher asked a group of higher attainers, “*How could I have made this activity harder?*” to check that they understood what they had done and what they could do next to extend their learning.

18 Higher attaining pupils achieve very well because the school is supporting them very well. In the assessments at the end of Year 2, nearly a third of the pupils are reaching the level beyond what is typically expected in reading and mathematics. In the current Year 6, just over a third of the pupils reached the higher level in the mathematics test, which is the only subject where confirmed results are available so far.

19 The school recognises if a child has a particular gift or talent and makes provision for this. For example, pupils with musical abilities are encouraged to learn to play an appropriate instrument, while pupils with sporting talents are given opportunities to develop their skills and achievements by working with coaches from a local college. Pupils with academic gifts are encouraged to extend their knowledge and understanding through links with local secondary schools and colleges. For instance, additional teaching programmes are provided in ICT, and Saturday School and after-school clubs offer

language, science and arts-based activities. This provision means that the school is recognising pupils' strengths and giving them opportunities to succeed.

Teaching is very good throughout the school and pupils develop their key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT particularly well.

20 Teaching and learning are very good for the following reasons:

- Teachers plan their lessons very carefully, matching work to the needs of the different groups of pupils in their classes. As a result, pupils learn at their own pace and achieve very well.
- Teachers use questions particularly well. As a result, pupils know what is expected of them and are challenged to learn.
- Teachers use resources imaginatively. This makes learning relevant and fun.
- Teachers organise and manage their lessons very well. Consequently, pupils benefit from a range of different teaching styles including whole class, group and individual work.
- Teachers expect pupils to do their best. Pupils rise to this challenge and are keen to succeed.

21 In the Foundation Stage, teachers, nursery nurses and other support staff work very well together. They know all the children very well and match activities to their individual needs. For example, in a nursery lesson, the teacher used her knowledge of the individual children to target questions and probe their understanding of the story she was reading to them. This meant that some children were able to tell her that the author is the person who wrote the book, while others were being supported very effectively by a classroom assistant and were able to retell parts of the story in their own words. Similarly, in a mathematics activity in reception, the range of questions used by the teacher, such as *‘who is holding number 5?’* and *‘what comes before number 3?’* helped to reinforce children's sequencing skills at the same time as making sure they used correct mathematical language.

22 Teaching and learning are just as effective in the rest of the school. For instance, in a Year 5 science lesson, pupils had the chance to see so many different types of seed that they quickly grasped the different ways they could be dispersed. The teacher's preparation for this lesson, collecting coconuts, cherries, poppies, lupins, gorse, apples and dandelions (to name just a few of the examples shown to pupils) brought the subject to life for the pupils and gave them first-hand experiences to remember. Teachers use their skills to provide exciting environments for the pupils. For example, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson, when pupils were struggling with their multiplication, the teacher recognised the need for another stimulus and asked *‘would you like some brain music on?’*, to which pupils eagerly replied, *‘yes please’*. They worked happily and productively during the rest of the lesson with classical music playing quietly in the background; this created a calming effect in the classroom and helped pupils to concentrate better on their work.

23 Teachers are very confident in what they do and are therefore prepared to be creative, knowing that things may not work entirely as they had planned. For example, a Year 6 science lesson had the very ambitious aim of introducing pupils to work that they would normally cover in the secondary school. The lesson went well – pupils learnt that they could test the “ph” of a liquid using indicator solutions, and actually made their own indicator using red cabbage.

24 Teachers make good use of new technology in their lessons. An interactive whiteboard in the computer suite gives teachers and pupils the opportunity to demonstrate their work. This was used very well in a Year 2 lesson to depict how pupils were expected to structure their branching database on minibeasts, and similarly when Year 3 pupils were given an example of how to draw a schematic

map of the local area using a “paint” package. Year 6 pupils confidently loaded their Powerpoint presentations and worked through them to show information and photographs of Craster and Alnmouth to the rest of the class. Technology is used just as well in other lessons. For instance, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson the teacher’s use of an interactive whiteboard, Powerpoint presentation and an overhead projector in the classroom meant that pupils were given ample visual stimulus to understand the concept of translating a shape.

25 The basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are taught particularly well, and are then used to underpin pupils’ learning in other subjects. For instance, pupils in Year 5 have used their literacy skills in science to write persuasive letters explaining that air really does exist, even though you can’t see it. They have also used their numeracy skills very well in their design and technology work where they have made models of moving bridges. ICT skills are used regularly for recording and presenting work, as well as regular use of the Internet for research in different subjects.

The curriculum offers an excellent range of learning experiences. Key strengths are the way that links are made between subjects and the way the local community is used to support pupils’ learning.

