

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST HILD'S COLLEGE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
(AIDED) PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114270

Headteacher: Mrs J Katsambis

Reporting inspector: Mr G Brown
21060

Dates of inspection: 24th – 26th March 2003

Inspection number: 247443

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior and Infant
School category:	Aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Renny's Lane Gilesgate Durham
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	The Reverend Canon R Davison
Date of previous inspection:	December 1997

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21060	Mr G Brown	Registered inspector	The Foundation Stage Geography History English as an additional language	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Leadership and management Key issues for action
9952	Mrs L Brock	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
4295	Mr D Dodds	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology	Teaching and learning
18370	Mr K Johnson	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Physical education Special educational needs	
2387	Mr P Nettleship	Team inspector	English Music Educational inclusion	Quality and range of opportunities for learning

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Hild's College Church of England Aided Primary School is situated close to the centre of Durham and serves a local community housed in a range of social settings. There are 162 pupils on roll aged four to eleven years, making this school slightly smaller than the average. A further 40 children attend the nursery on a part-time basis. A significant number of pupils enter and leave the school other than at the start of a school year. Some of this mobility is due to new housing programmes, as well as the presence of children from a few traveller families and some whose parents come from abroad to work at the nearby university. A significant number of children enter the school's reception class with below average attainment, particularly in relation to language, aspects of mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and personal and social development. A broadly average number of pupils (15 per cent) are entitled to free school meals. Most pupils are of white UK heritage but ten pupils originate from a range of ethnic minority backgrounds, of which three are at an early stage of learning English. A well above average number of pupils (40 per cent) are designated as having special educational needs. Whilst many of these have moderate learning problems, others have speech, emotional or medical difficulties. Three pupils have a statement of educational need. The school has currently no teaching vacancies but has experienced a relatively high turnover of staff in the past two years. The school has strong and traditional connections with the local Anglican Church and this is expressed clearly in its mission statement, as well as in its underlying aims and values.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Hild's is a popular school with some significant strengths. Pupils are well cared for and the school provides a good, imaginative setting in which pupils can learn and celebrate their best efforts. Staff form a hard-working and conscientious team. The good leadership and management provided by the headteacher, key staff and governors are important strengths in ensuring the aims of the school are well met. Teaching is satisfactory overall and pupils make sound progress as they move through the school. Although improving over time, standards in English and science are below average, and mathematics needs to improve in the infant years. Given pupils' attainment on entry and the standards they reach by the end of Year 6, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Children in the nursery and reception classes (the Foundation Stage) are well provided for and make good progress in their learning;
- The leadership provided by the headteacher and her deputy is good and ensures the school has clear educational direction. An effective climate for learning is well established;
- The pupils' personal development is given high priority, including very good measures to support their spiritual, moral and social development. This results in good behaviour, a positive attitude to learning and pupils who form very good working relationships;
- The general care and support given to all pupils is of a high order. The different learning needs of pupils are routinely met and staff ensure all pupils are fully included in school life;
- Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are particularly well provided for.

What could be improved

- Standards in English and science are below average overall by the end of Years 2 and 6;
- Standards in mathematics are below average by the end of Year 2;
- The quality of teaching and learning needs to be made more effective, particularly in relation to the progress made by higher attaining pupils.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made sound progress since its previous inspection (December 1997) and has moved forward on several fronts. In particular, some of the key areas outlined for development have improved considerably. Provision for the Foundation Stage is now a strength of the school. Pupils across the school make at least sound progress in information and communication technology. Schemes of work in all subjects have been carefully reviewed and there is better provision for the development of key skills, knowledge and understanding. Assessment procedures are now good overall and the school is becoming increasingly aware of pupils' performance and how it can improve still further. Financial planning and control are now more secure. Despite these improvements, standards in English and science, in particular, have not grown at the rate anticipated and frequent changes in teaching staff have led to some lack of continuity in pupils' learning. The impact of national initiatives, such as new forms of staff appraisal and the introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, has been satisfactory.

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	D	D	D	D	well above average A above average B
Mathematics	E	E	D	E	Average C Below average D
Science	D	E	E	E	well below average E

Children in the Foundation Stage make a good start to their school lives and achieve well over time. However, significant numbers are unlikely to reach the standards expected for their age by the end of the reception year, in communication, language and literacy and aspects of mathematical development. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve satisfactorily but standards in speaking and listening, reading, mathematics and science are below average overall by the end of Year 2. Standards in Key Stage 1 vary year on year and often depend on the number of pupils with special educational needs. Their standards in art and design and in design and technology are above those expected for their age. In the 2002 National Curriculum tests for pupils at the end of Year 6, the school's results were below average in English and mathematics and well below average in science. Pupils' results were below or well below those from similar schools. Relatively few pupils attained the higher standards for their age and it is often this factor which reflects below average attainment when compared to national standards. The results of inspection confirm below average attainment in English writing and science by the end of Year 6, but broadly average standards in mathematics. Despite some learning difficulties encountered by special educational needs pupils, the often very good teaching among current Year 6 pupils has led to a general rise in attainment in that year group. Standards in art and design are likely to be above average by the end of the year and standards in all other subjects are now at the level anticipated for the age of the pupils. Those with special educational needs or with English as an additional language are well supported and make mainly good progress. The school's targets for future attainment are challenging. They reflect its determination to improve in key areas, including, where appropriate, the standards reached by higher attaining pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and give of their best.
Behaviour, in and out of	Good. Pupils respond well to the high expectations of their teachers and

classrooms	their behaviour is reliable and very sensible.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Working relationships are very harmonious. Pupils show respect for the rights and views of others. The school's values impact very well on the all-round development of its pupils.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Pupils attend promptly and 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	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

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 in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory overall elsewhere. There is, however, some good and very good teaching in other parts of the school, particularly in the Year 5/6 class. Some teachers have only been appointed recently and in Year 2, were taught satisfactorily by long-term supply staff. No unsatisfactory teaching occurred during the inspection. The effective teaching in the reception and nursery classes is characterised by well organised, knowledgeable staff with high expectations and who are careful to build on children's knowledge and skills based on regular assessments. In Years 1 to 6, there are teaching strengths in the management of the pupils, the use made of homework to extend learning and in the overall use of everyday assessment, including, in several classes, high quality marking of pupils' work. The teaching of pupils in the current Year 5/6 class is consistently very good and is helping to raise standards in that class rapidly. In some classes, there is a lack of clear and high expectations as to what higher attaining pupils in particular should do. In some lessons, there is not a particularly good match of activities to help challenge the different learning needs of pupils. In other lessons, teachers have a tendency to over direct their pupils and give them few opportunities to show their initiative and work towards individual targets. This is not the case for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. These pupils are particularly well targeted and ably supported. The teaching of English and mathematics is sound overall, although there is room for improvement in promoting good oral and written language across the school and the mental skills of pupils in Years 1 and 2. Teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects, although weaknesses occur in science. Teaching is good in art across the school. Design and technology is taught effectively in Years 1 and 2, as is information and communication technology in the junior years.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good in the Foundation Stage and sound elsewhere. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. It is broad and balanced and is supported by an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils' needs are identified at an early stage and their individual targets are well supported by a wide range of adults. Pupils from traveller backgrounds are supported to a similar standard.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. Pupils are warmly welcomed into school life and are well supported by other pupils, school staff and outside agencies as needed. Their needs are well met and most make rapid progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural,	Very good overall and a strength of the school. Much of the provision centres on the values and principles of the Anglican Church and pupils are given opportunities to reflect on their learning and to work in harmony

development	with others. Provision for cultural development is good. Racial harmony is well promoted and pupils are prepared well for life in a diverse society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. This is a caring community that welcomes pupils and supports them well. The policies to promote good behaviour are particularly effective. Assessment procedures are good overall.

Parents' views of the school are largely positive and many make a good and lasting contribution to pupils' learning, both at home and at school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the headteacher and her deputy are good and provide clear educational vision and direction. School management is good overall with secure contributions made by all key staff and administrators. There is a shared commitment for the school to succeed and to grow further.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are very committed and meet their statutory responsibilities. They exert good influence on wider school life.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. A growing strength of the school as it continues to monitor pupils' standards and sets coherent targets for self-improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Annual funding is well linked to declared priorities and the school exercises good financial control. Obtaining best value for the pupils from the annual budget is effective. Staffing is satisfactory, although the school's need for growth and stability has been somewhat affected by the many changes in staff that have occurred. The accommodation is attractive and well maintained and is satisfactory overall. Learning resources are generally good and well used.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils enjoy school and the good teaching ensures they make adequate progress; • The school has high expectation as to how pupils should behave and the work standards they will reach; • The school is well led and managed; • Pupils' needs are well known and they are cared for and supported well within a Christian setting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information as to how pupils are getting on; • Clearer guidance as to how much homework will be given and the expectation on pupils; • Closer links between school and home; • An increase in the opportunities for outside visits and in the range of extra-curricular activities, particularly for younger children.

