

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **PITTINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114125

Headteacher: Mr R N Metcalfe

Reporting inspector: Mr G Brown  
21060

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> –12<sup>th</sup> February 2003

Inspection number: 247429

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Junior and Infant

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 -11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Hallgarth Lane  
Pittington  
Durham

Postcode: DH6 1AF

Telephone number: 0191 372 0314

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr W Kellett

Date of previous inspection: January 1998

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21060	Mr G Brown	Registered inspector	Art and design Geography History Physical education Educational inclusion	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
17685	Miss L Spooner	Team inspector	Science Music The Foundation Stage	
19154	Mr S Rigby	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Design and technology	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
17907	Mr M Bowers	Team inspector	Mathematics Religious education Special educational needs	Teaching and learning

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Pittington Primary is situated in a semi-rural area in the old East Durham coalfields on the outskirts of Durham City. It is of about average size and contains 227 pupils aged 3 to 11 years, including 44 children in a part-time nursery. It serves families from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, who live mainly in the immediate vicinity of the school as well as from more outlying areas. In recent times, several families have left the catchment area and this has affected the numbers entering the school. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are taught in three mixed-age classes but with special arrangements made for literacy, numeracy and science lessons, which helps to reduce the numbers in each class. Most children enter the reception class with standards similar to those expected for their age. A below average number of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Twenty-one pupils (a below average number) are on the school's register of special educational needs, a majority of whom have mild learning problems or difficulties with language and communication. A few pupils have profound medical conditions. Three pupils have statements of educational need. Almost all pupils are of white UK origin and no pupil has English as an additional language. The school aims for high standards under its mission statement 'We work, achieve and succeed together.'

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

Pittington is a very good school where pupils achieve particularly well and reach above average standards for their age. The pupils benefit from the experienced leadership of the headteacher and by a very good curriculum that engenders effective learning. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and is frequently very good, ensuring pupils make rapid strides in their learning. The school is effectively meeting its aims, particularly its emphasis on raising standards and on the personal development of the pupils. Given pupils' attainment on entry and the standards they reach by the end of Year 6, the school gives good value for money.

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

- By the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils' standards are well above average in English and science. Standards in mathematics are above average by the end of Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 6;
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, enabling pupils to make rapid progress and to achieve very well over time. Pupils with special educational needs are also well provided for and make very good progress;
- The school is well led and managed by the headteacher, key staff and the governing body. An effective climate for learning is well established;
- The curriculum is exciting and challenging to pupils, ensuring they grow in confidence, knowledge and skills as they move through the school;
- The pupils' personal development is given high priority, including effective measures to support their moral, social and cultural development. This promotes very positive relationships, good behaviour and very good attitudes to learning.

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

- The spiritual development of the pupils;
- The overall leadership of the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception).

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

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

The school was last inspected in January 1998 when the standards achieved by the pupils and the quality of education provided were both in need of improvement. Since that time, the school has made very good progress overall, including those areas it had to improve. Art and design and design and technology are better provided for and pupils' standards are now satisfactory. The attention given to

higher attaining pupils has also improved and many make good progress, due mainly to everyday activities being well matched to their needs. The quality of teaching and learning has improved greatly. The leadership and management of the school have also improved, particularly the emphasis given to high standards and the monitoring of the curriculum. Various initiatives, such as the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and performance management, have been adopted successfully. This is a school that tries hard and is successful in improving on its already very good standards and qualities.

## 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	B	A*	A*	A	Very high A* Well above average A above average B
Mathematics	A	A	A*	A	Average C Below average D
Science	B	A	A	A	Well below average E

Most nursery and reception children achieve well and are likely to reach above average standards in communication and language, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and personal development by the end of the Foundation Stage. Most pupils go on to achieve very well across the school. In the 2002 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 2, the school's results were very high in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. The results of inspection confirm the well above average standards of Year 2 pupils in reading, writing and science and their above average attainment in mathematics. Year 2 pupils also do well in information and communication technology (ICT), history and geography. In the 2002 tests for pupils at the end of Year 6, the school's results were very high (among the top 5 per cent nationally) in English and mathematics and well above average in science. Pupils also scored well above average in these subjects when compared to pupils in similar schools. The results of inspection confirm the positive pattern of results over time, namely that the standards achieved by both girls and boys in Year 6 are well above average in English, mathematics and science. By the time they transfer to the high school, pupils are also on course to attain above average in history and broadly average in other subjects. The high attainment across the school is due to the combined influence of effective teaching, the very good working atmosphere and a well organised curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils also achieve very well. The targets set for future attainment are challenging and reflect the school's determination to maintain its high standards and for all pupils to reach their potential.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and try very hard with their work. They respond well to the high expectations of their teachers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are mature for their age and show care, consideration and respect for others. Their behaviour is trustworthy.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The positive working relationships are a good reflection of the pupils' maturity and of the values the school helps to promote. The all-

	round development of the pupils is central to the aims of the school.
Attendance	Good and above the national average. Lateness is not a problem.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. During inspection, over eight lessons in ten were either good or better and no unsatisfactory teaching occurred. As a result, pupils achieve very well and make rapid progress in much of their learning. Children in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception) are taught well and make mainly good progress, particularly in language and communication, mathematics and many aspects of their personal knowledge and development. In Years 1 to 6, the pupils' above average standards reflect the high expectations of teachers and the careful planning of lessons, both of which target very successfully the needs of pupils of widely different abilities. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good and higher attaining pupils are also well targeted. The teaching of literacy, numeracy and science is particularly effective and pupils make great strides in these subjects. Teachers use a variety of effective methods, manage their classes well and lay strong emphasis on the teaching and learning of basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Lessons are interesting and challenging and make good use of available time, additional staff and the many attractive resources. The ongoing assessment of pupils' work is very good, particularly the teachers' marking which is encouraging and constructive. Homework is used satisfactorily to consolidate and extend learning. All subjects are taught to at least a satisfactory level. As well as in the subjects indicated, the teaching of ICT, history and design and technology is good across the school. Music is taught well in Years 3 to 6 but too few teachers are involved in the subject overall. Geography is taught most effectively in the infant years. Most pupils also learn well through their own intellectual, physical and creative efforts. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 in particular, show very clear awareness of their own targets for learning, including how best they can improve.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good in the Foundation Stage and very good elsewhere. The quality, range and organisation of learning opportunities are real strengths of the school. The curriculum is enriched by interesting visits (some of them residential) and by a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils with special needs are carefully assessed and very well targeted and supported, much of it on an individual basis.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good overall, but very good in relation to the moral and social development of the pupils. The provision for cultural development is good. Spiritual development is satisfactory but more staff thought could be given to this area. The school prepares its pupils adequately for life in a diverse society and promotes racial harmony well.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a caring community and matters relating to child protection and the welfare of the pupils are good. Health and safety assessments are carried out appropriately. The methods used to assess, monitor and record pupils' academic progress are good. The results of various assessments are used very well to set pupils' targets and to determine what they should learn next.

The parents' views of the school are very positive and many maintain good links year after year.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is ably led by the headteacher who has a clear vision of how the school is developing and how best to achieve its aims. He is well supported by all staff, particularly the subject co-ordinators, who lead their areas well. The management of the Foundation Stage could be clarified and strengthened further.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are good, very committed and have a good grasp of the aims and strengths of the school. They are well organised and meet their statutory requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. A school that is constantly trying to improve through self-review and external assessment. Its latest priorities are appropriate.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Finance is used well to help the school meet its declared aims and priorities. Good financial procedures are in place ensuring the school gets best value from its available resources. Good staffing levels aid pupils' progress and learning resources are generally plentiful and of good quality. The accommodation is satisfactory.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The standards of the pupils and the way they achieve over time;</li> <li>• Children enjoy school. They are mature and behave well;</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed;</li> <li>• Teaching is good and the curriculum provides a wide range of interesting learning opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of information given about how well their children are doing;</li> <li>• Some parents would like to see stronger links between home and school, including a clearer picture as to the nature and amount of homework given to the pupils.</li> </ul>

Inspection findings confirm all the positive points made by parents. What please parents most are among some of the strengths of the school. Evidence suggests that the school provides satisfactory opportunities for feedback to parents concerning how their children are getting on. The annual pupils' reports could be more evaluative. The links between home and school are good and generally effective in helping pupils to make progress. The impact of homework is satisfactory.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Children show a wide range of attainment on entry to both the nursery and reception classes but standards are broadly at the level expected for their age. They achieve well in the Foundation Stage and many are on course to exceed the early learning goals by the end of the reception year in those areas where teaching is particularly effective over time. These include communication and language, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and aspects of personal and social development.
2. The very good teaching and learning of basic literacy and numeracy skills in the Foundation Stage ensures that most children learn rapidly and achieve well. They benefit from a wide range of stimulating experiences that encourage and develop their language, mathematical and personal skills. They settle quickly into nursery and reception routines and respond very well to the high expectations of teachers and support staff. Play is harmonious and friendships are quickly formed. Most children speak with increasing confidence and learn quickly the basics of reading, writing and mathematical development.
3. Standards in all year groups have risen since the previous inspection, due mainly to improved teaching and learning and a very good, inclusive curriculum that stretches the most able and supports the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Standards in the core subjects, in particular, have risen sharply in recent years resulting in the school receiving two national achievement awards.
4. The results of the 2002 National Curriculum tests for pupils at the end of Year 2 showed that pupils at the school scored highly in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. In comparison to similar schools, pupils scored well above average in reading and writing and broadly average in mathematics. Based on teachers' assessments, pupils' attainment in science was above the national average. Over the past three years, the pupils' performance in reading and writing in particular has exceeded the national average. Standards in mathematics have fluctuated a little more but have been above average overall. In these core areas, it is often the above average number of pupils obtaining the higher levels for their age that is a feature of the year group's overall high attainment. There have been few significant differences between the standards attained by girls and boys. The results of the inspection confirm the trend towards high standards by the end of Year 2. Pupils are on course to reach well above average standards in English and science and above average standards in mathematics. The strength of teaching in these subjects ensures that pupils continue to learn and achieve very well.
5. The results of the 2002 National Curriculum tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 showed that the school's high standards of recent years have been maintained. In these most recent tests, pupils' results reflected high attainment in English and mathematics and well above average attainment in science. In the same year, pupils scored well above the average of similar schools in all three subjects. Over time, the performance of pupils as a whole exceeds the national average by a good margin in all core subjects. In some years, the national trend is followed and girls tend to outperform boys in areas like English, although boys in this school still perform above and sometimes well above the national average. As in Year 2, the average

scores of the school are boosted by the high proportion of pupils who reach the higher levels for their age. The results of inspection confirm the very good standards reached by Year 6 pupils year-on-year, with the current age group on course to attain well above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Inspection found that there is currently no significant difference between the everyday attainment of girls and boys. The good and frequently very good teaching in the junior year groups is a very important factor in the high standards reached by the pupils. The difficulties often found in teaching large, mixed-age classes is effectively overcome by the successful use of an additional teacher, who supports the work undertaken in English, mathematics and science in the junior year groups.

6. The adoption and practice of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been key factors in helping to drive up standards in recent years. There is strong emphasis on pupils' basic skills in these areas and pupils achieve well in their daily lessons. A good balance is struck between the various elements of English and mathematics and pupils learn to use literacy and numeracy in support of other areas of learning, such as design and technology and history. There is a good match of activities to the needs of different pupils. Those with special educational needs are taught effectively in short, well defined stages, whilst those who attain more highly are usually well challenged by the work that is set. In Years 1 and 2, pupils use their listening and speaking skills to good effect and are confident when expressing their views and giving answers readily to their teachers. Many pupils have a well above average knowledge of key words for their age and this is reflected in the clarity and accuracy of their reading and the development of writing skills. Most pupils spell well for their age and show good imagination and knowledge when writing stories or factual accounts. Handwriting and presentation are often very good and reflect the support and high expectations of the teachers.
7. By the end of Year 2, the influence of the Numeracy Strategy and other methods of teaching and learning leads to above average standards in many aspects of mathematics. Pupils show good mental alertness and develop appropriate strategies to add and subtract, in particular. They also have a good grasp of the basic properties of several shapes and know how basic data can be presented in graphic and other forms. Their numeracy skills are used appropriately to help solve many basic problems relating to money and measurement. Pupils' skills in science, art and design and design and technology have all improved since the previous inspection. Pupils carry out investigative work to a very good standard and will readily apply previous learning to new situations. Their recorded work in science is usually accurate and reflects the many things they can do and achieve without the direct involvement of the teacher.
8. In both art and design and design and technology, pupils are taught an appropriate range of techniques and build successfully on their previous learning. Standards in ICT are good and reflect more informed teaching and learning, as well as the many opportunities offered by the new ICT suite. Standards of Year 2 pupils in history and geography have also improved and are now above age-related expectations. In both these subjects, pupils apply their growing knowledge and understanding well and their exercise books give good evidence of them recording information at appropriate length and using different styles of writing and forms of presentation. Standards in music are satisfactory but are not as high as those elsewhere in the school, where the co-ordinator has particularly strong influence.