26 The school has received an Achievement Award for its curriculum for the past two years. This is rightly deserved and reflects the rich and interesting range of experiences that are planned and offered to the pupils. The themes of ecology, recycling and sustainability run through the entire curriculum and have a high profile in the school’s work, reflecting its commitment to being a Healthy School.

27 The curriculum is planned very carefully to meet the needs of each subject but in such a way that themes and topics weave through pupils’ work in different subjects. These links between subjects, supported by regular visits into the local area and contact with the local community, are very effective and make activities interesting and relevant to the pupils.

28 The local community is used very well to support pupils’ learning. Visits into the community, such as traffic surveys and visits to local newspapers, make pupils aware of their surroundings and add greatly to their local knowledge. They pick this up through work in other areas, such as when using their literacy skills to produce persuasive writing about whether the local allotments should be developed as a site for a new sports centre. The school welcomes visitors and regularly provides pupils with opportunities to experience the work of storytellers, poets, theatre groups, dance troupes and visiting artists. A good link has been established with the Education Business Partnership, where local business people have come into the school and taken part in a “What’s my line?” quiz with pupils. This type of activity supports the citizenship curriculum, along with visits from the Fire Brigade, City Refuse Cleaning Department and the children’s work with a local charitable organisation supporting local refugees.

29 Educational visits are a key part of the school’s curriculum. Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities, such as visiting local farms (nursery) through to residential visits (Year 6) and a good mix in between. These visits often form the basis of a theme for follow-up work in different subjects. For example, a visit to the River Tyne has been used very well as the stimulus for a project on “bridges” in Year 5, which has spanned work in history, literacy, design and technology, geography, art and design and mathematics. It was also used as a focus for poetry work, giving rise to a range of expressive and emotive poems. In a similar fashion, a visit by pupils to a stately home in Craggside has been used as a stimulus for art and design work, linked to a study of William Morris, which has culminated in pupils creating their own designs on stencils and transferring them onto T-shirts.

30 ICT is a strong feature of the school's curriculum, weaving through work in all subjects. This is carefully planned so that the ICT skill needed is relevant to the age of the pupils, but at the same time supporting and broadening their experiences in another area of their work. This subject, in particular, lends itself to the school's approach of integrating work in many areas. Some good examples to illustrate this are:

- Year 2 pupils have used their ability to draw lines, fill shapes and flood areas with colour to create computer generated abstract patterns, linked to their study of this style in art. Their understanding of symmetry in mathematics, linked to their use of such packages in ICT, has also allowed them to draw designs of Anglo Saxon weapons with realistic, authentic patterns during their study of this era of history.
- Year 3 pupils had previously emailed a mystery person with information on their local area, and had received an email reply with an archived map attached. As well as using email confidently, the pupils then had to create their own schematic map using a graphics package, which illustrated all the key features of their local area.
- Following a visit to a local newspaper, Year 5 pupils have produced realistic newspaper front pages, using their previously learnt skills to combine text, photographs and clipart, and to alter the layout and style of their work.
- Year 6 pupils have brought all their ICT skills together to produce their own websites in a Victorian theme, linked to their history topic, and have interrogated local history data from 1881 to produce charts and tables showing the high mortality rate in infants at this time.

31 Music, drama and school productions are an integral part of the school's provision. Annual productions, such as "Grease", "Oliver!" and "Bugsy Malone" are carefully planned to give pupils experience of writing and illustrating programmes, making costumes and scenery, and performing in front of an audience. Other special events, such as musical concerts by pupils who receive specialist tuition in the school, Christmas events, and class assemblies built around a theme from the work that pupils have been doing, all add to the richness of their experiences. After-school clubs, joint projects with the local secondary school and college, weekend and summer school experiences, and specialist sports coaching add a further dimension to the school's work.

32 The school's curriculum provides pupils with an excellent range of experiences. This, coupled with very good teaching, explains why pupils learn and achieve so well.

Pupils' personal development is excellent and the school's ecology based work is a strong feature of its success.

33 The school puts a strong emphasis on developing pupils' personally and this is a key feature in its success in encouraging the very good attitudes and excellent relationships that exist among pupils of all ages.

34 Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to make informed choices about their actions. For example, children in the Foundation Stage have looked at their outdoor learning environment and talked about what they would like to see improved. As a result, a store building has been painted in bright rainbow colours and flowers have been planted to encourage more butterflies. The school council includes pupils from all year groups and is a driving force in making decisions about the school. For instance, pupils have successfully negotiated new healthier menu options with the school's cook and

they have been instrumental in raising funds and supporting the design of new games painted on the playground.