The inspection bears out many of the positive points made by parents. The school holds two open evenings a year, which is about the norm, and encourages enquiries at other times. The school's annual reports could be more informative about individual pupil progress and their targets for the future. Homework is set regularly across the school and impacts well on pupils' learning. The school is currently reviewing the amount given to pupils of different ages. The links between home and school are generally good and there is a steady flow of information between the two. The curriculum is enhanced by a satisfactory range of outside visits and by a good range of visitors. The school's out-of-hours clubs cover such areas as ICT, sport and music and are broadly at the level anticipated for the size of the school and the age of the pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children enter both the nursery and reception classes (the Foundation Stage) with below average standards in relation to personal development, language and literacy, aspects of mathematical development and also their knowledge and understanding of the world. Standards on entry to reception are lower than those found during the previous inspection and reflect the more diverse nature of the area now served by the school. As a result of good teaching in the nursery, children make good progress in most aspects of their work. Through careful adult intervention and support, children gradually grow in confidence and self-esteem and become aware of the needs of others. Most continue to make mainly good progress in the reception class because of the imaginative curriculum and expertise of staff. Most children are well placed to achieve the Early Learning Goals in personal, social and emotional development, creative and physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. However, by the time they transfer to Year 1, children's ability to talk with confidence, together with their reading, writing and mathematical skills, are below average overall. Significant numbers are not well placed to achieve the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy and aspects of mathematical development.
2. Most pupils achieve satisfactorily as they move between Years 1 and 6. Although the results of national tests for pupils at the end of Years 2 and 6 vary considerably year on year, there has been, in Year 6 for example, a general upward trend in the number of pupils who achieve the expected level for their age in English, mathematics and science. However, average scores over time in this year group still reflect a decline since the previous inspection, due mainly to relatively few pupils achieving the higher levels for their age. This is due, in part, to the presence, annually, of a well above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs. A significant number of pupils also enter and leave the school other than at the usual times. The school has also gone through a period of relative staff instability, which in itself can influence pupils' progress and the standards they reach. It should also be borne in mind that sometimes the particular cohorts of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils can be relatively small and the performance of just a few pupils can affect the school's results either way.
3. The quality of teaching and learning across the school has not been sufficiently effective in the past to enable pupils to make more consistent gains. Although satisfactory overall, some pupils need consistently good and very good teaching to reach the higher standards. The attainment and progress of some pupils has been curtailed by a lack of consistently good teaching in the past, including high expectations as to what pupils should achieve.
4. In the 2002 National Curriculum tests for pupils at the end of Year 2, the school's results were above the national average in writing, below average in reading and well below average in mathematics. In comparison to similar schools, pupils scored well below average in reading and mathematics but above average in writing. This relative inconsistency between subjects is a feature of pupils' attainment that the school has yet to address successfully. Standards have fluctuated over time although it is only in mathematics where standards have fallen to below the national average. In 2002, it was the relatively few pupils who attained the higher levels in reading and mathematics that kept the school's average scores down. Over time,

there are few significant differences between the attainment of girls and boys. The inspection findings confirm that standards among the current Year 2 pupils are below average in speaking and listening, reading and mathematics. Standards in science are below average overall. Pupils' writing is now broadly in line with that expected for their age. The school has worked hard and effectively in this area of the curriculum.

5. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have helped infant pupils, in part, to extend their skills in English and mathematics. However, these subjects are still not taught consistently to a high standard and the progress made by some pupils is uneven. For example, the work set does not always reflect the needs of pupils of different ability and the use of assessment sometimes fails to build accurately on previous learning. In Years 1 and 2, pupils show below average speaking skills and several find lengthy oral sessions difficult to cope with. Reading skills and strategies are also not developed sufficiently for even average pupils to sound out and learn a wide range of new words. The attention now given to grammar, spelling and presentation has improved and pupils make sound attempts with their imaginative writing.
6. By the end of Year 2, relatively few pupils work to average levels of speed and accuracy when undertaking mental work in mathematics. Their recall of number bonds is not rapid enough and few have command of a range of strategies that would bring more understanding and accuracy to their work. Standards in science are below average overall, but improvements are occurring as more meaningful work is undertaken in investigative science. In both mathematics and science the match of work to pupils' ability is not always adequate, particularly the work set for higher attaining pupils. By the end of Year 2, standards in other subjects are broadly in line with those expected for the age of the pupils. Standards in art were above average in the previous inspection and this is still the case by the end of Year 2. Standards in design and technology have risen and are now above age-related expectations.
7. The results of the school's 2002 National Curriculum tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 showed that standards were below average in English and mathematics and well below average in science. When compared to pupils from schools in similar settings, standards in English were below average overall whilst those in mathematics and science were well below the average. A pattern of below and well below average attainment in these core subjects has emerged in recent years. Whilst this is due in part to the sometimes well above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs who take the tests, there remains evidence that some Year 6 pupils could score more highly than they do. Other contributory factors include pupil mobility and some low teacher expectations over time, particularly in relation to higher achieving pupils. There has also been some staffing instability within the Year 3 to Year 6 classes. Inspection confirmed that, despite recent improvements, standards among the current Year 6 are likely to remain below average in English and science. Standards in mathematics have improved considerably and Year 6 pupils seem set to achieve broadly average results. This represents good achievement in relation to their standards on entry to the school. Improvements are due mainly to good, well organised teaching among the oldest junior pupils where expectations are high and there is a consistently good work ethic.
8. Evaluation of Key Stage 2 results over time show that most pupils make sound gains set against their previous learning. The best progress occurs when teachers have high expectations and match accurately the work set to the needs of individual

pupils. There are some differences between the test scores obtained by boys and girls in Year 6 over a three-year period, but these are not significant overall. Improved target setting based on prior attainment is now helping to identify vulnerable groups and individuals. Although still not a strong feature, the school is beginning to lay greater emphasis on the progress made by its higher attaining pupils, including any who may be gifted and talented.

9. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 demonstrate broadly average speaking and debating skills although several are reluctant to speak at length or to make more telling oral contributions. Some lack the confidence to use technical vocabulary in mathematics, technology and science. Most pupils read quite widely but several still lack the more advanced skills necessary to undertake good levels of independent research. Significant numbers need more guidance and self-discipline with handwriting standards, spellings and when forming more complex sentences. Where teachers provide good exemplars, some pupils write at greater length and in different styles, but for others, writing needs to be more imaginative. Higher attaining pupils sometimes reveal a lack of challenge in their work, a factor that is vital if they are to extend their skills further.
10. In mathematics, Year 6 pupils show improvement in the speed that they tackle more complex numbers involving addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They cover an appropriate range of topics including measurement, area, decimals, angles and shape. By Year 6, pupils' work shows a healthy balance between the various strands of mathematics including improved mental accuracy and the ability to solve problems. However, an analysis of pupils' previous test papers shows some lack of confidence in the use and application of number.
11. By the end of the current Year 6, pupils' standards in science are likely to be below average overall. Pupils have infrequent opportunities to carry out their own investigations. The work set is not always challenging enough or carefully matched to prior learning. Although improving by Year 6, pupils' recording skills are relatively immature for their age and a lot of teacher input is usually required. In other cases, teacher support is actually over directive and pupils do not work independently enough. Knowledge and use of scientific vocabulary is also below average overall.
12. Standards in information and communication technology have risen considerably due to better teaching and improved resources. The school now has a computer suite and there is particularly effective teaching in the Year 5/6 class. By the end of Year 6, pupils are likely to achieve the standards expected for their age. However, some gaps in past learning have still to be filled. Standards in art remain above average and this is a subject that supports and illustrates other subjects well. Standards in all other subjects are at the level anticipated for pupils by the end of Year 6. Some of the difficulties pupils encounter in their literacy also impact on their written work in history and geography, although standards are satisfactory overall.
13. Pupils with special educational needs make mainly good progress over time, achieving well in relation to their everyday targets. They are also given additional support and encouragement, which heightens their self-esteem. The few pupils from traveller backgrounds also achieve well because they are assessed continuously and close records are kept of their overall progress. Pupils for whom English is not their mother tongue make particularly good progress. Such pupils are assessed very carefully and their language and other needs are well planned for. Some are supported ably by visiting specialists, who liaise effectively with school based staff.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Pupils' attitudes to learning, together with their behaviour, are good and have been maintained well since the previous inspection. Their personal development is good and relationships with staff and each other are very good. Pupils grow and flourish within the 'family' of St. Hild's School.
15. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and about school life in general. In many lessons, most pupils listen carefully and persevere even when tasks seem difficult. A good example occurred in a mathematics lesson in the reception class when children demonstrated secure counting skills up to at least 10. They played a shopping game with coins up to 20 pence and easily 'got into role' as was seen when the shopkeeper tried unsuccessfully to short change a customer! Many pupils do not find learning easy but they set to work with a will and try hard to succeed. Pupils with special educational needs and the few traveller children in school have good attitudes to learning and are fully included in all aspects of school life. Pupils who have English as an additional language also have good attitudes to learning and are given very good support by other pupils and by all adults who work in school. There is mutual respect between adults and pupils and between pupils themselves. Relationships are very good and pupils have a high regard for the feelings of others. For example, in a history lesson, Year 2 pupils listened very carefully to each other as they shared their thoughts about the changes in the medical care given to soldiers before and after Florence Nightingale took over in Scutari Hospital.
16. Behaviour is good both in classrooms and around the school. This confirms the view of most parents that their children like school and want to attend. Pupils respond well to the school's very good procedures for monitoring and encouraging good behaviour and this also has a positive impact on their moral development. The occasional lapses of a small minority are dealt with promptly and effectively in accordance with agreed policy. Pupils recognise the significance of even a minor offence particularly when sanctions are imposed. They feel that they have let their teachers down and this is usually sufficient to modify subsequent behaviour. There has been a decline in the number of exclusions during the current academic year. Pupils feel well supported by the 'Buddies' and 'Mini buds' that help them in the playground. If they are lonely or things go wrong, they only need to stand near a 'friendship stop' and they are very quickly cared for. Children in the nursery demonstrate good behaviour from the onset and are keen to learn together, as was seen when they shared free play activities. The behaviour of pupils when moving around school is good. During assemblies, they wait patiently for others to arrive and this helps to create a calm state of readiness for the main message of the assembly and has a good impact on their spiritual development.
17. The personal development of pupils is good. Through personal and social education, pupils are learning what it means to be a good citizen. For example, during a meeting of the school council, items on the agenda were discussed in a mature and sensible way and the contributions of all council members were respected. Decisions were carefully considered for their likely impact on the social development of all pupils. During the after-school computer club, opportunities were given for pupils to evaluate a visiting teacher's web site and they did this with great enthusiasm. Pupils contribute to charity appeals and this deepens their understanding of the needs of others and is in keeping with the caring ethos of the school and its community. There are some opportunities in lessons for pupils to work independently but these are not yet consistent throughout the school. Pupils have shown by their good attitudes to learning that they are capable of accepting more challenge in this respect including working to their own targets.