9. Pupils make good progress with their speaking and listening skills and reach well above average standards by the end of Year 6. Many are able to debate with their friends and are relatively confident when sharing their views or discussing the outcomes of class work. In reading, pupils' standards are well above the level expected for the majority of eleven-year-olds. A particular strength is their ability to skim and scan through information at good speed and to use non-fiction well for researching subjects such as the Second World War. Most pupils have good strategies for tackling unfamiliar words and phrases and understand the power of descriptive or emotive words when these are used effectively in fiction. Standards in writing are well above the national average. Most Year 6 pupils have a very good grasp of grammar and spelling and present their work tidily and at an appropriate length. Higher attaining pupils, in particular, write with flair using a wide range of imaginative vocabulary. Most pupils can adapt their writing style to a given purpose or audience. Junior pupils are placed in their single year groups for literacy lessons and this is having a good influence on the standards they reach and the overall progress they make.
10. In mathematics, many junior pupils have above average mental skills and are relatively adept with basic mathematical operations such as addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Standards of computation are also consistently good and work in books is accurate and well presented. Pupils show above average understanding of a good range of topics including fractions, angles, shape, time, perimeter and area. They also have sound experience of handling available data but could use their own forms a little more often. ICT is used mainly satisfactorily to extend mathematical knowledge and understanding. Much of the work using large numbers is good. A relative strength among junior pupils is their use and application of mathematics to solve everyday problems. Junior pupils are 'set' by broad ability for mathematics and this undoubtedly has a marked impact on the quality of their learning.
11. Standards in science are well above average, including the pupils' use and understanding of investigative work. Good emphasis is placed on pupils recording work in their own words following examples of fair testing, predictions and self or group evaluations as to why things happen as they do. Pupils' understanding of a wide range of topics is often well above the level expected for their age. In ICT, pupils enjoy a growing variety of experiences on the computer and make satisfactory progress in most aspects of their work. Most are confident with the language of the computer and perform an appropriate range of operations and techniques for their age.
12. Standards in music and history are above those expected for a majority of Year 6 pupils. Music has a strong tradition in the school and many pupils can play at least one instrument well. Some perform regularly in the school's brass band. In history, pupils have a keen sense of time and understand the impact of the past on the present. Their knowledge of topics such as the Second World War and the Ancient Greeks reflect above average attainment. Standards in all other subjects are broadly average. In physical education, good attention is given to pupils' standards in swimming and all pupils show an enthusiasm for succeeding in game including aspects of competitive sport.
13. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress set against their previous learning and develop skills and understanding in keeping with their individual educational plans. Pupils with statements achieve particularly well and the standards they attain indicate they reach their potential.

14. The school sets relatively aspiring annual targets for its Year 6 pupils year-on-year. The very good use of assessments, mainly to set individual targets for pupils to work towards, has proved a very successful way of helping them progress. Many pupils show good awareness of such targets in their everyday learning and this tends to increase their productivity and pace of working. The response and attitude of pupils towards their learning also has a significant part to play in the high standards that many reach.

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

15. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and are interested in everything they experience. In their questionnaire returns and at the pre-inspection meeting, parents confirm overwhelmingly that their children really like school. Many pupils arrive in school early or stay late and the school is alive with bustling activity. Some arrive at eight in the morning for pantomime rehearsals or to practise a musical instrument; others attend a nearby breakfast club or come for extra tuition in mathematics. Their enthusiasm helps to create a warm and positive atmosphere in school. Pupils are keen participants in the very good range of extra-curricular activities on offer. Many happily devote their playtimes to music. For instance, guitarists and recorder players made music with the headteacher, practising an increasingly tuneful rendition of 'Unchained Melody' together. Everyone was very focused on the part they played and concentrated well throughout. Pupils speak highly of their school. They are very proud of what goes on and of the work they produce. They agree that their academic studies are made more interesting because the teachers often make games out of them and this makes learning fun and more enjoyable. During lessons, pupils are generally attentive and well focused on what they have to do. They concentrate well and, when given the opportunity, will use their own initiative in learning.
16. Standards of behaviour throughout the school are good and in lessons, are usually very good. Pupils respond well to the very consistent behaviour management strategies used by adults and have a clear understanding of what they can and cannot do. All classes have clear guidelines for daily behaviour and pupils respond very well to the high expectations of their teachers. Most are very polite and are quick to offer help if someone is in trouble. There have been no recent exclusions from school. Lunchtimes are good, sociable occasions. Pupils chat happily to each other and to the dinner staff who look after them. Behaviour in the playground is also good, despite the rather barren nature of the area, which lacks seating or any real focus for imaginative play.
17. Very good relationships exist between all members of the school community and these reflect the relaxed approach and example of the headteacher. Pupils respond to one another with kindness and older pupils are happy to help the younger ones. Pupils show respect for the feelings of others and many are mature enough to enjoy the humorous asides that staff sometimes introduce into lessons. Pupils relish such moments and show their appreciation through continued hard work.
18. Pupils' personal development is very good overall. They respond well to any opportunities to undertake particular duties around the school and this helps to increase their levels of independence. Some operate small electrical resources with expertise and can be trusted with a variety of errands and responsibilities. Resources are handled carefully and responsibly. They control the music system and overhead projector during pantomime rehearsals and acts of worship. Others take photographs during achievement assemblies for use later on the school's web site. Year 5 pupils enjoy participating in the annual residential trip to Middleton

Field Study Centre and savour vivid memories, among other things, of their visit to the lead mine.

19. During lessons, pupils across the age groups demonstrate increasing maturity and participate well in the regular personal and social (PSHCE) sessions. In the nursery, children wipe the snack time table, taking care to make sure it is spotlessly clean and then help to set out the food. In Years 5 and 6, pupils cope very well with their own class council which runs on similar lines to the larger school council. Pupils take turns to be chair and secretary and lead a full debate on issues of particular concern to the members of the class. In one such session, pupils discussed what strategies they could adopt to stop some unacceptable playground behaviour, an issue raised by another class member. They listened carefully to each other's views and made very sensible suggestions about how to make the situation better. All members of the class paid due regard to the agreed ways of working and discussing and demonstrated clear understanding of what it means to be part of a wider social group.
20. Levels of attendance are above the national average and indicate how much pupils enjoy school. Almost all pupils arrive on time and there is a very prompt and efficient start to the day. Rates of unauthorised absence are below the national average. The attendance of children in the nursery is equally good.

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

21. Teaching and learning are good, overall and have improved considerably since the previous inspection. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The strengths in teaching and learning include:
  - teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach;
  - high expectations as to what pupils should be able to do;
  - clarity about what pupils are to learn;
  - the help given to pupils with special educational needs;
  - the effective management of pupils which means little time is lost;
  - the quality and use of assessment particularly in English, mathematics and science.
22. Areas for development in teaching and learning include:
  - teachers' knowledge of music and their greater involvement in the subject as a whole;
  - the development of more advanced skills in ICT in Years 3 to 6;
  - more joint planning between the nursery and reception classes.
23. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception) are good. Staff establish clear routines, very good relationships and lay successful emphasis on the teaching and learning of basic skills. Care is taken to build on what pupils already know, understand and can do. Planning between the nursery and reception classes needs to be more collaborative to ensure that the needs of all children are securely met, particularly as they move between classes. Staff generally integrate well those elements of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies anticipated for children in the Foundation Stage. The activities given to children are varied and interesting and help them achieve well over time. There is a good sense of teamwork present in each class. Support staff and learning resources are used to

very good effect, including when teaching pupils with learning difficulties. Staff make careful assessments as to the point children reach in their learning. The information they obtain is used well to decide the next stage of teaching, learning and support that should be given to each pupil.

24. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 1 to 6. It is slightly more effective in Years 1 and 2 where almost all lessons were good or better. However, the pattern is very similar in Years 3 to 6 where some eight out of every ten lessons were good or better and many of these were very good. The quality of teaching in music is relatively insecure for many teachers because only the headteacher and a visiting music specialist currently deliver music lessons. Elsewhere, teachers have at least secure and often good knowledge of the subjects they teach and offer good advice to pupils during lessons. Teaching is very good in English, mathematics and science. It is frequently good across the school in design and technology, ICT, history and religious education. Music is taught well in the junior years and the teaching of geography is good in Years 1 and 2. Teaching and learning are at least sound in all other subjects.
25. The school has given good attention to the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. The unsatisfactory levels of teachers' knowledge in art and design and design and technology have been improved through extra teacher training and a more structured curriculum. One of the current strengths of teaching is the high expectation that teachers have of all their pupils including the higher attainers. This represents a significant improvement on the findings of the previous report. Teachers continue to manage their classes effectively and the provision for pupils with special educational needs has also improved since the previous inspection.
26. Literacy skills are taught very well and this is reflected in the standards pupils reach. Year 4 pupils, for example, confidently use the contents, index and glossary pages in reference books to locate and seek out the specific information they require. They engage confidently in conversations about the events in the fiction books they are currently reading, accurately re-telling the story and forecasting specific endings. Teachers give interesting explanations. For instance, when 'Goosebumps' was introduced, the teacher shared her enjoyment of the book with the entire class, who responded enthusiastically to her descriptions of the plot.
27. The teaching of mathematics, including numeracy, has improved because teachers are now fully confident in the use of the Numeracy Strategy. The openings of lessons, usually with oral mental work, are lively and pupils concentrate well and answer questions readily. This prepares them well for the second part of the lesson. Activities are chosen carefully to enhance pupils' concentration skills. In almost all lessons, the teachers' high expectations are underpinned by the continual use of assessments and positive marking that praise children's achievements.
28. The teaching of science has improved because the school now consistently involves the pupils in practical investigations. Teachers carefully plan lessons to challenge pupils to predict the results of experiments before they carry out their investigations, finally comparing the results with their predictions. Consequently, pupils develop secure scientific knowledge and accurate investigative skills.

29. The teaching of ICT is good, particularly in the infant years, where standards among pupils are above average. During the inspection, several good lessons were observed, as basic computer skills were taught effectively in the computer suite. However, teachers do not plan enough opportunities for pupils to extend their ICT skills in support of other subjects across the curriculum.
30. Teachers' planning is good, although occasionally the introduction to a lesson overruns, making it difficult for pupils to sustain their concentration. Careful attention is given to the range of abilities in each class. In Years 3 to 6, pupils are taught mathematics in groups according to their prior attainment irrespective of age and this is a very important factor in the progress they make.
31. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. For instance, pupils in Years 3 and 4 are taught quite advanced reading skills to enable them to use contents and index pages and scan text in order to capture new knowledge. However, where teaching is no better than satisfactory, some of the machines in the ICT suite are not used well enough by the pupils. On other occasions, the tasks set are not entirely suitable for the ability of the pupils. In a very few lessons, the control of the pupils is also not effective enough. For example, in music the teacher is unable to channel the enthusiasm of the children correctly and they continue to play their instruments while she is still speaking.
32. Teachers often make learning exciting by including a range of interesting activities. This motivates children, accelerates their learning and raises standards. For example, in science in Year 6, pupils are challenged to analyse the effect on the rate of fall of parachutes when paper clips are added. Groups of pupils develop a positive enthusiasm for the task and, through discussion, agree on how to proceed. They hypothesise about the relationships between air resistance and the force of gravity and progress very well to work at the higher levels, developing their scientific knowledge and the ability to devise a fair investigation.
33. A positive feature in most lessons is the warm relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils. This leads to good behaviour and lessons that take place in an orderly atmosphere. This is particularly beneficial to pupils with special educational needs who are well supported by staff and fellow pupils. The overall quality of teaching of these pupils is very good because teachers have precise knowledge of their needs and keep detailed records of their progress. Teaching is systematically planned to move pupils forward against the targets set out in their individual education plans. Teaching assistants, when available, have a key role within many classes. They support and motivate pupils of all abilities well.
34. The marking of pupils' work is often very good. Most teachers include positive encouragement and comments to inform children how they can improve their work. All pupils have individual literacy and numeracy targets that help them understand the progress they are making. Satisfactory use is made of homework across the school. Tasks are linked to what has been taught and makes a purposeful contribution to pupils' learning. They enjoy the challenge of reading, writing and using ICT at home as a means of extending their knowledge.

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

35. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good in the Foundation Stage and very good elsewhere. This is a school that is fully inclusive in its approach and



organisation. A broad and balanced curriculum is in place that covers all the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. Subjects are all given appropriate lengths of time during the school week. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage follows closely the latest national guidance and meets the needs of young children in all aspects of their learning. The school lays considerable stress on the personal development of its pupils and provides well for them in this respect. It has also responded very well to the key issues from the previous inspection and provision in areas such as art and design and design and technology have all improved significantly. The school also provides well for higher attaining pupils, a partial weakness identified during the previous inspection.