35 The school achieved a “Healthy School” award last year. This stemmed from a lot of eco-based work. For example, pupils were so disgusted by the number of cigarette ends dropped outside the school entrance by parents, that they researched and designed their own posters advocating the dangers of smoking and encouraging adults not to smoke on the school’s grounds. Litter picking is a daily event in the school. It is very well organised, with posters designed by the pupils themselves encouraging them to put their litter in a bin. This has paid off, as the school has also won “Newcastle Tidy School” bronze, silver and gold awards.

36 The school’s commitment to ecology and the environment shines out of everything it does. The grounds are used extremely well to support pupils’ learning and personal development, for instance, by planting seeds, making compost bins, and looking after the plants and wildlife in the areas specifically created for this purpose. The “Dragon’s Lair” and “Rainbow Marsh” areas are award-winning projects that have created wonderful opportunities for pupils to experience nature firsthand in their own school. But this work hasn’t stopped there – pupils have continued to use these areas in the school’s grounds, for example when Year 2 worked with the Northumbria Wildlife Trust looking for minibeasts and learning how to handle them with care and show respect for their habitats. Pupils are encouraged to be pro-active in their approach to recycling. For instance, pupils, parents and teachers have set themselves targets to recycle printer cartridges. Year 6 pupils now have a “green patrol” each day, where nominated pupils sort materials collected by pupils, parents and the local community for recycling. Pupils then use ICT to analyse data about the materials collected and present this information in a useful newsletter. The school’s recycling efforts have won awards, raised money and benefited pupils and the environment. For instance, having won an award for recycling 1.4 tonnes of “Yellow Pages”, the school used the £1,000 prize money to buy time from an artist in residence, which supported the painting of murals in the school’s grounds. This activity further promoted pupils’ cultural development, as they had to research 2000 years of British History.

37 The pupils who participate on the school’s eco-committee are excellent ambassadors for the school. They are dedicated to improving the school’s environment through their recycling efforts and work very well with all members of the school’s community. For example, they compost the skins from fruit sold at breaktimes in the school tuck shop, collect and recycle paper, plastic bottles and cans to gain ‘eco points’ which are used to buy plants, trees and materials to improve the school’s grounds, and have recently started to recycle school sweatshirts. Even the youngest children in the school know that they have a responsibility to *“look after the birds and animals”* and *“take care of the plants”* in the school’s extensive wildlife areas. This aspect of the school’s work makes a significant and powerful contribution to pupils’ personal development.

The leadership and management are very strong. This is a large, complex school that is running very well and giving pupils a very good quality of education.

38 This is a large school that is meeting the changing needs of the local population very well. The very strong leadership by the head teacher and governors is a key factor in the school’s success and its ability to adapt to changing circumstances. For example, the school is responding positively to the increasing number of children coming into the nursery with English as an additional language, and the increasing need to focus on speech, language and communication skills at this early age. It has also recently been earmarked for possible inclusion in a major rebuilding programme, which would revolutionise the facilities available compared to the current situation with separate buildings needing regular repair and maintenance.

39 The head teacher leads this school extremely well. She has a very clear understanding of how the school is working, and why, and which areas could develop further. The senior management share her drive and thirst for success and support the school very well. There is a very strong team spirit among staff and governors and everyone appreciates how their involvement can benefit the school. For example, one governor has been instrumental in establishing the school's link with the local Education Business Partnership, while another governor has encouraged strong links with the local church (of which he is the priest) and has actively supported the development of the school's religious education curriculum.

40 The head teacher and governors know precisely how they want the school to develop and are taking active steps to make sure this is achieved. Individual staff all know and understand the school's priorities and the part they will play in its development. However, although this map for the future is clearly shared and understood by staff, the strategic picture is not written down or laid out as clearly as it could be in the school's management planning. Governors are aware of this and are beginning to formalise their planning more with the possible advent of a Private Financial Initiative building programme, which will require very tight and detailed planning from all concerned.

41 The school is managed very well. Any movement of pupils and staff between the two buildings is carefully controlled and the school runs very smoothly and efficiently as a result. Individual staff take clear responsibility for managing their own work and, again, the strong team spirit evident between teachers in the same year groups, age ranges and buildings comes to the fore. Other members of the school community, such as the caretaker, kitchen staff and visiting staff all said that they felt part of the school and felt that their contributions were valued.

42 This is a very effective school that has made good progress since its last inspection. This success is down to the strength of leadership by the head teacher, senior staff and governors, and the commitment and enthusiasm of staff and pupils to do their best.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Attendance is too low due to some repeated absences and because too many pupils are taken out of school for holidays.