18. Pupils who have special educational needs are very well integrated into the life of the school. Staff and other pupils are sensitive to their educational needs and consequently they are generally happy to work alongside and help one another. Pupils with special needs also benefit from the sense of security which is promoted. They become willing, confident learners and show good attitudes to their work. Pupils with English as an additional language contribute well to school life and there is a growing awareness of the diversity and richness drawn from different cultures and beliefs.
19. The school has maintained its attendance at around the national average since the previous inspection. There is very little unauthorised absence. Any authorised absence is due mainly to parents taking children on holiday in term time and to the poor attendance of children from a few families. Although there are a few persistent latecomers, almost all pupils arrive at school on time and enter classrooms with a smile on their face confirming the views of parents that their children like school and attend willingly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. During the inspection, teaching was good in about one third of lessons in Years 1 and 2 and just under half was good or better in Years 3 to 6. There are particular strengths in the Foundation Stage and in the Year 5/6 class. However, evidence indicates that over time much of the teaching and related learning is satisfactory, rather than good. This is a picture similar to that presented during the previous inspection, which has been maintained. Since then, the management of the school has worked hard to raise standards, through monitoring teaching and learning, staff training, new forms of staff appraisal and the adoption of the national schemes for teaching numeracy and literacy. However, there have been many staff changes and long-term 'leave-absences' in the interim that have somewhat lessened the impact of training for improvement. There are, however, considerable strengths among the current teaching team. There are also pockets of very good teaching and other lessons where teaching is more ordinary and less conducive to rapid progress. The teaching of art and design is consistently good, as is the teaching of mathematics in the upper junior class. Information and communication technology is taught well in the junior years and design and technology is taught well in Years 1 and 2.
21. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good. Staff there form a coherent team, planning effectively across the nursery and reception classes. Teachers place considerable emphasis on the learning of early skills in reading, writing and number and this helps to accelerate children's learning in these important areas. Individuals are well catered for with staff acting on a wide range of assessments that help to identify the needs of individual children, including those who enter school with particularly low attainment. The two classes are managed well and the very good relationships are used effectively to motivate and stimulate children to learn in a friendly, collaborative way.
22. In the wider school, almost all lessons give clear evidence that teachers manage and organise their classes well. As a result, pupils almost always behave positively. Where a lesson does not sustain their interest throughout, some pupils become less responsive and one or two go 'off the boil' and lose concentration. Their progress slows as a result. The school's strategies for promoting good behaviour are used consistently by all staff and this encourages pupils to do their best, as does

the very good relationships that exist. The majority of lessons take place in a positive working atmosphere that is conducive to effective learning.

23. In the best lessons, teachers' plans are clear and detailed, setting out exactly what they want pupils to learn and how this will be achieved. This information is often, but not always, shared with the pupils in a way that they understand. Tasks are explained clearly. For example, at the onset of a Year 5/6 science lesson, the teacher wrote the aims of the lesson on the board. She explained very clearly that the class was going to investigate dissolving solids and that, in groups, they were going to devise their own ways of finding out about factors that influenced the rate of dissolving. At the conclusion of the lesson, the same aims were used to check what had been learned and understood during the session. It also gave pupils greater responsibility for their own learning. Practice of this quality is, however, not well spread. In some lessons, teachers do not break pupils' learning into small, meaningful steps and even their planning suggests it is unclear what they expect pupils to achieve. As a result, pupils become confused about what is expected of them and this in turn slows their learning.
24. A further feature of the less effective teaching is poor time management. In some lessons, introductions and explanations take too long and pupils lose both interest and concentration. This also leaves insufficient time for pupils' activities and gives a sense of imbalance to a minority of lessons. In an otherwise successful history lesson as to what changes Florence Nightingale brought to hospital life, the teacher took rather too long to read the story; this reduced the time for practical work, thereby restricting pupils' progress.
25. Teachers use most day-to-day assessments well. The pupils' work is marked well and responded to positively by the teacher through oral and written comments. A Year 6 pupil engaged in a short written dialogue with his teacher as to why he had predicted a particular curve in a line graph depicting falling temperatures when boiling water cooled. By the end of the dialogue, he appreciated why the temperature would continue to fall until room temperature was reached. The work of pupils is generally monitored effectively during such activities and teachers intervene well, using their assessments to maintain progress. A relative weakness is that pupils' targets are not referred to enough during lessons. This means that many are not sufficiently aware of the standards they are trying to reach and the part they should play themselves in getting it better next time.
26. In a majority of lessons, resources are used effectively to illustrate the concepts being taught and to involve and interest the pupils. Very good use is made, for example, of the local authority's loan scheme of books and artefacts. A Year 1 history lesson on Victorian England was brought to life by good questioning of the pupils and the imaginative use of artefacts depicting everyday household goods. Visits to other locations for learning are also used effectively to give pupils first-hand experience and new opportunities to apply their learning to real situations. These visits are used particularly well in the teaching of history and geography.
27. Teachers are using resources in information and communication technology with increased effectiveness. The use of the projector and interactive white board is very good. In the shared parts of the majority of literacy and numeracy lessons, individual whiteboards and pens are used to good effect to ensure all pupils take part in answering questions and working things out. Homework is also used effectively to support learning in many subjects. Unusually, this includes design and technology, where, for example, Year 4 and 5 pupils were asked to make a 'Pandora's Box' based upon their history work about Ancient Greece.

28. In a majority of lessons, tasks of different levels of difficulty are offered to pupils according to their needs. They are also helped by various forms of adult support. Where these tasks are well matched to established needs, pupils become absorbed in their work because they have to think hard about what they are doing. The work given to higher attaining pupils is sometimes less than secure. Too often this is less challenging than it ought to be and is sometimes over directed, leaving too little for the pupils to attempt for themselves. The 'thinking skills' of pupils could be stretched much more on these occasions.
29. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught soundly and numeracy is taught well through some classes in Years 3 to 6. Although the teachers have had training in these areas, many are still relatively new to the school and need time to adopt the whole-school approach to enable pupils to build well on their previous learning. The teaching of numeracy at Key Stage 1, for example, needs to have more pace and for mental strategies to be taught more rigorously.
30. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are taught well. Some are in school for a relatively short period but make sometimes very good progress due to quality support from both their teacher and visiting support staff. A similar pattern emerges among pupils with special educational needs. Teaching assistants skilfully support individuals and small groups inside and outside the classroom. They frequently work alongside pupils, reinforcing teaching and helping them to sustain their interest and focus. When teaching small groups, they question pupils sensitively and demonstrate and model work clearly, thus making a strong contribution to learning. Some of the teaching support offered by the co-ordinator for special needs is outstanding. Learning was highly effective, for example, when a small group of pupils were withdrawn from their class to boost literacy skills. On another occasion, the most able Year 1 pupils were withdrawn to challenge their mental skills. On such occasions, the teacher's subject knowledge and knowledge of how children learn is very evident.