36. The school is particularly effective in addressing pupils' needs within the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. There are very effective strategies in place to teach both literacy and numeracy skills and these are reflected in the high achievement of the pupils. The daily literacy and numeracy lessons are an integral part of the school's morning sessions and these areas of the curriculum are particularly well planned for and delivered. A systematic and well structured approach has been successful in providing the technical skills needed in the subject. Close monitoring and accurate assessment, particularly in the core subjects, allows for a consistency of approach. The school's decision to employ a part-time teacher, enabling pupils in Years 3 to 6 to be taught literacy, numeracy and science in either discrete age groups or in sets of pupils with broadly compatible ability, has been fully justified. Provision in these core areas is therefore strong and has impacted very well on the standards reached by the pupils. Different levels of pupils' attainment are carefully provided for, increasing, for example, the challenge given to the most able.
37. The planning behind the curriculum is also a strength of overall provision. Policies and schemes of work are in place for all statutory subjects and these are well monitored by subject leaders to ensure that staff and pupils have the maximum support. Subjects are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that teaching and learning meet the latest requirements and that good resources are in place. The school achieves a very good balance between the knowledge and understanding that pupils require and the everyday skills they need to develop. In order to overcome any potential difficulties created by the mixed age groups in Years 3 to 6, the school uses a well developed two-year cycle of subjects and topics that overcomes the possibility of unwanted repetition. Although all subjects are taught as discrete areas, there are useful links across several subjects so that pupils see their learning expressed as a whole, particularly in Years 1 and 2. The work undertaken by children in the nursery and reception classes includes a good balance between the six areas of learning and is particularly effective in language, mathematical and personal development, areas where children do very well.
38. The school has particular curriculum strengths which it has developed over time. Despite rather too few staff being involved in teaching, the provision in music is strong, particularly the opportunities to perform and to learn to play a wide range of instruments. The work undertaken in art and design, physical education and history is also of growing importance. Some of these subjects involve the school working in partnership with a number of external agencies that provide specialist support. The school is placing increasing importance on the personal development of its pupils and there are now regular lessons to develop personal and social skills. Sex education and drug awareness programmes are in place.

39. Very good provision is provided for pupils with special educational needs. Detailed and appropriate individual educational plans are in place to support learning. These are regularly reviewed and help pupils to make very good progress. The setting or year group arrangements for teaching literacy and numeracy ensures that these pupils are presented with suitably challenging, yet manageable work. The support given by the skilled and effectively deployed learning support staff ensures that pupils receive extra assistance when necessary and that they are fully included in all aspects of school life. Extra learning groups in English and mathematics run regularly, giving these pupils further opportunities to consolidate their subject knowledge and skills. The school has also identified a good range of computer programs to use as a means of supporting pupils in important areas of their learning. The overall provision for ICT is appropriate for the needs of all pupils and this too is a developing subject in the curriculum, currently being enhanced by the new computer suite.
40. The quality of both medium and short-term planning provides teachers with a clear focus that helps steer pupils' learning. Support assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. They are well organised, well trained and knowledgeable about their roles. The quality of the curriculum is enriched by a wide range of visits to places such as Bede's World, Preston Park and Middleton-in-Teesdale. Some good links are made between subjects using ICT, for example, to record geographical observations. However, pupils' subject skills in numeracy and literacy could be used more effectively to help raise standards in the other subjects of the National Curriculum.
41. Parents are very happy with the school and its work. They feel it offers an interesting range of activities both within and outside lesson time. The range and impact of extra-curricular clubs are very good. There is particularly strong provision in music, art and design and sport. The Parents' Association also enriches the literacy curriculum by funding and organising a 'Story Sacks' initiative that supports home / school reading links. The art and design club has a lengthy waiting list and the school has a successful brass band incorporating a number of talented musicians. Links with the local community and neighbouring comprehensive school are promoted well. These include joint concerts with the village brass band, a sharing of ICT facilities and physical education lessons taken by high school tutors and pupils.
42. The provision for pupils' personal development is good overall. Spiritual development is satisfactory and is reflected in a variety of ways ranging from learning to appreciate the natural world, to pupils showing respect for themselves and others. However, this is an area of school life that could and should be stronger and therefore requires some attention, particularly the nature and purpose of daily acts of worship and how the curriculum in general can support more reflective learning. The school assembly celebrates pupils' good work and achievement and individual talents and abilities are recognised. However, there is only a limited time for pupils to reflect. The prayer to close the assembly is frequently not the most ideal and opportunities are missed to further develop pupils' values and emerging beliefs.
43. The provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. They share a number of social and moral issues within their 'circle time' and these aspects of personal development are reflected well in the very good relationships that exist across the school. Pupils are taught the importance of being mature and responsive towards the needs of each other. This is a school that celebrates everyone's individuality and discusses openly with pupils the need to work in harmony, without prejudice and to put others first. Each class has a set of 'rules' that guide moral

behaviour and the expected response to each other. Social and moral development are clearly very good, when pupils show respect towards one another, both within the classroom and playgrounds. Staff provide very good role models and mutual respect is always in evidence. Pupils have a keen awareness of right and wrong.

44. Provision for cultural development is good, ensuring that pupils learn from their own local culture, history and heritage. The school visits places of particular local interest and importance, such as Durham Cathedral and Bede's World. In addition, visits to Killhope Lead Mining Centre help pupils to understand the region's past history and they have produced a very good display that shows their empathy with the miners of the period.
45. The school continues the strong local traditions of mining and the brass band, synonymous of the area. It has a very good band of its own and is involved regularly in local events and competitions. The school also provides a range of other extra-curricular and community links such as an art and design club, a breakfast club and sports coaching that provide an informal social and cultural context for pupils. A good range of multicultural resources are in evidence in display and in supporting class teaching. A variety of cultures and religions from other countries are celebrated within the curriculum. Current themes and artefacts on Hinduism and Jewish culture and tradition are in clear evidence. Pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of a number of Hindu gods, such as Vishnu and Shiva. Such themes help foster children's cultural awareness and prepare them adequately for life in a diverse society.

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

46. The school takes good care of its pupils and they are happy in school. They trust and respect the teachers and adults with whom they work. The overall procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare are good.
47. Well considered child protection procedures are known to all staff, although currently there is no recording system in place to ensure staff attend regular training updates. The headteacher is the designated adult responsible for this aspect of pastoral care and he is conscientious in his duty and exercise of care. He takes a very sensitive approach to any concerns that arise and his priority is always that the school should be a safe haven for its pupils. Appropriate links are maintained with outside support agencies so that specific advice is readily available to the school.
48. Satisfactory health and safety systems are in place and staff follow set procedures. The headteacher liaises weekly with the caretaker to ensure the school environment is well maintained and to discuss any health and safety concerns. Currently, the governing body does not take a particularly active role in monitoring aspects of health and safety in the school and this area could be improved. Emergency evacuation drills take place regularly and care is taken to ensure medicines are stored safely. Staff are particularly well aware of any pupils with serious or mild health and dietary needs and their photographs are on display in appropriate areas so that instant support can be provided. The overall care of pupils with medical problems is a good feature of school life.
49. Road access to the school can be severely congested at the start and end of the day. Parents and residents who live nearby have expressed concerns about this. The school has, therefore, adopted a new initiative, the 'Walking Bus', funded by the local authority. This is a great success and enables parents to collect their children from the nearby village hall, where parking provision is more generous. Children

walk to and from the hall each morning and evening, dressed in reflective jackets and accompanied by two adults who wait with them until they are collected. This enterprising scheme has rightly attracted environmental awards and is now a model for others in the county. During the inspection, the school crossing patrol officer was ill and the headteacher took instant precautions to ensure children were safe as they arrived and departed.

50. Effective systems are in place to ensure pupils behave well. Staff react consistently to any behavioural issues and routinely use positive strategies to reinforce examples of good behaviour. This ensures that all pupils have a very clear understanding of what is an acceptable response in school. As a result of such consistency, the school is an orderly community where pupils are familiar with the expectations staff have of them. The positive impact of this behaviour strategy is apparent in the dining hall, where children mix happily, in the playground, and during assemblies, where their behaviour is exemplary, and they listen with great respect to the contributions of others. The school maintains a very clear stance on any matters related to bullying and this is well understood by parents and children. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting stated that they had no experience of any incidents of bullying and discussions with pupils confirmed this to be currently the case. The school has an effective approach towards promoting racial harmony.
51. Good procedures are in place to monitor and promote pupils' regular attendance in school. These help maintain the school's above average rates of attendance. Registers are carefully completed and weekly data is collated by the well organised administrative staff, to ensure a close watch is kept on any instances of absence. Effective procedures are established to record any latecomers, of whom there are few.
52. Staff know their pupils well and offer them effective guidance and support in all aspects of their educational and personal development. More is now being done to identify and support pupils who are gifted or particularly able and talented. Pupils are encouraged to attend booster classes in some subjects and to participate in a good range of extra-curricular activities. These help them to progress and mature as individuals. Termly staff meetings ensure pupils with particular needs are carefully monitored. Regular targets are established for pupils to guide their learning and most have a clear idea of what these are and where they can be found. The tracking and recording of pupils' personal development is mostly informal; written assessments usually only occur in end-of-year reports to parents. The whole school celebrates pupils' personal achievements and successes in weekly assemblies. Parents agree that the school is helping their children to become more mature and that staff have high expectations of them.
53. The school has very good assessment procedures for those of its pupils with special educational needs. It recognises the importance of early identification of such children and strong links are then made between the teachers involved and the pupils' home. Teacher assessments are supported well by a good variety of English and mathematics group and individual tests. Very good use is made of the expertise of psychologists, speech therapists and other outside agencies to assess these pupils' needs and to measure their progress. A new and valuable innovation is the involvement of pupils in drawing up their own individual educational plans (IEPs), together with presence at the regular review meetings. This enables them to become much more aware themselves of any progress they are making and the targets set for them.

54. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are good. This indicates that the school has at least maintained standards in this area since the previous inspection when assessment procedures were judged as effective. The school meets statutory requirements for assessment procedures at the end of Years 2 and 6. Very good assessment procedures are in place for English, mathematics and science. Teachers track the progress of each pupil well and make good use of this information to set new learning objectives. These are pasted directly into pupils' books and help them to know and 'own' their targets and provide them with a good understanding of how well they are doing.
55. Good assessment procedures are in place in the nursery and reception classes. Teachers in both classes use a broadly similar approach mainly through recorded observations of work done during activities and when talking with children. The children's development is tracked against the six areas of learning and this provides a good level of consistency across the Foundation Stage. More collaborative planning could strengthen the procedures still further and this is an area where a co-ordinator's overview of what actually occurs would be helpful.
56. Procedures for assessing and recording progress in other subjects are of a similar nature and level to those seen in most schools. An exception to this is in music. This subject is taught solely by the headteacher and visiting music staff, and satisfactory records are maintained. However, because class teachers have such limited involvement in the teaching of this subject, they do not have an up-to-date knowledge of how well individual pupils are doing and how best to support them in the everyday setting of the classroom. Whilst assessment procedures in subjects like history and geography are good, other subjects such as physical education and design and technology have something of a fragmented approach towards assessment and improvements could be made.
57. Lessons are evaluated on a regular basis and within these evaluations, teachers record how well individuals or groups of pupils are doing. In addition, teachers keep their own on-going records containing information from standardised tests and regular assessments in English, mathematics and science.
58. Very good use is made of the results of assessment. This provides teachers with information on the next steps in learning for all pupils and is consistently and successfully integrated into lesson planning. This also indicates a significant improvement since the previous inspection when the use of assessment to inform planning, particularly in ensuring the progress of higher ability pupils, was a key issue. Assessment information is also used very effectively to identify pupils for additional provision in areas such as literacy and numeracy and also forms the basis of the 'setting' arrangements in mathematics for pupils in Years 3 to 6. The quality of marking of pupils' work is very good in most classes and provides pupils with very clear information on how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve their work further.
59. The monitoring of the academic progress of individuals and groups of pupils is very good. The school makes very effective use of computerised assessment systems. Assessment results for individual pupils and year groups are carefully analysed to track the progress being made and to set future targets. The school also uses assessment information to analyse any differences between the attainment of boys and girls and takes appropriate action. The information from the analysis of assessments is also used very effectively to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision and to set targets for improvement through the School Development Plan.

For example, last year the school identified a relative weakness in spelling across the school and took immediate action to remedy this through additional resources.