43 The school has very good procedures to monitor pupils' attendance. Consequently, there is ample evidence to show that some pupils are missing school too often and that too many others are being taken out for holidays during school time. The result of this is that the school's rates of attendance are not good enough. Attendance was below the national average in 2001/2002 and the school's data shows a similar picture for the first two terms of 2002/2003.

44 The school has a good range of systems and procedures to encourage pupils to attend. Staff ring to check on a pupil's first day of absence and, where necessary, work closely with the education welfare officer to follow up repeated absences. Governors have been prepared to take action against parents, as a last resort, and support the school's efforts extremely well.

45 The school has taken many steps to actively encourage parents to help them, but this has not worked well enough. Too many parents are still not supporting the school's attempts to reduce absence due to holidays. For example, 144 of the school's 423 pupils have been taken out of school for holidays by their parents so far this year. Some of these have been pupils from minority ethnic groups who have been absent for extended periods of time due to family holidays and visits abroad. Repeated and extended absences affect children's learning and, although this is being carefully tracked and monitored by teachers, it still has a detrimental impact, despite the very good work of the school.

Teachers' marking could give pupils better support for their learning.

46 Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and follow the school's marking policy. However, this puts an emphasis on using ticks to show that work is correct and commenting mainly on the presentation. Teachers discuss the work with pupils but their use of feedback is inconsistent. As a result, many pupils are unclear about what they do particularly well, what could be improved and, more importantly, what they would need to do next to make their work better.

47 In mathematics, pupils' work is often simply marked with a tick or cross. "Good work" stickers suggest that pupils have achieved well but teachers' marking rarely indicates how, or why, to the pupil concerned. Marking in science and other subjects follows a similar pattern. Consequently, although pupils know what they have done right, they struggle to explain clearly what level they are working at or what targets they are aiming for in these subjects.

48 Marking in English is better, but only really in Year 6. Here, there are some examples of good practice, where pupils are clearly told how well they have done and given clear guidance to move their learning forward. For example on a pupil's writing in the style of a newspaper report, the teacher commented: *"You have used main clauses and subordinate clauses, joined by using connectives. It would help your writing if you linked ideas and information together."* Similarly, on a Year 6 pupil's persuasive writing, the teacher identified the need for greater challenge by writing: *"Some well constructed sentences – level 4 work. You should be aiming for level 5 . . . by adding more detail."*

49 The school's formal assessment systems are very good and teachers have a very good understanding of how well pupils are doing. They obviously talk to pupils regularly about their work, but their marking could provide even greater reinforcement to help pupils remember what they have done and prompt their future learning. The pupils in this school are mature and sensible enough to take this responsibility for their own learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50 The school should now:

- (A) Improve the rates of attendance by continuing to work with parents to reduce the number of absences due to holidays taken in school time.
- (B) Improve teachers' marking to make pupils more aware of their own learning and to give them greater responsibility for knowing what they need to do next and how they can improve further.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

15

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

21

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	11	3	1	0	0	0
Percentage	-	73%	20%	7%	-	-	-

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 one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	24	423
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	99

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	61

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	31

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	32
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	40

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2002	27	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	23	24	25
	Girls	26	31	29
	Total	49	55	54
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83% (83%)	93% (83%)	92% (91%)
	National	84% (84%)	86% (86%)	90% (91%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	26	25
	Girls	31	31	29
	Total	55	57	54
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93% (84%)	97% (89%)	92% (89%)
	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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2002	39	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	28	34	35
	Girls	21	24	24
	Total	49	58	59
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	77% (82%)	91% (84%)	92% (89%)
	National	75% (75%)	73% (71%)	86% (87%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	29	32	36
	Girls	21	22	25
	Total	50	54	61
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78% (77%)	84% (77%)	95% (90%)
	National	73% (72%)	74% (74%)	82% (82%)

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

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	392	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	3	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	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	16	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	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	5	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

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27
Average class size	30

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	256.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Total number of education support staff	1

Financial information

Financial year	2002 – 2003
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	£
Total income	925,199
Total expenditure	997,156
Expenditure per pupil	2,201
Balance brought forward from previous year	72,566
Balance carried forward to next year	609

Total aggregate hours worked per week	32.5
Number of pupils per FTE adult	12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	471
Number of questionnaires returned	207

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	35	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	62	33	5	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	41	2	1	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	45	44	9	1	1
The teaching is good.	65	32	1	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	49	41	8	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	30	3	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	27	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	39	48	12	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	55	40	0	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	39	4	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	25	11	3	13