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

31. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the school are satisfactory. However, there are both good and very good aspects to some parts of the overall provision. The areas that are most developed and influential are:
- the provision for children in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception);
 - the provision made for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their native tongue;
 - the success of programmes to develop personal, social and health education;
 - the effective working links that have been formed with other local schools and colleges.
32. The newly created Foundation Stage is very well planned for and brings together a comprehensive and exciting range of learning opportunities for young children. It is planned for jointly by all relevant staff and there is a common philosophy running right through the education of children between three and five years old. Combined with the good teaching, the curriculum thus described enables children to make a particularly good start to their school lives.

33. The school has rightly recognised the need to raise the proportion of pupils reaching above average levels by the ages of 7 and 11. However, there is not yet sufficient identification of their particular needs. For example, opportunities are missed to give such pupils more open-ended challenges in which they can take greater responsibility for their own learning in subjects such as English and science. Art is a particular strength and the school is confidently awaiting ratification of the 'Silver Artsmark' in recognition of its currently high standards in the subject.
34. This is a good school for inclusion by which all pupils have immediate and fair access to the full curriculum. The school has rightly gained a strong reputation for its welcoming ethos when accepting all families into its caring, Christian community. Parents appreciate this inclusive approach and feel that the school is the richer for having pupils from a range of ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds. However, opportunities to ensure that the more able pupils are fully extended, are not unduly rigorous or as routinely established in the school's planning. Consequently, the tasks they are set are not always well matched to their true capabilities and potential.
35. The identification and progress of pupils who have special educational needs is very well monitored by the SEN co-ordinator and overall provision is very good. All staff are aware of pupils' specific needs and plan their learning well, often to very precise individual plans and targets. Learning is broken down into small, meaningful stages and this helps teachers to monitor and evaluate progress and keep targets under review. The school has begun to make provision for some pupils in one age group to be taught in another when there is particular challenge or support available. The relatively small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language receive a good programme of activities to help them learn English. Good quality support is available from local authority staff. Pupils on the MAT (more able and talented pupils) register are encouraged to nurture their talents in music, gymnastics and soccer by attending clubs and schools of excellence outside of school time. The school recognises that there is still work to be done in this area of provision and has established very strong links with local sixth form colleges with a view to extending what is already on offer.
36. Curriculum strategies for teaching literacy skills are satisfactory. Skills of speaking and listening develop slowly in Years 1 and 2 but more rapidly in the upper years of the school. A number of initiatives have been introduced to raise standards in writing. These have proved to be particularly effective in Years 1 and 2 where standards are now broadly average. Satisfactory attempts have been made to link the work in the literacy hour with that undertaken in other subjects. The strategies for teaching numeracy are satisfactory overall, although some weaknesses exist in the Infant years. There is a tendency, for example, to get the balance wrong on occasions between teacher led sessions and the pupils' own activities. In some cases the provision does not lay sufficient emphasis on the pupils' quick mental recall of number bonds and tables, or on developing a wide range of strategies to solve everyday problems.
37. The provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory and similar to that usually found in schools of this type and size. Some clubs are linked to school subjects, such as the art and ICT clubs; some are formed to help Year 6 pupils in their preparation for the annual National Curriculum tests; some are used to prepare pupils for their school responsibilities, such as the training for 'buddies'; others are set up to take advantage of sports training by expert coaches in rugby, soccer and tennis. In many instances, these clubs are short-term and some have been adversely affected by staff changes or absence. The curriculum is enriched by a

range of educational trips into the locality and the more distant environment. Visitors also extend learning through talks and demonstrations.

38. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to develop their personal, social and health education (PHSE). This extends further into areas of drug awareness, sex education and citizenship. There is a full range of useful policies, all closely linked, that draw these separate strands together. The school has worked closely with the Durham Education Authority to implement several of these policies, some of which are used as exemplars of good practice for other schools to consider. Taken together, these policies have a strong impact on shaping the attitudes that pupils form and help to create a climate in which learning can flourish. By seeking the 'Healthy School Award' the school is showing its determination to raise standards in PHSE still further. The school has also won the award 'Investors in Children' and this says much of its determination to keep children at the very heart of all that it does and stands for.
39. Good links with the local community enhance the pupils' education as do those with the local church and parish. These help foster, among other things, the pupils' spiritual development. Visits by the community police officer and the local fire-fighting crew develop a better awareness of citizenship and personal responsibility. Artists, sculptors, writers and poets introduce fresh challenges to develop creativity and imagination of pupils. Visits to residential homes during Harvest and Christmas help pupils to feel they have made a useful contribution to the wider community.
40. Very good links with local schools benefit the pupils in many ways. Links are established with mother and toddler groups and with local private nurseries to ensure that children starting school are integrated quickly and successfully. Teachers from St Hild's visit other schools to see how they operate and to learn from their practices. Staff and pupils from a number of high schools and colleges enrich the curriculum. For example, students lead sports clubs and science lessons are run for pupils in Year 6 at a nearby secondary school. French lessons are given weekly to all Year 6 pupils by a visiting staff from the high school. The transition of pupils from primary to secondary education is greatly eased by the close liaison between the schools involved. Existing procedures help pupils to move on with confidence.
41. The provision for the pupils' spiritual development is very good and underpins the life of the school. Pupils grow and thrive in a caring, Christian community where they are increasingly given the opportunity to explore the values and beliefs that influence their lives and those of others. For example, 'Celebration Assemblies' are a weekly affirmation of success and achievement. A 'can do' culture is promoted via the 'WOW!' factor ('Watch Out World – Here I Come!'). Assemblies are also used to develop other aspects of spirituality, such as a sense of amazement when considering wonders of nature. Showing the life force present in a well-rooted bulb is an example used skilfully by the headteacher to give the pupils a greater appreciation of what it is to be alive. 'Inside this bulb is packed all the information it needs to make a daffodil. This is a miracle. This is God's world at work!' Such commitment to recognising a spiritual dimension within the familiar is now permeating the teaching staff. Music, art, story and dance provide opportunities for pupils to consider their feelings and responses. Quiet periods of reflection regularly allow pupils the space to think about aspects of their lives. 'Circle time' is well used to give opportunities to reveal one's inner feelings to friends. The influence of the Church is important here but the emphasis on spiritual development now transcends many areas of school life. Teachers still need to see the potential for this aspect of personal development in their everyday curriculum.

42. The school provides very well for moral development. The pupils show a clear awareness of what is right and wrong. Class rules are set by the pupils themselves and these are then circulated to the parents so that expectations are clearly established. Pupils co-operate well and demonstrate a respect for their classmates and for the code of conduct in general. This is seen in several group activities, often unsupervised, where pupils work hard on their tasks. Property is also respected and, as a result, the school presents itself as a tidy, well-organised and attractive environment for learning. Questions on the morality of rich and poor are explored. Pupils do particularly well in their fundraising efforts. For example, those in Year 2 decided to organise a 'Bring and Buy Sale' to raise money for the Blue Peter Waterworks Appeal. Pupils raised £15 to help villagers in Uganda and also raised funds for National Children's Homes and a local hospice. Older pupils examine moral issues, such as 'Should we expect animals to perform for our entertainment in circuses?' This extends both their linguistic and personal development as it gives them opportunities to clarify issues of right and wrong from their own perspective.
43. The provision for the pupils' social development is very good. There is a strong sense of community that permeates the school. Pupils feel that this is *their* school because they have a degree of 'ownership' in how it is organised and run. They are made to feel that they have democratic rights in aspects of decision making, such as through the class and the school councils. The seeds of citizenship are planted early and the pupils respond well to being given these responsibilities. There is a 'Pet Team', responsible for the upkeep of the school guinea pigs. There are 'buddies' who patrol the school yard to attend to the needs of any pupils feeling in any way isolated and children can be supported and counselled at the 'buddy stops.' There are even activities to encourage co-operation rather than competition, such as the parachute game to promote group endeavour. The school also accepts responsibilities for the wider community, such as in caring for the local environment. Underpinning all these initiatives and group ventures are the basic Christian principles of love and charity. The school encourages all pupils to help promote and monitor good behaviour and the school's anti-bullying policy has won wide acclaim. Much of this is based on mutual respect and understanding and on the celebration of similarities and differences.
44. The provision for cultural development is good. The school celebrates the richness and diversity of many aspects of life. This is heard in the traditional folk music played to the pupils. It is seen also in the sculptures from Ghana. Art is a particular strength of the school. Displays provide striking decorative features to many areas of the school. Artistic awareness is heightened by the visits of painters and poets, musicians, actors and dancers. However, some opportunities are missed to celebrate the cultural richness of religious and ethnic groups represented at the school. For example, there are no multicultural musical instruments other than Latin-American non-pitched percussion. Among good examples, a visitor came to demonstrate how to wear a sari and pupils thoroughly enjoyed a Filipino dancer. The strength of overall provision is in the celebration of humanity that is seen in the respect shown towards those with different cultures, customs and creeds.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. The school's procedures for child protection and for ensuring the welfare of pupils are very good. The day-to-day care of pupils is particularly good because teachers and support staff are caring and dedicated and know the pupils' needs very well. Parents agree that the school puts considerable emphasis on the care and support of its pupils. This is an inclusive school where all children are welcomed. Pupils