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

60. Parents and carers expressed great satisfaction with the school, both at the meeting held before the inspection and also in response to their questionnaires. In particular, they are pleased their children enjoy school so much and feel they are becoming increasingly mature. Parents report that the teaching is good and helps their children to make good progress. They also value the leadership and management of the school and the commitment of staff. Inspection findings confirm their positive views.
61. Some parents express concern about the amount of information they are given as to how well their children are getting on at school. A relatively small number are also unhappy with the quantity of homework given to children, the range of available extra-curricular activities and the way the school works with parents.
62. Inspection evidence shows that a very good range of extra-curricular activities is provided and this is helping many children to become more self-confident and to experience a range of new social settings. Although homework is not the highest priority in school, pupils are encouraged to complete regular literacy and numeracy activities at home and to undertake some independent research to support their topic work. This mirrors the expectations found in many similar schools. There is considerable effort made within the school to work effectively with parents although, at times, parents are not always clear about arrangements as to what is occurring or how best to help. The headteacher accepts the need to revisit a few issues, such as the nature of parents' meetings, to ensure all parents understand what is happening. Written and verbal feedback to parents generally offers a good overview of children's progress and areas for development.
63. Another area of concern raised by parents is the quality of school meals. Inspectors looked at these during the course of the week and sampled the menus. Records of previous weeks' menus show an acceptable level of choice, including a daily vegetarian option, milk, fruit and water. The cook reports to her management team at regular intervals about the uptake of different menus. During the inspection, inspectors ate with pupils who expressed satisfaction with the meals and described which meals they preferred. More vegetarian dishes are being introduced but few of the children choose these at present. There may well be occasions in the past when parents have been justified in their criticism of the overall quality of meals and the school is anxious to put this matter right. It tries to encourage healthy eating by offering fruit and milk for younger pupils during the day.
64. The school provides good quality information for parents and most feel that they know what is happening in and around school. The newly combined school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents provides correct statutory information. However, the content lacks real celebration by the governing body of the many successes enjoyed by the school and does not reflect, for example, its own busy agenda. Newsletters are sent home as required and although brief, usually contain all the necessary details for parents.
65. Notice boards in the entrance halls provide useful information for parents about school events. The nursery notice board contains curriculum information about the topics children are covering during the term, along with a brief description of each area of learning. A brief overview of the primary curriculum is also included in the

prospectus / annual report. Staff encourage pupils to maintain their own informal record of their achievements by bringing in files from home, in which they can keep any awards or certificates they receive. Parents are welcome at the celebratory weekly assemblies, where staff and pupils recognise individual achievements.

66. Several parents express some confusion about the frequency and function of parents' meetings. A few felt they could only attend some of these if they had concerns about their child's progress. In fact, the school welcomes all parents to each termly meeting so they may look at their children's work and speak to teachers. This however, needs clarifying and reiterating as necessary. The written end-of-year reports on pupils are of satisfactory quality and provide parents with a sound overview of their children's progress. Evaluative comments concerning progress in English, mathematics and science are very useful. Reports are individualised and provide targets for pupils to work towards. Many of the comments in other subjects of the curriculum are rather bland and merely indicate areas of study covered, rather than levels of expertise reached by the pupils.
67. Parents of nursery children do not receive a written report at the end of the year. Instead, they share the assessments made by staff on an overview sheet that covers each area of learning. They then participate in an informal discussion about their children's progress. They also value the individual 'scrapbooks', compiled by staff, that contain a pictorial record of their children's progress. Staff react well to any questions raised by parents.
68. Parents make a very good contribution to the life of the school and also to their children's learning. Most parents sign and return the Home School Agreement and keep their side of the agreement in several ways. They make sure their children attend school regularly and on time, encourage them to complete and hand in any homework set and actively support the school's behaviour policy. This ensures that parents uphold the positive strategies adopted by the school and children receive the same messages when at home.
69. A small, highly committed group of parents help to organise the Parents' Association and much valuable fundraising takes place. In the past this has helped to provide, in part, very effective learning resources such as the ICT suite which makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning. A number of parents participate in the recently introduced and successful 'Story Sack' scheme, making the sacks and helping to run the loan scheme. The sacks are enabling the parents of younger children to have a 'hands on' approach to supporting their children's basic literacy and numeracy skills whilst at home. 'Story Sacks' are also of benefit to community members in organisations such as the Pram Club, mother and toddler groups and local child minders.
70. Another group of parents have undertaken specific training to assist class teachers with reading in the school. They listen to pupils read each week and offer very good levels of support, ensuring pupils make very good progress with their reading. For instance, one parent listened to a girl read from her book and, because her target was to improve her attention to punctuation, the adult was careful to point out how she should respond to an exclamation mark when reading. She was encouraged to raise her voice in order to show surprise or shock. Such targeted support clearly helped the pupil to make specific gains in her reading skills. Many parents are also actively involved in the extra-curricular activities offered by the school. Some parents help regularly with sports or the art club whilst another parent is an active member of

the brass band, coming in several times each week to support pupils and the headteacher in their efforts.

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

71. The leadership and management of the school are good. They are pivotal to its continued growth and development. The school is well led by an experienced headteacher who has come to know the changing needs of the school over many years. Together with others, he has a clear sense of vision and provides good educational guidance and direction. There have been considerable improvements in the management of staff, the curriculum and the monitoring of school performance since the previous inspection. The headteacher has continued to develop a strong team ethos and ensures that staff and governors have good ownership of their various responsibilities, whilst maintaining a clear, whole school commitment to raising standards and establishing challenging targets for the future. The aims of the school are well met and its mission statement 'We work, achieve and succeed together' is central to its everyday work and procedures.
72. The role of the subject co-ordinators has been developed well since the previous inspection. The actual impact of their work on pupils' standards varies according to the experience of the subject leader and the opportunities they have been given to develop their subjects across the school. Where a particular subject such as mathematics or science has been made a staff focus or school priority, then the influence of the co-ordinator has sometimes been far reaching. All co-ordinators carry out annual audits as a means of raising priorities in their own subjects. The school has also developed a regular cycle of subject review. This ensures each area is examined in turn, its policy updated and the co-ordinator released from class duties in order to monitor standards and the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. Teachers' planning and the work pupils complete are also subject to regular scrutiny. Within many subjects, the co-ordinator has compiled a useful portfolio of pupils' work that has been carefully analysed as to the typical standards anticipated from pupils of different ability in each year group. The work done in art and design and in design and technology, for example, has strengthened these subjects in the curriculum from the relatively weak position described during the previous inspection.
73. The governing body meets statutory requirements and makes a good contribution to the life of the school. Together with the headteacher and staff, governors have helped create a solid platform for the school's future. The governing body meets regularly and has established a sound range of working committees designed to carry out much of its routine work in an efficient manner. These committees have separate chairpersons and have established clear terms of reference for their individual meetings. Several governors have strong links with particular subjects and build up their own expertise as to what is expected in the curriculum. Their influence on strategic and school development planning, whilst satisfactory, could be usefully strengthened. Statutory governor appointments are in place for areas such as literacy, performance management and special educational needs. Governors have particularly strong links on matters of finance and the future development of the site. As a hard working and committed group, they have a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and ensure that its aims are well met.
74. The management of special educational needs is good. The special needs register is comprehensive and regularly reviewed. Staff are given appropriate guidance in writing individual education plans and these are generally of good quality. Every effort



is made to ensure that procedures are followed according to the Code of Practice and that effective systems are in place to track and evaluate pupils' progress across the school. The leadership of the Foundation Stage, whilst satisfactory overall, is in need of some clarification and a more cohesive approach in order to maximise the impact of the exciting new developments that the school is envisaging. Currently, there is some danger that the two classes could act independently at a time when the Foundation Stage should be viewed and planned for as a whole.

75. Over the past few years, the school has become much more evaluative about its past and present performance. The monitoring of teaching and learning and taking effective action to improve performance have become strengths of management and helped to raise pupils' standards to their present levels. The school's systems for self-review are very thorough and supported by LEA personnel. The latest measures for assessing teacher and headteacher performance have been integrated satisfactorily. The impact of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has been carefully analysed. The annual school development plan is a well produced working document and gives an accurate assessment of future areas for growth. The plan makes appropriate links with available finance and contains clear statements about where responsibilities lie, together with how the school will evaluate its future developments and progress. The action taken to meet the school's declared priorities and current targets is good and this is a school that has shown it has the capacity to improve still further.
76. The finances of the school are well administered and monitored by the headteacher, finance officer, governors and school secretary. The most recent school audit showed that appropriate financial systems and procedures are in place. Grants are used and monitored correctly. The high under spend figure carried into the current financial year is almost entirely earmarked for the school's contribution towards its new ICT suite. The school gives good value for money. Good links are made between the annual budget and the priorities expressed in the school development plan. The school is well aware of the need to gain the best value it can when purchasing resources and services on an annual basis. Particularly good value has been achieved from the introduction of an additional, part-time teacher in the junior age groups and from the often very good work offered by support assistants.
77. Several key changes have occurred recently within the school's administrative team but nevertheless, the office is run smoothly and effectively. Currently, the school's senior management team comprises only headteacher and deputy and there is scope for extending this into a larger group sometime in the future. Staff development and training are satisfactory. The accommodation is satisfactory overall for the needs of the pupils although teaching space in some areas is rather limited. However, the main accommodation is bright and welcoming and staff ensure that pupils' displayed work is valued and used well to encourage further learning. The outdoor provision is satisfactory but during the winter months when grassed areas are not available, the lack of playground space can pose some problems. The school lacks a large space for a centralised library but overcomes this potential difficulty well by creating well stocked classroom libraries and stores of books in several small, but easily accessed areas. The relatively new ICT suite is a very good resource and is already impacting well on standards. This, and the school's wider use of computer technology, is good. The quality of learning resources is good overall, with some particular strengths in the provision for science, English, religious education and music.

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

78. In order to build on the already good quality of education in the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

(a) **Improve the provision made for the pupils' spiritual development by:**

- giving them more opportunities to explore values and beliefs and the way these can impact on peoples' lives;
- giving them the opportunity to understand and reflect on human feelings and emotions;
- using the daily act of worship and the entire curriculum to promote reflection, self-awareness and a deepening perception of the world around, including the things pupils cannot see;
- encouraging teaching styles that give pupils time to value their own ideas and concerns.

(paragraph 42)

(b) **Improve the leadership and management of the Foundation Stage by:**

- providing a more detailed overview as to the roles and responsibilities involved in the management and teaching of young children;
- ensuring there is regular, joint and systematic planning between all nursery and reception staff;
- creating more opportunities for monitoring and evaluating Foundation Stage practice;
- developing clear procedures for overseeing long-term strategic planning and the management of change.

(paragraphs 22, 35, 74, 81 and 84)

**In addition to the above, the school should consider adding to its post-inspection plan:**

- Improve the teaching of music for the future by involving more class teachers in everyday activities and practice.

(paragraphs 22, 24, 31, 162 and 167)

*Note: The school is aware of the need to develop these areas further and has already begun the process of improvement.*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	47
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	17

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	15	24	8	0	0	0
Percentage	0	32	51	17	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 two percentage points.

### 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)	22	183
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	10

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	21

#### English as an additional language

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

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.6
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	13	12	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	13	13
	Girls	11	12	11
	Total	24	25	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (96)	100 (96)	96 (92)
	National	84 (84)	86 (91)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	13	13
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	24	24	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (96)	96 (88)	96 (96)
	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	12	14	26

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	11	11
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	26	25	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	100 (100)	96 (95)	96 (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	11	12
	Girls	14	13	14
	Total	25	24	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	96 (91)	92 (95)	100 (100)
	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	180	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	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 (no returns etc)	34	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: Y R – Y 6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Average class size	30

#### **Education support staff: Y R – Y 6**

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	64

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	44
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	441794
Total expenditure	432664
Expenditure per pupil	2131
Balance brought forward from previous year	28429
Balance carried forward to next year	37559

Number of pupils per FTE adult	44
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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	222
Number of questionnaires returned	105

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57	38	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	46	2	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	43	2	0	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	45	10	3	5
The teaching is good.	63	34	3	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	46	21	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	23	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	39	1	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	35	50	10	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	47	47	6	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	38	4	1	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	50	10	2	5

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**

79. Provision for children in the nursery and reception classes is good. This indicates an improvement since the previous inspection when provision was satisfactory. At the time of the most recent inspection, forty-four children attended the nursery on a part-time basis. Twenty-nine children attended full-time in the reception class. Children are admitted to the nursery mainly from Pittington itself, with others coming from surrounding villages. At the end of their time in nursery, the majority of children transfer to the school's reception class but some move on to other schools. The school's reception class is often over-subscribed.
80. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with that expected for the age of the children but generally contains a wide range of abilities. All children achieve well during their time in both the nursery and reception classes, mainly because of the good quality of provision, including teaching. As a result, by the end of the reception year, attainment in personal development, mathematics, speaking and listening, reading, writing, and knowledge and understanding of the world is on course to be above the national expectations for children of this age. Higher ability children in the reception class have already attained the early learning goals in reading, writing and number knowledge and are now working towards National Curriculum targets. This indicates a significant improvement since the previous inspection, when standards were broadly in line with expectations. Attainment in creative and physical development is similar to that seen in most other schools. Good provision is made for children with special learning needs, particularly in the level of support in lessons. As a result, they make good progress.
81. The quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection but is now good. Particular strengths lie in the well established routines, very good relationships, high expectations of behaviour and basic skills teaching. Planning makes good provision for children to attain the expected targets in all six areas of learning. However, nursery and reception provision is planned for separately. This does not provide a sufficiently shared and detailed plan of what children are to learn across the whole of the Foundation Stage or ensure there is the most effective transition of children between the two phases. Elements of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are introduced appropriately into the reception class during the year. Activities in lessons are interesting and ensure a good level of challenge. Assessment is rigorous. Teachers and support staff have a clear knowledge of what each child has learned. Information from assessment is used well to make decisions about the next steps in learning. Teachers and support staff in both classes work very successfully together and this contributes well to the good achievement of the children.
82. Positive links are established between the school and parents. As a result, the children settle quickly into the daily routines. Parents are provided with good opportunities to visit and find out about the school before their children are admitted. They are welcome to talk with staff about their children on a daily basis and more formal meetings are offered during the year to discuss children's progress. Annual written reports for parents of children in the reception class provide clear information. Parents are given good opportunities to be involved in their children's



learning particularly through working alongside teachers in lessons and helping their children develop reading skills at home.

83. The accommodation for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. In the nursery and reception classrooms it is bright and attractive. The outdoor learning environment provides a good amount of hard surface and grassed space. There is an option for reception children to use this area whenever it is available, but it is currently accessible only through the nursery classroom. The school has well documented plans in place to improve the outdoor learning environment for all children in the Foundation Stage and to promote links with the wider community, including a parent and toddler group. Teachers and support staff make effective use of a wide range of resources that help promote learning. These are well organised and accessible to the children and, as a result, many are learning to take responsibility for collecting things and putting them away in the right place.
84. The management of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. However, currently there is no co-ordinator with overall responsibility for monitoring the quality of provision and the management of strategic planning for change. The education of young children is entering an exciting phase in the school and requires co-ordinated leadership to ensure that changes and initiatives are carefully monitored, so that they will have the most beneficial impact on children's learning.

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

85. By the end of the reception year, most children are on course to achieve the early learning goals in this area and many are likely to exceed them. Standards are higher than seen in the majority of schools.
86. Teaching in this area of learning is very good. The children come into school happily. Routines are clear and children know what is expected of them. Behaviour is good and relationships are positive. The children are confident when choosing which activity they would like to do. They respond well in class and group discussion time and have learned to listen to others and wait their turn to speak. During one lesson taken in the school hall, the children in the nursery developed good skills in co-operating with others. They learned to be a member of a large group by using the giant 'parachute' to rock a toy teddy bear to sleep and then, together, lift him high into the air to wake him up.
87. Planned activities provide good opportunities for children to learn to work independently and as a result, they are developing good skills in concentration. During literacy and numeracy lessons in the reception class, the children concentrated hard on what they were asked to do without the need for constant adult supervision. Many are developing an awareness of the need to follow rules. In a mathematics 'hopscotch' game in the nursery, they listened attentively as the game was explained and carefully followed what was asked of them. The behaviour of a small number of children in the reception class was uncharacteristically silly during a physical education lesson because expectations of behaviour were not made sufficiently clear by the teacher.

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

88. By the end of the reception year, most children are on course to achieve, and many are likely to exceed, the early learning goals in this area. Standards are above expectations.

89. Teaching in this area of learning is good and is particularly strong in the teaching of basic skills, such as those in literacy and numeracy. Many opportunities are planned and taken to promote good oral language. The children showed good skills in listening to others during circle time in the nursery and were confident when telling the rest of the class why they had been given a sticker. Teachers and support adults are skilled in encouraging children to talk in a range of situations. They support and develop language by talking through with children what they are doing, ensuring new and key words are introduced. As a result, the children achieve well in using their speaking skills both to communicate with others and to help them in thinking through their ideas. During a clay-modelling activity in the nursery, skilful questioning encouraged the children to comment on what they were doing, 'Look! I'm putting a head on my horse', and to talk about related experiences, such as 'I've got lots of snowdrops in my garden at home.'
90. Children in the nursery enjoy listening to stories. During one story session, they listened enthralled and joined in with the story of, 'The Little Old Lady Who Wasn't Afraid Of Anything.' In both nursery and reception, children are provided with a stimulating literacy environment where early reading and writing skills are planned into many activities. This good provision results in children enjoying looking at books and listening to stories from an early age. A particular strength is found in the very good quality 'Story Sacks' made by parents. These provide a high quality and exciting resource for young children. In the reception class, the emphasis on the continued development of early reading skills results in the majority of children reading successfully the first books in the reading scheme. Most children read well for their age and can identify the letters and the sounds that make up individual words.
91. Children make good progress in developing writing skills. Those in the nursery are beginning to make marks on paper to represent writing and, by the beginning of the reception year, some are beginning to write letter shapes, write familiar words and attempt to write their own names. The Literacy Strategy is used very effectively for children in the reception class to build on previous learning. As a result, most children write words and simple sentences independently and have a good knowledge of letter sounds, which they use effectively to help their reading and writing. By the time they are in the reception class, most children hold a pencil correctly and letter formation is legible.

### **Mathematical development**

92. Most children are on course to achieve, and a significant minority is likely to exceed, the expected targets in mathematical development by the end of the reception year. Teaching in this area is good and children achieve well, particularly when learning about number. The large majority of nursery children have reached the level expected of them and some exceed expectations. A good variety of activities are planned and these are matched well to the children's learning needs, with many opportunities being taken to promote mathematical development. Games such as hopscotch reinforce the children's number knowledge and provide good opportunities for them to follow the rules of a game. Many count objects reliably to five and some to higher numbers; most children count out loud to 10 and beyond and backwards from ten to zero.
93. Reception children count accurately to well beyond twenty. Well focused planning based on the National Numeracy Strategy for children in their reception year ensures that all abilities are appropriately challenged. As a result, children are confident with

addition of number at their own level of learning, whilst higher attaining children make accurate use of their number skills to subtract from ten. Children in the reception class know the names of several shapes and identify them correctly. Some recognise why they are different the different and can compare one shape with another.

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

94. Teaching is good in this area. By the end of the reception year, most children are likely to meet or exceed the expectations in all aspects of this area of learning. This is because many opportunities are provided and adults focus on developing key language and its use in helping the children to talk about what they know and understand.
95. Children in the nursery class working independently on the computers are already able to use a mouse to click on and drag icons on screen. They know that the class guinea pigs like to eat broccoli, need water to drink and sleep in the 'dry grass.'
96. Children in the reception class develop a good understanding of the care of animals through the carefully set up veterinary surgery role play area. The children's knowledge is systematically built up through activities, such as an 'animals and their young' dice game led by a parent helper.

### **Physical development**

97. Teaching in this area of learning is satisfactory. Most children are likely to achieve the expected learning goals in this area, including activities such as handwriting and the use of scissors that require more precise actions. Adults in the nursery carefully observe and work with the children in the outdoor learning area. As a result, the children are learning to take care of each other's safety and develop the control skills expected of children of this age as they ride wheeled toys around the track and play collaboratively in the large sand play area. Children in the reception classes have access to the school hall for a range of physical activities, as well as facilities for outside play. Because warm-up activities are a regular and a valuable part of lessons, children develop a good awareness of the effect of exercise on the body. During one lesson, they developed satisfactory control by moving around the hall in different directions and by using their bodies in various ways to make stretched and curled shapes.

### **Creative development**

98. The quality of teaching in this area of learning is satisfactory and as a result, most children are likely to attain the standards expected by the end of reception. Carefully planned activities ensure a balance is made between independent learning where children are able to make choices for themselves and where adult support is used to help promote basic skills. For example, children in the nursery were amazed as the string they had painted and placed inside a folded piece of paper, made a symmetrical pattern as they pulled the string out and then opened the paper to see the results.
99. Children in the reception class are currently being introduced to playing the recorder. This is taught as a class lesson by a visiting music teacher and, although the children are learning the basics of holding and blowing a recorder, this approach has

limited creative value as a whole class activity. More regular and a greater variety of musical activities would be more beneficial.

100. Role play areas provide satisfactory opportunities for the children to develop social, imaginative and communication skills. Children in the nursery become doctors and nurses in the 'hospital', although there are sometimes too many children 'attending appointments' at one time and this makes it difficult for the supervising adult to focus on the needs of individual children. They make sparkly winter pictures using a range of materials and have drawn sensitive pictures of snowdrops and aconites following a winter walk to the local church. In the reception class, good links are made with art and the topic on birds. Examples of work on display indicate that the children are developing satisfactory observational skills, as they paint pictures of different birds and make careful drawings of feathers. Resources are easily accessed and provide a good choice. Children's work is valued and teachers ensure that the children's work is attractively displayed.

## **ENGLISH**

101. Pupils' standards in all aspects of English are well above average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Girls and boys achieve equally well and most make very good progress over time. Standards are significantly higher than those reported during the previous inspection, particularly in writing and reading. These are reflected in the school's latest national test results, as well as the trend in English results over time. High achievers in the subject do particularly well, with a high proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels for their age by the time they are seven and eleven years, respectively.
102. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and a significant strength of the subject, helping pupils to achieve very well over time. English is taught to a consistently high level and most pupils progress rapidly in a wide range of aspects. Lessons are delivered at a good pace, maintaining high levels of pupil interest and concentration. Teachers' good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for literacy is very evident. Clear instructions allow pupils to focus on the task in hand resulting in little time being wasted. The Literacy Strategy has been very well implemented and has impacted significantly on the organisation of the subject and the quality of learning pupils receive. It has, for example, provided a systematic approach to teaching reading, punctuation, grammar and spelling, all areas where most pupils do well. The use of specialised programmes, such as Early Learning Support and Additional Literacy Support, has worked effectively as a means of support for pupils who have not made the expected levels of progress during routine lessons.
103. The English curriculum is very well planned and closely monitored. Pupils' individual skills are taught and targeted well and their progress recorded carefully. The close assessment of individual and group progress has led to a careful review of planning. Group work within the lesson is usually very helpful to the needs of individual pupils and shows a high level of commitment by teachers and pupils to achieving the targets set. Where a group is targeted by the teacher, pupils become particularly enthusiastic and the teacher has to work hard when acting as a scribe in order to keep up with all their suggestions.
104. Standards of speaking and listening are well above those expected nationally for pupils by the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils are attentive and listen to instructions, contributing fully to whole class discussions. They are provided with a good range of opportunities for constructive talking and this is also encouraged by the good quality

questioning skills of the teacher. Pupils are generally articulate and polite when speaking to adults and other pupils. The school provides a number of opportunities for children to use these skills, such as in assemblies and school concerts. In several lessons, pupils were seen to share their views with confidence and had the ability to explain exactly what they were doing in their everyday work.

105. Standards in reading are very good throughout the school. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 benefit from good quality phonics teaching that provides them with the confidence to read unfamiliar words. A genuine love of books is reflected in the pupils' willingness to use class and school libraries. Of a group of representative pupils being interviewed from Years 2 and 6, all were articulate, expressive readers for their age, who responded to grammar and characterisations within the texts read. Many are also members of local libraries. They find little trouble in recalling their favourite books and authors. Older pupils are adept at using non-fiction books for research and use techniques such as skimming and scanning effectively enough. The oldest pupils recognise different forms of published writing and are able to use their own skills of inference and deduction. The school's use of reading through shared books is an effective way of ensuring younger pupils make rapid progress.
106. Parental involvement is significant in supporting reading standards throughout the school. The very popular 'Story Sack' initiative, which is organised by parents, is used regularly and effectively to extend reading skills as well as for an enjoyment of reading. Weekly homework is set with spelling and reading books going home. These books are regularly changed and annotated reflecting the strong links between home and school.
107. Writing standards are very good throughout the school. There are opportunities for pupils in all year groups to write to a wide range of audience and for different purposes. The children use narrative and non-narrative forms equally well. Displays around the school showed a wide range of writing styles and forms. The Young Letter Writers Competition, fantasy setting poems and infants producing a brochure for someone who was visiting Dublin are just some of the many good examples on display.
108. Pupils are taught the basic rules of writing in a systematic way and to very good effect. Word and sentence level work are well planned for with a wide number of examples on display providing useful points of reference. As part of their writing tasks, pupils sometimes use the computers to draft and re-draft their work but this could be usefully extended. Older pupils, in particular, frequently work independently and are self motivated. They make good use of aids such as dictionaries, thesauruses, word lists and glossaries to support their ideas. Good opportunities are given for collaborative writing. One lesson in the ICT suite saw infant pupils working on the computers using the 'Clicker' program to help their sentence structures. Pupils have a pride in their work and presentation is good. Infant pupils use a clear legible form of print that develops into a neat cursive style by the end of Year 6. Writing is used effectively not only to support the development of pupils' English standards, but it is also used across the wider curriculum to good effect. Different styles of imaginative and factual writing are used well to illustrate pupils' knowledge in subjects such as history and religious education.
109. The quality of assessment is very good. A range of data is studied, including statutory test results, to identify weakness and celebrate strengths in the subject. The individual pupil's progress is also carefully monitored, recorded and reported upon. This allows teachers to modify their planning to tailor the needs of the pupils.