from traveller families, and those who have special educational needs or English as an additional language, are very well supported and their unique contribution to the life of the school is valued and celebrated in several ways.

46. The measures that are in place for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. Teachers and classroom assistants manage pupils well and have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. This creates a pleasant atmosphere in which pupils can learn and teachers can teach. The procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very effective and encourage reconciliation, not retaliation. This was seen in the playground when the 'Buddies' role as peacemakers helped to resolve a minor conflict between two pupils. There is a consistent determination among staff to raise pupils' self esteem. They are praised and rewarded for their efforts, for working hard and when achieving high standards in their work. As a result, most grow in confidence and are not afraid of getting something wrong. Pupils also monitor and comment on their own behaviour. There are very effective procedures for promoting racial harmony.
47. The procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good and have helped to maintain the national average in attendance. The school is pro-active in identifying reasons for absence and does its best to discourage parents from taking holidays in term time. There is good support from the educational welfare service as and when needed. Due to the efforts of the school council, rewards are now offered for good attendance and a company is sponsoring a cup to be won by the class achieving the best attendance. Registers are neat and in good order and fulfil legal requirements. Registration periods are efficient and provide an orderly and positive start to lessons.
48. There are good procedures in place for ensuring the health and safety of pupils and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. Regular risk assessments of the site are conducted by the headteacher and the health and safety committee of the governing body as well as by the health and safety executive of the local authority. Any concerns are documented and reported. First aid procedures are good and trained personnel are on site. Regular fire drills and testing of equipment takes place and the school conducts an appropriate risk assessment before taking its pupils off site. All such procedures ensure that pupils work and play in a safe and secure learning environment.
49. Child protection procedures are very good and are well known to staff. Clear guidance is given to all adults who work in school about the procedures to follow if they have a concern. Pupils learn about personal safety in personal and social education. Sex education is delivered sensitively to older pupils and the school is developing further this area of provision. The achievement of the Healthy School Award and the Investors in Children Award are examples of the school's determination to equip pupils with the skills and knowledge to make decisions about their lives in and outside of school. The school fulfils its mission statement that all pupils should have disciplined learning in a caring environment and where Christian values are promoted.
50. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic progress are good overall. The records made of personal development are less well structured and maintained. There has been, however, steady improvement in much of this area since the previous inspection. Data from baseline, National Curriculum and optional tests is analysed well to track pupils' progress through the school. Information is used to set class and individual targets for numeracy and literacy. Teachers check pupils' progress against these targets each term. However, some teachers do not use data as thoroughly as they could or use pupils' individual or group targets as an everyday

source of improvement. The use made of assessment is therefore satisfactory overall.

51. Data and targets relating to individual pupils are also monitored by the headteacher prior to setting new targets for the following year. The use of ICT in helping this process is now a little more developed. Although clear targets are set in numeracy and literacy the same amount of rigour is not yet used to set targets for attainment in science or in some other subjects. Systems for teachers' assessment and recording of progress in these subjects are used consistently and often consist of checklists for learning following the completion of units of work. Any information gathered using this method is passed on to the next class and is clear and useful. Information gained from assessment tests is used well to guide curriculum planning in mathematics and English.
52. The school takes very good care of pupils who have special educational needs and there are very good systems for monitoring their progress and achievements. Pupils' individual plans are annotated to record daily progress and more detailed reviews are regularly updated by teachers. Records of extra provision are comprehensive, contributing well to the informative profiles of how well pupils progress. Similar systems support pupils for whom English is an additional language. The school has a few pupils from traveller backgrounds, who are sometimes on roll for a relatively short period. In view of this, their progress is monitored particularly carefully. Assessments are used well as a means of ensuring they continue to achieve at least satisfactorily, in different schools if need be.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

53. Parents view St Hild's as a good school where their children behave well and become mature and responsible. The partnership between most parents and the school is good and improves pupils' learning and their experiences of school life. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. The value that the headteacher places on the involvement of parents in children's learning is seen in the way she encourages them to help around school. Most parents confirm that the headteacher and staff are approachable and that they are able to discuss any worries or concerns with them. Parents feel positive about the school and the improvements that are being made. At the meeting prior to the inspection and in the questionnaires, most parents show good support for the school and its work. They feel that their children are making good progress because the school expects them to work hard and achieve well. Some parents do not agree with what they feel are excessive amounts of homework that some children are asked to complete, but inspection findings are that homework is generally effective and is enhancing the learning of the pupils.
54. Some parents do not consider that the school to be providing a sufficiently interesting range of activities outside the normal curriculum. However, inspection findings are that the range is satisfactory, is popular with the pupils and is typical of that found in many schools.
55. The quality and quantity of information which parents receive is good. Most are kept well informed through the regular supply of newsletters. Formal consultation evenings are held in the autumn and summer terms but some parents express a wish for more regular information on their child's progress in the period between these two meetings. Parents are informed of their children's individual targets and the curriculum for the term. Parents of children in the reception class enjoy their termly meetings with the teacher and feel that there are excellent links through the

Home/School booklet. They receive information on what children will be learning and how they can help at home. Parents consider that the home/school log is also a very good form of two-way communication and confirm that through it, they are able to share any concerns with their child's teacher. The prospectus is clear and easy to read but does not give parents statutory information on the absence/attendance of pupils. Reports on pupils' progress are satisfactory and whilst they summarise achievement in subjects, they are not always clear about what children need to do to improve. Targets are frequently given but some of these are too vague or are not in language which is accessible to parents. The 'Parents on Line' initiative is giving parents information on the Internet and about how their children are acquiring computer skills. The school's web site is a popular and growing form of communication and the school is already making good use of this valuable resource.

56. The school reaches out to parents but not always with the success it would like. Most parents give good support to the work of the school and to their children's learning through homework activities. This is appreciated by the school. For example, a group of parents were observed during the inspection helping to prepare activities for children in the reception class and another group of parents helped pupils with weaving. Such support has a good impact on learning. Individual parents support teachers by helping in the classroom or in any way they can. The school involves parents by sending home the 'Things to do at home' and 'Reading Together' booklets and these are now well-established and impacting on pupils' standards. Parents are invited to assemblies and school concerts.
57. The Friends' Association supports both children and parents by offering a range of social and fund raising events. This dedicated and hard working group of parents has purchased carpets and window blinds, as well as a digital camera and the 'Friendship Stops' for use with the Buddy System. Their own newsletter gives good information for parents and encourages them to support fund raising in school. The school holds meetings for parents of pupils in Years 2 and 6 to inform them about the summer tests. Parents of children with special educational needs are given opportunity to be fully involved in their child's review process. Only 63 per cent of parents attended the autumn consultation evening and the school is looking at new ways to encourage them to be more involved in their children's learning. Parents are supportive of the way the school identifies and provides for children who have different learning needs. They are informed as soon as there is a concern and are welcomed in discussion about the best provision for their children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

58. The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The headteacher provides effective leadership and is pivotal to much that the school achieves. Together with an experienced deputy, she provides clear educational direction for further improvement and school development. The priorities expressed in the school improvement plan reflect a school that has undergone several staff and other changes in recent times. It is clear that a time of staffing stability would be very beneficial so that school management can implement and evaluate fully those changes already set in motion. Since her appointment in 1997 the headteacher has been careful to maintain the ethos of a well-established and respected church school, but has also been instrumental in developing a new sense of teamwork and commitment to further improvement and change. Much of this work remains challenging and at an early stage, particularly in relation to the many temporary and permanent staff changes that have occurred in recent times. The leadership and management of the school have been strengthened since the previous inspection.