The school is currently trialling the 'Targeteers' scheme that supports individual target setting and which is recorded in individual books. The quality of teachers' marking is consistently good and very supportive. It helps pupils recognise the progress they have made and also helps them identify their next target. This attention to detail has ensured that pupil's progress is maintained and problems addressed.

110. The school also monitors its coverage of the subject well. The supporting scheme of work that has been adopted is closely adhered to and individual lessons are monitored by the staff as to its success. Such close monitoring has allowed the school to identify and correct any perceived weakness. For example, the identification of a weakness in spelling led staff in reception to 2 to introduce the 'Jolly Phonics' programme. This has resulted in an improvement, with words usually being spelt correctly, or at least a logical phonetically based guess being made by the writer.
111. Higher attaining pupils are much better targeted than before. Most are given challenging activities that stretch both their imagination and techniques. Pupils with learning difficulties make very good progress. Many have individual educational programmes of work that are followed well and are closely monitored and regularly reviewed. The quality of support staff is good in English and they provide an important contribution towards the pupils' progress. At every opportunity, staff try to involve pupils of all abilities in whole class work. Pupils with special educational needs are encouraged frequently to contribute to class discussions and their responses listened to. There are a number of well established groups within the school supporting the needs of such pupils, including the Additional Literacy Scheme, a nationally recommended 'catch up' programme.
112. The school has a new subject co-ordinator who, at this time, is continuing the good work that has been done since the school adopted and implemented the National Literacy Strategy. There is a sound action plan in place alongside a number of supportive policies, such as homework, differentiation, library and marking by teachers. There is a need to develop further in-service training programme for the future. A file recording, levelling and celebrating pupils work also needs to be developed further.
113. The quality of resources has improved steadily since the previous inspection and is now good. The school now has a number of good, classroom based, fictional libraries and a colour coded central reference library for each age group. The ICT suite and an increased number of computers have improved the opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their literacy work. The development of cross-curricular links can now be further developed. In addition, there is evidence of the computers starting to provide an additional dimension to research and being used as a reference tool, for example, when pupils in Years 5 and 6 use non-fiction books as part of their project on the Second World War.

## **MATHEMATICS**

114. By the end of Year 2, standards in mathematics are above average. By the end of Year 6, standards are well above average. Boys and girls achieve similar standards and make comparable rates of progress. This represents a very good improvement over the previous inspection, when attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 was average. The rise in standards is due to better teaching, particularly in the quality of explanations and questioning. More attention is also paid to mental mathematics and

teachers have higher expectations, particularly of the higher attaining pupils. The Numeracy Strategy is also taught well. Pupils' progress is systematically tracked by means of clear assessment and also by effective setting procedures in Years 3 to 6. Very clear help and guidance is given to higher attaining pupils and any with special educational needs enabling most to make very good progress. Mathematics is a good subject to illustrate the inclusive nature of the school.

115. The results of national tests for pupils at the end of Years 2 and 6 have improved at a faster rate in this school than they have nationally. In the most recent tests, the overall performance in mathematics was above average for Year 2 pupils at both the expected and higher level. It was very high for Year 6 pupils. Pupils also scored well in relation to those from similar schools. The school's decision to provide greater challenge for the more able and to organise pupils into groups based on current attainment levels, regardless of age, has produced a rich dividend.
116. Most pupils in Year 2 are currently on track to reach at least the expected level for their age, with a higher proportion than normally found progressing towards and beyond this. Although a small number of pupils in Year 2 are having difficulty working at the higher level, this represents good achievement overall, set against their standards when they were five-years-old. The great majority of current Year 6 pupils have a very good grounding in mathematical skills. Most are on course to achieve the expected level for their age and the proportion demonstrating examples of higher-level work is well above that found in many schools. This again represents very good progress and achievement from the results the same pupils gained as 7-year-olds.
117. Many Year 2 pupils are very competent in sequencing numbers and developing a secure sense of number patterns and place value. They can halve and double numbers accurately and quickly. Most are confident when counting in twos and tens and use this knowledge, together with division, to calculate answers and solve simple problems. More able pupils calculate more complex numbers, for instance  $89 - 53 = 36$  and  $26 + 13 = 39$ , before moving quickly on to carrying a ten in order to calculate  $35 + 27 = 62$ . Pupils use mathematical language confidently, such as 'less than' and 'not less than', as they sort and classify with the help of specially devised diagrams. Pupils accurately apply these skills to simple problem solving activities. Many have a good appreciation of the properties of two-dimensional shapes. However, their understanding of measurement is not fully developed because they do not systematically estimate the dimensions of objects or parts of the classroom before they measure these particular lengths and distances. Children collect information and present it in logical form through the use of Venn diagrams. This is particularly effective in their analysis of scientific investigations when they classify objects according to their properties or collect a set of objects that conduct electricity.
118. Pupils in Year 6 have a very good grasp of place value and of complex number operations. Their secure and confident knowledge of number bonds and times tables gives them good skills in mental mathematics. They accurately identify number sequences during their mathematical investigations. For instance, they calculate the pattern of triangular numbers and complete investigations using negative numbers. More able pupils solve algebraic problems, for instance  $3n - 2 = 298$  and  $36/p = 9$ . They understand the terms 'median' and 'mode' and are developing basic competence when analysing statements of probability. However, they do not have sufficient opportunities to apply these techniques to problem solving situations.

119. Higher attaining Year 5 pupils have a good understanding of fractions, decimals and percentages and how these relate to each other. They investigate the qualities of three-dimensional shapes, making out nets before assembling their models.
120. Whilst there are small differences within individual year groups between the overall attainment of boys and girls, the pattern over time shows that this is a reflection of individual abilities or the nature of a cohort as a whole. A strength of the school's approach is the attention given to improving basic number skills. A good example is found in the teaching of multiplication using both 'partitioning techniques' and traditional multiplication methods by multiplying the tens then the units. The organisation within mathematics ensures that groups of pupils with broadly similar abilities are taught together, enabling the teacher to concentrate on similar targets for the entire group. Small groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, receive extra and valuable support. Groups of Year 6 pupils also receive extra help from the subject co-ordinator on a weekly basis. These 'booster' classes run twice weekly, before school and during lunchtimes, and pupils are very keen to attend. Clear mathematical targets have been identified for pupils with special educational needs. This ensures that their progress can be carefully checked and built on in small, meaningful stages.
121. The overall quality of teaching is very good and leads to very good learning throughout the school. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, when teachers did not always have sufficient regard to the previous learning of higher attaining pupils, in particular. The National Numeracy Strategy is well established and teachers are confident in its application. Lessons are well planned and teachers have clear aims for what they want pupils to be able to do by the end of the session. This helps both teachers and pupils to focus on key ideas. It also contributes to the very good progress made in many lessons and the effective gains in knowledge and understanding over the course of a unit or topic.
122. Lessons begin with practice in mental mathematics and most of these sessions are conducted at a brisk pace that captures the pupils' attention and sets a challenging tone for the lesson. Teachers question pupils carefully to help them explain their thinking and to assess their understanding. For instance, in a Year 5 lesson, a pupil is asked to explain how he calculated the two remaining angles of an isosceles triangle when he was given only one angle measurement. Explanations of new work are clear and usually based on very good teacher knowledge of the subject. Very good use is often made of diagrams and models that hold pupils' attention and help them to understand new ideas. The supportive atmosphere and the use of skilled learning support assistants where available, encourages pupils to participate well in discussions and to enjoy their mathematics. Their attitudes to learning are consistently very good in response to the many tasks they are given.
123. Teachers organise lessons well and there is smooth movement between whole class sessions and group or individual tasks. Occasionally, the time given to introductory explanations is too long, causing some children to have difficulty sustaining their concentration. There are different levels of tasks to cater for the range of attainment present. This ensures that pupils' interest is held. For example, a Year 1 pupil is given a task to cut out half a circle in folded paper. When she completes the task she notices the full circle and explains that if the half circle is cut round the edge (perimeter) to the fold it will make a full circle. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and this makes for relaxed, yet rigorous, learning. Good use is made of mathematical vocabulary during explanations and when pupils



are involved in discussions. For instance, when Year 3 children are involved in weighing investigations, the adult interacts well with the pupils, drawing on their ideas and encouraging them to estimate the number of cubes that will balance the pear. They take great care with their investigations, using the balance scales sensibly and carefully to achieve accurate results.

124. Good use is made of information and communication technology to reinforce pupils' learning. Year 6 pupils confidently and skilfully use the mouse to place a screen protractor on to an angle to accurately measure its size. The concluding part of lessons, when the class is brought back together, is managed effectively. Teachers use this time to reinforce key teaching points by explaining further examples to tackle any weaknesses they may have noticed in the group work, to share what different groups have discovered and move pupils' thinking forward. This helps them to consolidate their understanding of the topic.
125. The management of mathematics is very good. The issues for improvement, identified in the previous report, have been addressed effectively. The National Numeracy Strategy is well established and good levels of resources and staff training have been provided. There are very good systems for checking pupils' progress carefully and regularly. Assessments are used in Years 3 to 6 to place pupils into classes based on attainment groups and both national and optional test results are analysed thoroughly to see what aspects of teaching need improvement. The quality of teaching is monitored very effectively and this has contributed to the very good progress made in improving the teaching since the previous inspection.

## **SCIENCE**

126. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 2. This indicates good improvement since the previous inspection when standards were above average. Very good gains have also been made by the end of Year 6. These have improved from satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection to now being well above average.
127. The school has made significant improvements in its science provision and organisation. Greater emphasis has been placed on the areas of scientific enquiry and investigation and evidence shows that teachers ensure that activities help pupils build upon what they have learned earlier. The school has also moved away from an integrated, topic-style approach to now focus more on the units of study outlined in the national science planning guidelines. Last year, the school reorganised the teaching of science in the junior classes from mixed-age to single-age groups and this provides more focus on the needs of each year group. As part of the annual science audit, strategic funding of the subject has ensured that resources provide good support for teaching and learning. Assessment procedures have been improved and pupils' achievements are systematically recorded, monitored and analysed. Assessment information is used very effectively to set challenging targets for pupils to work towards and to identify strengths and weaknesses as part of subject improvement.
128. The sharp focus placed upon investigational science in Years 1 and 2 has resulted in pupils having very secure enquiry skills by the end of Year 2. In both classes, a clear emphasis is placed on the development of pupils' own ideas. Pupils ask sensible scientific questions based firmly on knowledge acquired over time; they make reasonable predictions, test their hypotheses and write independent reports on what they have found out. The pupils' achievements in the Year 2 lesson

observed were remarkable in terms of what had been learned in the space of one hour. By the end of the lesson and as a result of very good planning and organisation of resources, very skilful questioning and many opportunities for creative thinking, the pupils were able to explain the reasons why certain electrical circuits did not work. They made good use of technical language and their growing knowledge of conduction. Many were able to build their own electrical circuits choosing from a range of different materials. Pupils with special learning needs were given very good levels of teacher support and as a result achieved very well.