59. The role and influence of the co-ordinators are good overall, although periods of discontinuity have occurred in a few subjects due to changes in personnel. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage, and subjects such as English, mathematics and ICT, are basically very effective and the co-ordinators influence for the good the standards reached by the pupils. Standards in science need to be monitored more regularly and rigorously by the co-ordinator if these are to rise. Some co-ordinators are also very new to their responsibilities but the various priorities they express are usually very pertinent to the point of development reached in their subject. All co-ordinators work to a common job description format and steps are taken for each in turn to monitor pupils' standards alongside teaching and learning in their areas and to produce points for short and longer-term development. Good monitoring has occurred in English, mathematics and most recently in ICT. This is helping to raise standards. The headteacher has maintained a phased programme for staff release aimed at providing additional opportunities for staff training, monitoring and, in time, a more accurate evaluation as to the point of development each subject has reached. This measure is appropriate, particularly in relation to new co-ordinators.
60. The governing body is effective. It meets very clearly its statutory requirements and helps the school achieve its declared aims and objectives. The attention paid to meetings and other statutory requirements is good. As with other parts of school management, governors are strengthening their own monitoring role and beginning to increase their influence in shaping the school's future educational direction. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have begun to raise their own profile in areas such as the curriculum, a move that is designed to raise standards still further and improve the overall quality of education. To this end, governors share their time, interests and expertise to the benefit of the school and its pupils. The chair of governors is very committed and has weekly meetings with the headteacher in order to discuss the progress of various initiatives. Due to temporary staff absence, he is currently helping with the support of music. As it becomes more informed, the governing body has begun also to be more involved in strategic planning. The committee structure of the governing body is good and encourages governors to carry out their business in an efficient manner depending on their interest and expertise. Several governors are particularly influential and experienced in matters of curriculum, finance, buildings and other site matters.
61. The management of special educational needs is very good. The co-ordinator (SENCO) is experienced and has an effective overview of systems including the development of the new Code of Practice. Provision for SEN is therefore managed very well. The SENCO has very good knowledge of all the pupils with special needs and in consultation with other teachers ensures that individual educational plans are of a consistently high quality. Governors too have a good knowledge of the school's work in this field. The SENCO monitors carefully the quality of work carried out by the teaching assistants, who have a very crucial role in supporting pupils in the classroom. Parents are involved at the correct times. The management of the school is also looking at the needs of different groups of pupils to ensure it remains fully inclusive in its philosophy and practice. In this connection, the needs of the most able and talented have now been fully recognised, although the actual provision for such pupils is still at an early stage. The management of pupils from traveller backgrounds is equally well done and supportive. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are also very well monitored, managed and provided for.

62. The school continues to move forward satisfactorily in relation to the many initiatives it has faced, including the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, the formal implementation of personal and social education and the introduction of new forms of staff appraisal (performance management). Good systems are in place to support the induction of newly qualified teachers, several of whom have been appointed in recent times. Various diverse areas for further development have been identified correctly, including how best to raise standards in the core subjects and the provision of better outdoor facilities for the Foundation Stage. Some projects and initiatives have been particularly well staged and managed including the linking of nursery and reception planning and facilities, and the establishment of a new ICT suite, all of which have led to improved learning.
63. The systems for the monitoring and evaluation of the school's overall performance and taking effective action are good. Some very good measures have been developed including its acceptance as a 'Healthy School' and Investors in Children. Policies and procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are currently good but have been less effective in the recent past due mainly to the many staff changes that have occurred. The school has become self-evaluative and is looking more critically than before at its past results including those aspects of pupils' attainment that need to be improved or strengthened. For example, the ongoing priority to improve pupils' written work has been successful, especially in Years 1 and 2. Management is also aware of the need to raise the quality of teaching and learning to the level of the best and has secure plans in hand for this to occur. The annual development plan presents a general survey of the needs of the school in a wide range of areas. The priorities expressed are appropriate to the growth of the school and management has made steady progress in the areas currently under review. It is a useful tool for helping staff and governors with the review and monitoring process and has clear focused targets for development.
64. The school's finances are well administered and monitored by the headteacher, school secretary and governors. The most recent school audit showed financial systems and procedures to be sound overall, but with improvements, financial control and management are now good overall. The school makes effective use of its annual budget and financial grants are correctly targeted and accounted for. Clear links are made between the annual budget and priorities expressed in the school development plan. The school is aware of the need to gain best value for the pupils in its purchases and use of educational resources and applies such principles well. The day-to-day running of the office is very good and is well organised by the headteacher and an experienced and efficient secretary. The school makes good use of new technology including the very latest means of raising and processing orders and maintaining its records on databases. Overall, the school gives sound value for money.
65. Current staffing levels are satisfactory in meeting the pupils' needs as well as the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. Support staff provide experienced and well-informed help to pupils and teachers in a wide range of everyday situations. This has a marked impact on the pupils' progress, particularly those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. The level and quality of educational resources are good and an effective feature of the best teaching and learning. Good use is made of the local authority's loan service for books and artefacts to support history and geography in particular.
66. The available accommodation is of a satisfactory standard to deliver the planned curriculum and meet the needs of the pupils. It is particularly bright and well maintained, a credit to the cleaning staff. Classrooms are of sufficient size for the

number of pupils although in some junior classes, space is at a premium. The outdoor provision for nursery and reception children needs improving and the school has this as a clear priority on its current building plans. The new look to the classrooms in the Foundation Stage is a strength of provision and the school library and computer suites are very attractive and valued resources. Displays of work in classrooms and corridors are often of exceptional quality and contain significant amounts of pupils' own work, which is clearly valued and celebrated.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

67. In order to improve standards and develop the quality of education provided by the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

(a) **Raise standards in English by:**

- giving younger pupils in particular more opportunities and greater confidence to develop their speaking skills in a wide range of contexts;
- ensuring pupils in Years 1 and 2 develop and practise their reading skills in a systematic way building carefully on what they have achieved in the Foundation Stage;
- giving older pupils a clear framework by which they can write more freely, successfully and imaginatively. Plan for a wide range of opportunities that enables them to develop their writing skills across the full curriculum, including their use of various styles for different settings and audiences;
- ensuring that the most able pupils are given written tasks that will fully motivate, challenge and extend them.

(paragraphs 4, 9, 28, 33, 34, 92 - 101)

(b) **Raise standards in science by:**

- improving teachers' knowledge and understanding as how best to teach investigative science.
- ensuring pupils' work is not over directed and that older and more able pupils in particular learn to pose scientific questions for themselves and become more aware of the evidence needed to conduct their own investigations;
- ensuring that science activities are based firmly on pupils' previous knowledge and experiences. Use more precise measures of assessment to ensure teachers are clear as to what pupils know, understand and can do;
- giving all pupils sufficient practice in recording their findings in a logical and coherent way;
- ensuring that the science co-ordinator monitors the progress made in the subject and develops a clear programme for improvement that can be evaluated and modified as the needs of the subject change.

(paragraphs 4, 5, 7, 11, 28, 33, 51, 59, 111 - 117)

(c) **Raise standards in mathematics in Years 1 and 2 by:**

- laying additional emphasis on pupils' mental work ensuring they have more speedy and accurate recall of their tables and other number facts;
- developing more strategies among the pupils that will help them solve number and other mathematical problems;
- ensuring teachers give pupils more time to work on their mathematical activities and that less time is spent on prolonged oral sessions that slow the pace of their learning.

(paragraphs 4, 5, 29, 36, 102 - 110)

(d) **Improve the quality of teaching by;**

- raising teacher expectations as to what can and should be achieved by each pupil. Ensure that, for more able pupils in particular, lessons have sufficient pace and challenge for them to achieve consistently well set against their previous learning;
- ensuring there is a close match of prepared activities to target accurately the particular needs of individual pupils. Use the results of assessment to pinpoint accurately the next steps in their learning.
- wherever possible, sharing with pupils the aims of lessons, ensuring they have a clear picture as to what is expected of them including the point they should reach in their learning;
- extending the initiative given to older pupils in terms of their own learning. Ensure they have sufficient opportunities to make decisions about their own work and how best to complete it to a good standard.

(paragraphs 3, 5, 7, 22 - 25, 28, 33, 34, 51, 106, 111, 112, 115, 132, 142)

Note: The school is already aware of the need to raise standards in these areas and has begun already to put into place appropriate measures to improve its performance.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

53

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

18

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	7	19	26	0	0	0
Percentage	2	13	36	49	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	20	162
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	24

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – 6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	3	73

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	10

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

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

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	10	10
	Girls	13	13	12
	Total	22	23	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (92)	92 (88)	88 (92)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	10	11
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	22	23	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (92)	92 (92)	96 (85)
	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	10	9	19

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	7	8	8
	Girls	8	7	7
	Total	15	15	15
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	79 (76)	79 (76)	79 (86)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	8	n/a
	Girls	7	7	n/a
	Total	12	15	n/a
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	63 (67)	79 (71)	n/a (76)
	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	118	4	0
White – Irish	3	1	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	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	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	2	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	27

Education support staff: YR – Y 6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	86

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	40
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32
Number of pupils per FTE adult	20

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2
	£
Total income	443,569
Total expenditure	444,784
Expenditure per pupil	2235
Balance brought forward from previous year	36,523
Balance carried forward to next year	35,308

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5.5

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	202
Number of questionnaires returned	107

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	36	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	45	3	3	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	45	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40	44	11	3	2
The teaching is good.	57	40	1	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	36	15	1	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	36	4	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	36	0	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	44	42	11	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	43	52	2	2	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	44	1	1	3

The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

35	29	19	5	13
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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

68. The overall provision for children in the nursery and reception classes is good. This represents significant improvement since the previous inspection when the quality of provision, including teaching and learning in the reception class, had areas of weakness. During the current inspection, the quality of teaching and learning was never less than satisfactory and much of it was good or very good. The two teachers plan effectively across all the recognised areas of learning and there is now a unity in the overall provision that was not present before. Support staff are fully involved and add their own enthusiasms and expertise to good effect. Expectations are high and both classes are organised into well-structured learning areas where children's individual needs are clearly identified and catered for. The wide range of interesting activities provides a warm, attractive environment that children enjoy and readily relate to. Children are highly valued and their well being and development are of paramount importance to all staff. The close attention given to detail encourages children to make good progress in both classes. Children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are very well provided for and make good progress. Their needs are identified early and they are well supported in all aspects of their learning.
69. Forty-one children attend the nursery on a part-time basis and this means it is almost run to capacity. Most attend for five sessions per week and enjoy at least three terms of nursery education. Most transfer to the school's reception class in September, although a few go on to schooling elsewhere. Twenty-six children attend full-time in the reception class and there are more boys than girls. Almost all children will have some form of pre-school experience before entering the reception class.
70. The school's assessment information is based around teacher's own assessments and Durham's 'Flying Start' attainment on entry baseline. Significant numbers of children enter both the nursery and reception classes with attainment below that expected for their age. There are particularly strong variations in the standards children exhibit in personal development, communication, language and literacy, aspects of mathematical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Children go on to achieve well in both classes, mainly due to the quality of the curriculum, the effective teaching and the enthusiasm for learning that they show. As a result, significant numbers are on course to achieve the standards for their age by the end of the reception year in all but language and aspects of mathematical development. Many make particularly strong gains in their personal and social development.
71. Nursery and reception staff plan collaboratively for the development of children across the full Foundation Stage. Key decisions are made together as to what activities will be provided, the type of resources needed and how support can best serve the needs of individual children. This works well and leads to children building successfully on their knowledge, skills and experiences. For example, the emphasis on the different seasons increases children's awareness and observations as they move between the classes. Elements of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are introduced appropriately in the reception class and increasing emphasis is placed

on children's oral language as this is an area of weakness in their initial attainment. The teaching and learning of many basic skills is a strength of the overall provision. Children are also managed well and good use is made of a wide range of attractive resources that hold much appeal to the children. Homework has a high profile for the age of the children and is used well to develop early skills in reading, writing and mathematics. A strength of teaching is the use made by all staff of on-going assessment of children's progress and attainment. Areas for particular focus are well planned for on a daily basis and often become the area of learning targeted by the teacher or another adult for special observation and recording. Records are simple but thorough and are used very well by staff to plan the next phase of teaching and learning. A particularly good feature is the on-going compilation of photographs that are entered into a series of portfolios depicting the progress made by children in each area of learning. These provide excellent sources of evidence and serve as reminders to staff as to the wide range of useful ideas that have been used successfully in the past.

72. Positive links are well established between parents and staff. Several parents attend school on a regular basis working either in the nursery on a rota basis or on a range of activities to support learning in reception. Very good induction procedures are in place before children attend nursery and reception. Open days for prospective children and their parents have become familiar features of school life. There is a good brochure for parents and the Foundation Stage Policy is also very good, offering clear guidelines on policy, approach and how best young children learn. The annual reports given to parents on their children's progress are informative and meet their needs.
73. The Foundation Stage is very well led and managed by the deputy headteacher who also acts as co-ordinator for Years 1 and 2 thus ensuring there are effective links between classes. The curriculum for nursery and reception children is very exciting, colourful and presents many and varied opportunities for children to grow and learn together. The accommodation is also good and the recent improvements have brought nursery and reception children even closer together. It creates good space for children to move around and learn from a 'hands on' approach. The space given to role-play corners and creative activities is particularly good. The outside area is small and barely satisfactory, especially for reception. Plans are well developed for this to be greatly improved. Children's work is very well displayed and there are many other displays that are designed to get children thinking and talking and 'having a go' for themselves. Learning resources are plentiful and attractive to use for staff and children alike.

Personal, social and emotional development

74. This area of learning is taught very well and most children are on course to reach the Early Learning goals by the end of the reception year. For many, this represents significant progress due to the relatively low point at which they enter the nursery in particular. Children settle quickly to flexible routines and soon respond to their teacher's expectations. Most quickly make new friends and develop the early stages of independence. They are happy to come and cheerfully collect their name cards at the beginning of each session. They develop confidence and greet each other and adults in a pleasant, caring manner. They like learning, choosing their activities well and are not tempted to move unproductively between what is on offer. Children in both classes are aware of others around them and behave very well, taking their cue from good role models provided by staff and older children. Reception children compile their own class rules as part of a 'contract' to good learning. Play is generally very harmonious, particularly around the water or sand trays. It is also

harmonious in the role play corners, where children quickly become involved in imaginary play, for example in the 'running of the school office.' They listen well to each other, gradually understanding that children of their age come from different homes and backgrounds. During a reception 'circle time', children learnt well about how friends spend their weekends and passed a puppet around the circle so that everyone understood only one child should talk at once. Staff try to broaden the horizons of many. During an early years act of worship, children learned about the many jobs mothers carried out for their children and how, as young children, they can help around the house. They were enthralled when they realised how much time a baby needed in order to be looked after properly.

Communication, language and literacy

75. This area of learning is also taught well and most children make good progress over time. However, because of the below average attainment on entry, significant numbers of children are unlikely to reach the anticipated standards for their age by the end of the reception year. The growth in their social skills leads to greater confidence in speaking and listening and most children achieve well in this area. Teachers plan for such development very well, encouraging productive talk whenever they can. Staff are well deployed to question children and ask them for simple explanations as to what they are doing. Relationships are very good and children feel secure about talking in a non-threatening environment. In the nursery, talking and listening is central to much else that goes on and children develop key words to use in their various activities, Children in the sand and water areas were heard to be using words such as 'building, floating, capsizing, more than and squeezey'.
76. In the nursery, children's oral language is targeted in small groups. In reception this continues, with increasing intervention at critical times by the teacher. Nursery staff allow children to take objects out of a 'talk talk' bag and then provide each child a few moments to try and explain in their own words what exactly they are holding. In reception, the teacher encouraged children to talk about information gathering and how they can find facts from books, the Internet and newspapers. In the same class the children have a 'tricky word' wall or hat and have to learn spellings and recognise new vocabulary.
77. Children begin their early reading skills in the nursery and this is developed well in reception. Parents are encouraged to hear their children read and to share books on an everyday basis. In reception, pupils concentrate on particular phonic blends as part of their 'jolly phonics' programme. They explore lists of objects beginning with 's' and practice 'p' sounds as part of the 'Prickly Pig' story. Children begin making marks on paper in the nursery as part of an introduction to writing their letters. Some are already familiar with letters and sounds that appear in their own name. Sounds soon give way to whole words and in reception, able children can write a little of their own version of the 'Dragon that went to the Park'. Although progress is quite rapid, many children do not acquire oral and written language to the extent that these aspects of literacy and communication are totally secure for their age or by the time they move into Year 1. However, teachers plan for this area of learning effectively and build up wide ranging displays that introduce new vocabulary to children and encourage them to read and write letters under supervision.

Mathematical development

78. Many children leave the reception class quite skilled in their basic counting, shape recognition and have a broad understanding of the value of coins. However,

significant numbers do not have a secure understanding of number patterns, how numbers grow or use number names in the right order in familiar and new contexts. Others are not yet familiar with everyday words to describe position or have the experiences to develop mathematical ideas or solve practical problems. Despite the progress made, significant numbers of children are unlikely to achieve the level expected for their age in this area of learning. However, it is an area that is taught well in the nursery and very well in reception.