129. Pupils think very much for themselves in science by the end of Year 6. The work observed in this year group clearly reflected the quality of their efforts since the beginning of the school year. Pupils in all ability groups are very keen to answer the teacher's questions, with their responses demonstrating, for example, a clear understanding of the various elements of forces and how to go about investigating a scientific question. The pupils' mature attitudes meant that they were able to conduct the investigations themselves, working in pairs or small groups and without the need for direct teacher supervision. The teacher was able to concentrate on supporting a group of lower ability pupils and this resulted in this group also making very good progress. They worked out the dimensions of a parachute as part of an investigation into the effects of gravity. Work done over time indicates that the pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills development are well above national expectations across the full range of the science programme of study.
130. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 1 and 2 and good, with many very good features, in Years 3 to 6. Teachers have secure subject knowledge which they impart very effectively in all classes. Investigative skills are taught very well in most classes, although not enough opportunities are provided for pupils in Years 4 and 5 to make their own decisions when investigating scientific problems. This has a tendency to slow down the progress of the most able pupils in particular. Teachers' expectations of presentation and effort are very high and pupils in all classes respond positively. As a result, pupils' workbooks are very well organised and almost always completed on time and to a good or very good standard. In lessons, pupils show good attitudes and work hard. Lessons start on time and proceed at a brisk pace. The quality of teachers' marking is high in most classes and is a significant factor in the well above average standards being achieved. Good use is made of the school's science resources, particularly those to support investigational work.
131. Pupils' literacy skills are developed appropriately as they learn to record their work in a variety of ways, including independent report writing, lists and charts. Although the wider use of mathematics was found in pupils' science books, teachers do not make enough use of the pupils' data handling skills in either mathematics or ICT to record their work, for example, using graphs and interrogating the data.
132. Subject leadership is good. The joint co-ordinators have a very clear understanding of standards, the subject's strengths and weaknesses and priorities for development. Satisfactory opportunities are provided for the co-ordinators to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in order to gain an overview of standards, but this could be further extended to ensure that all pupils have appropriate opportunities for independent investigation and that the marking of pupils' work in all classes matches that of the best practice in the school. A particular strength in leadership and management is the use of the science annual audit to identify priorities for improvement. The subject provides good opportunities for personal development through the wonder of scientific discovery and the many opportunities for pupils to work alongside others. Pupils learn about healthy living

and taking care of themselves. Sex education, drugs awareness and environmental issues are appropriately addressed within the science programme of study. The good resources are well used by both staff and pupils.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

133. Most pupils across the school make satisfactory progress and are on course to attain the standards expected for their age by the end of Years 2 and 6. The provision for the subject and the standards achieved by the pupils have improved considerably since the previous inspection when they were unsatisfactory. Girls and boys have the same subject opportunities and reach broadly similar standards. Pupils with special educational needs require little or no additional support to help them achieve satisfactorily. They make similar progress to others in their classes, as do the few who show early signs of giftedness in the subject.
134. The art curriculum has been revised several times since 1998 and now presents an appropriate range of activities for pupils to explore, practise and develop. There is particularly strong emphasis on the exploration of colour and how this can be represented in different media. Although art is still used well to support and illustrate other subjects such as history, it is now taught as a discrete subject and this has helped to extend pupils' experiences and techniques in art itself.
135. The good art work undertaken by the subject co-ordinator in the reception class is built on well in Year 1. The sketchbooks from this year group show a wide range of techniques being explored including printing with fruit, marbling, sketching from real life and investigating ideas about oneself through 'mark making.' The same year group reach above average standards when making their own bricks from clay. Infant pupils show sound awareness of colour when painting about the topic 'new life.' Some do well with aspects of their spiritual development by drawing various types of lines to reflect their moods and feelings.
136. Although sketchbooks are continued throughout the junior year groups, there is too little emphasis on pencil sketches in the environment or of inanimate objects to be observed and drawn from first hand. Rather too much emphasis is given to picture drawing from memory or imagination, even though such themes clearly have a part to play. Year 3 showed satisfactory observation and technique when producing work on the theme 'from my classroom window' and the same year group painted some detailed faces depicting surprise, anger and sadness. Year 4 pupils reached average standards when exploring patterns in crayon, pastel and paint, linking their art to Egyptian history. Some pupils reached above average standards when looking at the technique of painting using small dots. By the end of Year 6, pupils have explored the role of primary, secondary and tertiary colours and have experienced the possibilities of working in the style of Monet or Matisse.
137. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and good in Year 1. All teachers plan their work to a sound level and make it clear to the pupils at the onset of each lesson what they are expected to learn. Compared with the previous inspection, teachers show sound subject knowledge and use a wide range of resources to motivate the pupils. In a particularly good lesson in Year 1, the teacher built on the pupils' previous experiences well so that they felt a real sense of achievement when making bricks from clay. Their skill in the use of small tools was clearly the result of sustained practice. The pupils' own creative efforts during lessons make a significant contribution towards the progress they make. Most pupils

show delight when showing visitors their finished work in sketchbooks or on display. The teachers' use of available time and support staff is satisfactory.

138. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the subject is now adequately structured and organised to gain positive benefit from the time available. Techniques are built on successfully year on year and the standards pupils reach are assessed and monitored satisfactorily. The subject is led satisfactorily by an experienced co-ordinator who has a secure feel as to the point art has reached and what priorities are needed for its further development. A very good contribution to standards is made by the art club, which is run after school hours and is supported well by the co-ordinator and a parent who is a local artist. Resources have improved and are now are satisfactory. The use of ICT in the development of art techniques is adequate but could be usefully extended.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

139. There has been good and significant improvement in the provision for this subject since the previous inspection and pupils' standards have risen because of the overall progress they now make. By the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils' standards are broadly at the level expected for their age and most pupils achieve satisfactorily. Girls and boys achieve similar standards.
140. The school now uses a nationally recognised scheme of work to provide additional structure to the subject. It organises its infant curriculum on a one-year cycle and its junior curriculum on a two-year cycle. The subject and the pupil's progress are monitored and reported upon to a sound level. Pupils make good progress throughout the infant classes. They use a variety of materials to model, weave mould and bake. Pupils are also familiar with drafting design and evaluating and modifying their work. For instance, there is clear evidence of salt dough sculptures of faces and paper construction work of trams, caravans and tractors that have been carefully glued and painted. Pupils in Year 1 also work with clay. They had rolled patterned and sculpted designs on a brick to be provided with a finish later. In food technology, cross-curricular links with health education had taken place with pupils designing a sandwich and selecting their own healthy filling.
141. The pupils' good progress continues in the junior classes. Pupils produce designs, plans and labelled diagrams prior to construction. For example, different types of stitching were in evidence when soft toys were made in textile work. There were also examples of simple bridge designs and the use of construction kits incorporating electric motors. Some very good Greek masks were created in Year 5, linking pupils' design and technology work to history. In Years 3 and 4, the most able pupils suggested a practical use of a hinge using pneumatics to lift the lid on a rubbish bin.
142. The quality of teaching and learning was good, overall, during observed lessons. Lessons are well planned and prepared with a wide range of suitable materials available to support the activity. The previous week's work is usually revisited and built on. Good quality questioning skills used by staff result in a generally positive response from pupils. Good use of technical vocabulary is evident, such as pivot, spindle and stability, when discussing construction possibilities. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their work and this results in much discussion, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Plans are modified and pupils work together sharing ideas and supporting one another well. Pupils with special educational needs show interest and determination in the subject and are well supported towards achieving as well

as their peers. More able pupils are targeted well although more could be asked of their own initiative away from the direct supervision and ideas of the teacher

143. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory, although the co-ordinator has only been in charge of the subject for a little over a term. The monitoring of subject coverage and of planning is now taking place. The record of pupils' work however, fails to celebrate the quality of work that actually exists around the school. The file contains a number of pieces of work that are not dated, levelled or fully evaluated. This fails to supply staff with first hand evidence as to the quality of work expected or enough information to assist their own monitoring and assessment. In addition, the subject still lacks a rigorous training programme that would help staff with their own skills development and improve teaching still further. Such a programme would also support staff with their own subject knowledge and continue to raise standards within the subject. Since its previous inspection, the school has invested in an appropriate range of resources to support the whole design and technology curriculum. Of the materials and tools available, all are of good quality and sufficient in quantity to support the range of class activities.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

144. Pupils' standards are on course to be above average for their age by the end of Year 2 and to be in line with age-related expectations by the end of Year 6. This is broadly consistent with the picture described during the previous inspection and represents satisfactory improvement in the subject over time. However, standards in the infant years have improved, mainly due to the good quality of teaching and learning and the input of a challenging curriculum. Girls and boys attain broadly average standards and achieve satisfactorily as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs make mainly good progress in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6.
145. In Years 1 and 2, there is good emphasis on understanding the local environment and 'exploring around our school' in Year 1. Pupils achieve well when drawing simple maps to show features in their own locality. The ability to learn about and contrast new areas to that of their own begins well with a much enjoyed study of 'Barnaby Bear goes to Dublin.' Infant pupils also learn to contrast their own area with the fictional Isle of Struay off the northwest coast of Scotland. These good standards continue into Year 2 when pupils follow Barnaby into Brittany. By the end of Year 2, many pupils follow maps to a good level and realise that symbols represent real features and where they are to be found. The most able pupils interpret maps well and give short commentaries as to the scenes they would pass if they were following a real route. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 also make very worthwhile studies of the seaside and introduce a range of ideas as to how their local area can be made safer.
146. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 complete a range of topics over a two-year cycle in order to avoid duplication of material in mixed-age classes. Topics are covered in sufficient depth and pupils reach sound standards in their knowledge and understanding of areas in Britain and overseas. In some lessons, ICT is used to gather new facts. Many pupils build up a sound geographical vocabulary when learning to contrast their village to the nearby city of Durham, or with a remote village in India. A positive feature of much of the work is that many maps and much of the written information are presented by the pupils in their own way, rather than merely completing worksheets. The pupils' work on India, Europe and mountain environments helped develop multicultural awareness from around the world. This work contrasts well

with that done by Year 5 when they study the place of lead mining as part of their residential stay in Teesdale. By the end of Year 6, pupils make detailed studies of mountain regions around the world, the impact of weather and climate on human activity and the life of a river from source to mouth. Knowledge is retained satisfactorily and most pupils know enough about how different settlements originate and develop.

147. Some good teaching was seen in Year 2 and in Year 4 / 5 although the quality of teaching, overall, is satisfactory. Evidence from lessons and displays of pupils' work gives a firm indication of the high expectations of staff and the overall effectiveness of methods used by several teachers. Appropriate emphasis is placed on pupils researching topics for themselves and the planning of lessons is particularly good in Year 2. Although some topics, such as the study of mountains in Year 6, require additional resources, teachers in general use what they have well to make lessons informative and enjoyable. Pupils' work is well marked and various assessments are used constructively to decide the next stage of teaching and learning. Junior pupils are sometimes given geographical research to complete for homework and this helps to extend learning satisfactorily.
148. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator who has high expectations as to the work pupils need to produce. There is a helpful policy and set of topic guidelines that support staff and pupils well. Teachers' planning and standards in geography are monitored regularly and well and this leads to an accurate analysis of the strengths of learning and what needs to improve. The curriculum is well planned and fully meets statutory requirements. Resources are satisfactory and well supplemented by loan material from the local authority. The school's emphasis on fieldwork in both the local and more distant environments is a particular strength of overall subject provision.

## **HISTORY**

149. Standards are on course to be above average for the age of the pupils by the end of Years 2 and 6. Most pupils achieve well and make good progress as they move through the school. The attainment of girls and boys is broadly similar. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection when pupils' standards were judged to be satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning has also improved over time. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to others in their age group and this is heightened even more when additional adult support is available.
150. The subject has high profile in the school and uses both traditional topics and the history of the local area well. Topics are covered in appropriate depth and good use is made of pupils' literacy skills to develop both factual and persuasive writing in the subject. A good balance is maintained between pupils acquiring knowledge, opportunities to research information for themselves and the ability to separate fact from fiction. Wherever possible, pupils use secondary sources of information well and ICT is used satisfactorily to extend pupils' learning.
151. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a basic idea of chronology and understand the nature and purpose of a timeline. By the end of Year 1 they are able to answer successfully questions such as 'How are our toys different from those of the past?' and 'What were our homes like a long time ago?' Most pupils are clearly interested in topics such as these and show a good response in their exercise books. Year 2 pupils also know the importance and relevance of looking back and were able to

explain the significance of Remembrance Day and the poppy. The work becomes particularly meaningful by visiting the village war memorial. In one particularly effective lesson, Year 2 pupils used photographs well to give them clues to the past and showed above average knowledge and understanding of the times and life of Florence Nightingale.

152. As with geography, topics in Years 3 to 6 are taught over a two-year cycle and are spread over several weeks to encourage in-depth study. Some topics, such as the Second World War studied by Years 5 and 6, encourage pupils to respond to moral issues as well as historical facts. In this topic pupils showed well above average interest and knowledge about the impact of the war on ordinary people, particularly the lives of evacuee children. Topics such as the Ancient Greeks, the Aztecs and Victorian Britain are studied in good depth and pupils' workbooks reflect above average knowledge and understanding. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a relatively secure sense of chronology and know how an understanding of the past is highly relevant to the issues of today.
153. The quality of teaching and learning is good across the school. Staff use their own knowledge and enthusiasms well to help pupils develop a keen understanding of historical events and leading characters who have influenced our past. Historical artefacts are used effectively to motivate the pupils and where possible homework and ICT are used satisfactorily to extend learning. Teachers manage their classes very well and there is a brisk, purposeful feel to much of the learning. Good use is made of the pupils' above average literacy skills in order to encourage good writing and recording in the subject. In an effective Year 6 lesson, the teacher gave a lively introduction and used questioning well to ascertain from the pupils how we can learn from historical evidence such as the diary of Anne Frank. The activities chosen led pupils to explore the theme in greater depth and drew a very good response which was maintained over a long period.
154. This is a well organised subject, with clear objectives and good opportunities for pupils' personal as well as academic development. History is well led by an enthusiastic and experienced co-ordinator, who is in good touch with her subject and monitors standards and planning on a regular basis. Potential links with other subjects, such as art, geography and literacy, are developed well. The curriculum is well structured and fully meets statutory requirements and the needs of the pupils. Good use is made of the above average resources as well as historically based visits to places such as Killhope Lead Mining Centre, Durham Cathedral, Beamish Museum and Preston Park.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

155. There has been good improvement in standards since the previous inspection. Boys and girls attain similar standards and these are above expectations by the end of Year 2 and broadly average by the end of Year 6. A contributing factor to this rise has been the recently opened ICT suite. There are now sufficient computers and software within the school for whole class lessons to take place and this has made it possible for skills to be taught as a whole class lesson. In addition, the full implementation of the school's nationally recognised scheme of work has provided a structured programme that ensures full curriculum coverage. Standards and provision have also improved, as a result of pupils' own enthusiasm, teacher training and their increased confidence in working with the subject.

156. Pupils make good progress during lesson time. Those in Year 1 are able to use many of the facilities of a computer. They use space bars, arrow keys and the delete key successfully. They are also able to highlight and drag required information around the screen. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are confident when asked to save their work to disk. Pupils were observed using an art package well, producing backgrounds and pictures and using the tools of a paint palette to smudge line and soften edges. Most younger pupils are also familiar with the technical language of computers and understand terms used by the teacher, such as save, open, file, delete and icon.
157. The standards reached by pupils in Year 6, whilst satisfactory overall, reflect in part some shortcomings in the teaching and learning of specific ICT skills in the past. There is, therefore, some catching up to be done. The new computer suite, renewed teachers' confidence and the pupils' own enthusiasm for the subject, are all undoubtedly helping with this. Year 6 pupils are able to programme a robotic toy and enter commands to control its movements. They are aware of the use of a database and word processing and editing skills. These skills are used on occasion to enhance their written work, although this is not done enough. Work is saved to disk, which pupils confidently open and retrieve information from. A number of software packages, such as 'Wordshark', are used to improve spellings, including the standards of those with special educational needs. Sometimes the use of such programmes fails to provide sufficient challenge to pupils who can work at higher levels.
158. There are some good examples of the use of emails, such as the correspondence between a pupil and a friend in Bangalore. Junior pupils are also involved in the updating of the schools own web site. This is used as a means of communicating to parents and others the events and workings of the wider school and is a very full and well organised addition to school resources.
159. Pupils with special educational needs make at least sound and often good progress. They are supported effectively by well trained classroom support staff. Some of their skill levels are being developed to match those of other members of their class. They are also provided with equal opportunities to access the machines within the ICT suite and classroom. There was also evidence of pupils working together well and sharing the duties of importing different forms of data into the computer.
160. The quality of teaching is good in the infant years and satisfactory, but with some good features in Years 3 to 6. The training that all staff have undertaken allows them to use the computers and interactive whiteboard with confidence. Lessons are generally well planned and classroom support staff fully utilised. The interactive board and computer networking allows whole class skills teaching to take place. Pupils' confidence is growing in their use of both the new hardware and software. However, computers within the classrooms are seldom used effectively, partly because a number of technical problems prevent pupil's full and regular access. This limits pupils' opportunities to use their skills to enhance their work, particularly in other subjects. Pupils behave well and are managed effectively within the ICT suite. Many of the pupils interviewed have computers at home and are enthusiastic about their use in connection with school work.
161. It was not possible to make a judgement about the quality of subject leadership as the current co-ordinator is away from school and the headteacher is only undertaking the role on a temporary basis. The new suite is beginning to have a positive impact on the skill levels and standards within the school. There is a range of new and suitable software that provides a very adequate base to build upon.



Learning resources and accommodation have now reached very good levels, although some computers in classrooms need attention. Any potential problems of inappropriate access to the Internet are guarded against. There are no computers within the libraries and their use as a reference tool is still under-developed. The school has a comprehensive action plan that clearly outlines the guidelines as to the future development of the subject. The development of links with other subjects and improved monitoring and assessment of pupils attainment are rightly highlighted as targets for the future. The school has a file of pupils' achievements in the subject but this needs to be developed further. It currently lacks photographic evidence and examples of levelled work that would both celebrate achievement and provide support in assessing future standards. Overall, however, the subject is beginning to make good progress and gather momentum.

## MUSIC

162. Standards are in line with the levels expected by the end of Year 2. This indicates something of a decline since the previous inspection, when standards for pupils of this age were above national expectations. In Years 1 and 2, the subject is taught by a visiting music teacher. Pupils are taught in the hall for one lesson each week and there is little follow through in the classroom. Lessons contain elements of recorder playing, singing and basic music theory. A system is in place whereby class teachers in both the infant and junior parts of the school are given non-contact time during music lessons and classes are often taught without additional adult support. However, in the lessons observed the control and management of the pupils in these year groups was not strong enough to ensure that progress in skills development was any better than satisfactory.
163. Pupils achieve well in Years 3 to 6 and by the end of Year 6 standards are above average. This indicates that pupils' standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. Pupils in the junior classes are currently taught jointly by the headteacher and a visiting music teacher. In addition, a large proportion of junior pupils are provided with good opportunities to play a musical instrument, mainly through visiting specialist teachers but with additional opportunities provided also by the headteacher.
164. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls. Music provision, particularly for the junior pupils, offers a wide range of interesting opportunities. Pupils with special educational needs are successfully encouraged and supported, taking a full part in all activities and achieving as well as other pupils. The school has recognised some of its pupils as being gifted and talented in the field of music and they are given every encouragement as part of the school's successful policy on inclusion.
165. By the end of Year 2, pupils achieve steadily. Through learning to play the recorder, they are developing basic theoretical knowledge. Interesting ways of learning about dynamics, for example, by following symbols, singing and playing percussion instruments, are enjoyed by the pupils. However, in one lesson, the immature behaviour of a few pupils was not managed well and, as a result, progress declined and was satisfactory at best.
166. Junior pupils achieve well. During the inspection, pupils in Years 3 to Year 6 were rehearsing for the school pantomime. These lessons were led by the headteacher with the support of the music specialist teacher. The headteacher's infectious enthusiasm and good subject knowledge in the Year 5 / 6 lesson, resulted in a high level of enjoyment where pupils worked hard as they practised new songs and

rehearsed those learned previously. Pupils sing tunefully and with good expression. They respond well to music, doing the hand jive to 'Going to a Wedding.' Pupils learning to play a brass or stringed instrument are provided with good technical support. In the range of sessions observed, it was clear that pupils take their learning seriously and are prepared to practise at home ready for their next lesson.

167. The teaching and learning of music is satisfactory in the infant classes and good in the junior classes. Where lessons are successful, strengths lie in the teachers' expertise and in their skills in imparting to the pupils their own knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject. Relative weaknesses come about where the teacher does not successfully manage the behaviour of a small number of pupils. There is also a potential weakness in that so few teachers are learning about teaching music to pupils in their own class and are losing the 'feel' for a subject that they may wish or have to teach at a later stage.
168. Music plays an important part in the life of the school. There is good provision for pupils in Years 3 to 6, particularly in the wide range of musical opportunities available. In assemblies, music is often an arena for instrumentalists to contribute, although music is not often a feature as pupils enter or leave the hall. Links with the local community, for example playing with the local brass band, provide very good opportunities for pupils to be a part of the wider music world and to learn about their own heritage. The school is rightly proud of its own brass band and has won deserved acclaim for its efforts. Opportunities to learn about music from other cultures are satisfactory. Visiting musicians also make a good contribution to enriching pupils' awareness of a range of music, such as recitals given by members of the authority's music service.
169. The headteacher co-ordinates the subject and offers a great deal of musical expertise and enthusiasm together with a strong commitment to the importance of music in the lives of the pupils. However, the school is highly dependent on the headteacher and visiting specialists, as no other members of staff are routinely involved. Although assessment procedures for recording pupils' skills are broadly satisfactory, class teachers are not involved and so do not have enough day-to-day knowledge of how well pupils' musical skills are progressing. Resources are good and provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to perform on both tuned and untuned instruments. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' personal development, particularly the opportunities to develop personal skills, work with others and learn about their own musical heritage.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

170. Pupils' standards are broadly in line with age-related expectations by the end of Year 6. It was not possible to see any lessons in either Years 1 and 2 and therefore a secure judgement could not be made about the standards and progress of pupils in these age groups. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection.
171. The curriculum covers all the statutory strands of physical education and these are planned appropriately for each year group during the year. Swimming is taught from Year 3 onwards and certificate evidence indicates that pupils achieve well over time with most being able to swim in excess of the recommended 25 metres before transferring to high school. Only two lessons were available for observation during the inspection period and both produced satisfactory standards through sound teaching and learning. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 showed satisfactory standards when

responding in their dance to music such as the Carnival of the Animals. Working either alone or in unison with a partner, pupils built up a series of well-linked sequences that helped them to explore moods such as aggression and curiosity with their bodies. They made satisfactory progress because the teacher had prepared the session well and made good use of pupil demonstrations and her own observations. Although the lesson did not flow as well as it could, pupils were given adequate time to rehearse and improve their sequences.

172. Year 6 pupils were observed building up their skills in playground hockey and basketball. This lesson was taken by visiting students from a neighbouring high school and pupils responded well. By the end of the session, pupils had developed their ball control, passing and catching skills to a level appropriate for their age. In this and the lesson described earlier, good attention was given to health and safety matters including pupils and teachers being dressed appropriately for activities.
173. Physical education is under new leadership. The co-ordinator, has made a sound start, but has been unable as yet to make a firm, accurate assessment as to the next stage of subject development. However, the subject is well established, popular with pupils and is well supported by a long established, quality scheme of work that gives teachers the confidence to work with pupils to a good level. The school has done well in identifying several gifted pupils in elements such as gymnastics and encouraging them accordingly. The curriculum is also well supported by good quality resources, a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and some competitive sports for older pupils. The accommodation is good mainly in the form of a large hall, adequate yard space and access to a well grassed area in the spring and summer.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

174. By the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils reach the expected standards set out in the local guidelines for the subject. They make good progress, overall, showing an improvement on the findings of the previous report. Girls and boys achieve similar standards and those pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
175. In Years 1 and 2, children retell stories accurately from the New Testament and know about some significant events in Jesus' life; for instance, they link the story of Christ's baptism in the River Jordan with the ceremony of Christian baptism today. Young children have a basic knowledge of the Christian account of the Creation and the lives of the saints, including St. Francis and St. Cuthbert. They have appropriate understanding of other faiths by studying, for example, the Divali celebrations of the Hindu religion.
176. In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue their studies of Hinduism and develop introductory insights into the symbolism of Christian religious festivals, such as Easter, Christmas and Harvest. They learn about the life of Jesus and His disciples. One pupil notes that 'to be a disciple you should be able to stand in front of lots of people and talk to them!' They also study the lives of famous saints, including St. Paul, and Mother Teresa. Pupils begin to learn about Sikhism and study the form of a Hindu marriage ceremony. They show their understanding of 'The Good Samaritan' parable by writing a twenty first century version. Throughout the school, pupils study the symbolism of places of worship, including Christian Cathedrals, churches and monasteries, Hindu 'Mandir' and Jewish synagogues, examining and contrasting the functions of worship and symbols of peace.

177. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, indicating an improvement on the findings of the previous report. Teachers' expectations are high. They exercise good control, hold the pupils' interest, challenge them to ask relevant questions and contribute to whole class discussions. The content of lessons is often related directly to pupils' own lives. For example, during a discussion about the Old Testament account of the Israelites being chased towards the Red Sea by Pharaoh's army, pupils make the point that some Egyptian soldiers might have friends who are Israelites and would not want to kill them. The teacher builds on this observation well by asking the pupils to think about how the Israelites felt when they saw the Egyptian army galloping towards them. Pupils displayed high levels of interest. Catching the sombre mood of the incident, they make comments about being frightened, 'shivering with fear', feeling betrayed by Moses and then being 'amazed' when the waters of the Red Sea part miraculously.
178. Good use is made of visits to places of religious significance, for instance Durham Cathedral, where younger children observed at first hand the size and splendour of a Christian church and learnt about the life styles and good works of the early English saints. Good use of 'visualisation techniques' enables the pupils to recall their visit, to remember the splendour of the stained glass windows, the shapes of the tombstones and the height of the steeples. Good teaching techniques in recalling the visit enabled the children to concentrate well and remember the key physical features of the Cathedral. Consequently, they produced sketches of good quality to recall the beauty of the church, including the stained glass windows, St. Bede's Tomb and a portrait of 'The Last Supper.'
179. Good relationships exist between adults and pupils and effective use is made wherever possible of ICT, for example, enabling children to research into the Hindu religious ceremonies. However, teaching does not always systematically assess the thoughts and ideas of the pupils before preparing the next set of learning tasks.
180. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements. The subject is well led and managed, with the co-ordinator continuing to modify the religious education curriculum to help meet the needs of the recently revised syllabus. The subject is included in the action plan for the next academic year and this is appropriate for further improvement. Lesson plans are monitored and there is an on going programme of lesson observations made by the co-ordinator. A subject portfolio has been produced and work is being assessed and levelled. Currently staff development is limited to informal discussions between teachers and the co-ordinator. A good range of books and sacred artefacts effectively resource the subject. This brings learning to life by arousing the pupils' interest. The very good practice of incorporating church visits into lesson planning is not extended sufficiently into religions other than Christianity.