79. All staff plan effectively, carefully building on the 'stepping stones' of pupils' previous learning. Both the nursery and reception classes have numerous activities, games and puzzles that engage children in counting and matching, for example, the numeral 3 with three animals or other objects. In the nursery, staff count slowly and carefully the five balloons, buses and dolls. In reception, children enjoy 'big maths' in the hall and learn counting rhymes and songs that reinforce basic counting skills. The teacher encourages counting at every turn, choosing a child to count small groups of children during registration. Nursery children play games trying to find the value of certain coins. One was heard to say at an imaginary ticket office, 'No you can't go in, it costs too much money!' In another scenario, a customer grew angry accusing the shopkeeper of short changing him. Nursery children enjoy counting when going on a 'bear hunt'.
80. Reception children learn much by comparing and contrasting numbers, shapes and sets. In this way, several build up good and useful levels of mathematical vocabulary. They become fascinated by the world of sets when the teacher asks them to make a set of eight small animals and then make another with two less. The reception and nursery staff place much emphasis on repeating patterns and colours and this is beneficial to children's understanding as well as visual recognition of number. Reception children are on course to reach the expected standard in shape recognition. They can compare the lengths of different objects and can make lists of objects that are bigger than, less than or the same size as their pencil. They also use constructional equipment to compare children's heights.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

81. The quality of teaching and learning in this area is good, ensuring children make rapid progress and also many gains in their knowledge and understanding. Most children are on course to reach the Early Learning Goals in this area of learning by the end of their reception year. This is an area where teaching is particularly strong and imaginative and pupils have the benefit of wide ranging provision including attractive resources and many sources of stimulation and interest.
82. The use of computers is very good as is the wide range of visits and visitors that is used to extend pupils' learning. Children make rapid progress on the computer, learning to access different software and to communicate using shapes, images and different data. Nursery children are given rich opportunities to use their senses and to explore many things for themselves. In one lesson, a group visited the new computer suite and by standing on special stools were able to use a digital whiteboard, moving images with great confidence around the screen and choosing menus to activate toys and draw faces using 'colour magic'. Other nursery children begin the basics of science when playing in wet and dry sand or the water trough. They play with 'Bob the Builder' toys and explore movement, capacity and weight by handling and contrasting toys of different types and size. Most show a real interest in the world in which they live and show that knowledge by sharing information books and playing with a large cut-out of a bus. Many are curious and ask a lot about the natural world, including emerging bulbs, flowers and other signs of spring. Their

knowledge and understanding of their own environment is sound and they are aware of how they themselves have changed over time.

83. Reception children progress to a knowledge of things in the wider world including British mammals and the differences between wild and tame animals. Most have a good grasp of the fundamentals of the human body and can make simple jointed figures to illustrate everyday movements. As part of a simple study involving materials and friction, a group of reception children tested the suitability of different surfaces on which a toy could move and recorded their results in simple but effective ways. The same age-group learn by direct observation such as when making their own Easter garden, watching the development of tadpoles and planting willow on the school field.
84. Visitors are used effectively to extend knowledge and develop children's curiosity. During the inspection, a local vet came to the reception classroom and, as well as cutting the pet guinea pig's nails, talked about the care and responsibilities that are a part of pet ownership. Children used language effectively by introducing themselves and asking sensible questions. Other sources of enrichment include local fire fighters and a visit to the local supermarket. Past work is very well recorded by the staff, mainly in photographic form, and used as a means of pupil recall and further points for discussion. The nursery booklets on 'keeping warm' and a visit to the seaside and the Blue Reef Marine Centre, are good examples of such resources.

Physical development

85. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and children make sound progress overall. Most are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals in their physical development by the end of their reception year.
86. In both the nursery and reception classes there are many opportunities for children to develop their fine motor skills. Completion of various jigsaws gives them good practice in handling and retrieving small objects. Similarly, children thoroughly enjoy threading activities that develop their sense of pattern and order as well as hand/eye co-ordination. The nursery in particular provides a wide range of construction toys, big and small, so that children can learn about balance, strength and delicate movements. Reception children handle scissors well for their age and are able to practise fine movements with paintbrushes of differing thickness.
87. The outside area is about the right size for nursery children but is a space less suited to growing reception children. The school compensates for this by encouraging the Foundation Stage to use the school hall whenever possible and this gives them a lot of potential for large movements. Reception children show considerable enthusiasm for these sessions, skipping, jumping, moving in different directions and learning how to transfer their weight. Nursery children have a good range of outside toys including trikes and trundle toys that help develop their gross motor skills and also develop strength, balance and confidence. A limited amount of physical activity was available for observation during the inspection, but teachers' files and photographic evidence give a strong indication that it is an area of learning adequately planned for and resourced.

Creative development

88. This is an area of learning that is well taught and provided for enabling children to achieve well and to grow in skill and creativity. Most children are likely to reach and significant numbers exceed the Early Learning Goals in this area by the end of their

reception year. The nursery in particular provides strong evidence of skilful teaching but all Foundation Stage staff work hard and well to ensure a richness of provision that incorporates mathematics, language, physical and personal development.

89. Staff are quick to exploit children's natural curiosity and delight while working with colour, shape and forms of creative expression. The role corners provide rich sources of imaginative play where children are readily transported to an office, a bus or the kitchen at home. Expressive language is a natural by-product of such play. Staff are a great source of musical jingles and rhymes and introduce music into the curriculum as much as possible so that children learn to express themselves in a wide variety of contexts. Action songs are particularly popular and well executed by most children.
90. Nursery children have the benefit of their teacher being the art and design co-ordinator for the primary school and she is able to provide a wide variety of media and ideas for children to explore and create from. Some of the artwork supports language and communication or children's learning about pattern in number. Children make their initials from coloured ribbon whilst others use growing cress seeds for the same purpose. Nursery children are encouraged to explore printing techniques using small wheels and leaves. They learn very well about the impact of colour by creating collages in blue, silver and gold. The teacher encourages close observation and drawing objects from first hand, using pencil, pastel and crayon. As with reception children, there are good opportunities to experiment with colour mixing and working on different scales.
91. The good teaching in the reception class gives children opportunities to build and expand on their nursery experiences. Some good examples of self-portraits are carefully displayed to encourage talk and ideas for improvement. Children make small animals from salt dough and show great pleasure with the results, comparing them to pictures of animals in books. Much emphasis is given to bold, bright and complementary colours as could be seen when reception children made symmetrical butterflies. There is also growing emphasis on two-dimensional art with the making of attractive paper bag puppets. Support staff are used particularly well during group activities with a creative theme. One group of reception children combined mathematical development, hygiene and creativity by weighing out the ingredients for small cakes and baking them in the staff room oven. This particular area of learning is used very effectively as a resource for classroom display and children in both classes are quick to show visitors their finished efforts and the pride they feel.

ENGLISH

92. Standards in English are below average overall by the end of Years 2 and 6. Standards are lower than at the previous inspection. In comparison to schools nationally, significant numbers of pupils are reaching average levels at the ages of seven and 11, though comparatively fewer are reaching the above average levels. There has also been an increase in the numbers of pupils with special educational needs. Taking into account their limited skills in literacy when they enter Year 1, pupils make steady progress during their time at school. There is no marked difference between the progress and attainment of girls and boys. The best progress is often made by pupils with special educational needs and by those who have English as an additional language. This is because they receive more individual help and are set work that is closely matched to their assessed needs. There are other strengths in the subject. Pupils gain a very good grasp of letter sounds and blends. This helps them to develop their skills in reading and in spelling. There are

also good resources that add to the quality of the learning. In particular the library is an excellent resource and is well used. The main areas in need of development are, raising standards of speaking and listening and reading in Years 1 and 2, and in setting greater challenges to extend the more able pupils in most classes, particularly in the junior years. The subject leader provides good guidance and support to staff in several key areas. Areas of weakness have been accurately identified and steps taken to improve them over time. For example, standards in writing are much improved in Years 1 and 2 and have now reached average levels. However, changes of staff have made it difficult to maintain the development of some planned initiatives.

93. Standards of speaking and listening are below those normally observed by the end of Year 2. These skills are, however, satisfactory by the end of Year 6. The more able pupils are regular contributors to the discussions that open and close most literacy lessons. They listen carefully and speak with confidence. Significant numbers of younger pupils listen attentively but are not confident when asked to speak to the class. Sometimes their contributions are very limited and their words are difficult to hear. The school has speaking centres that enable groups of up to four pupils to listen to a tape via headphones. These are not sufficiently used to develop listening skills, particularly with tapes that provide instructions for the pupils to act upon. Opportunities are also missed to encourage pupils to discuss and develop their ideas in pairs. Such discussions would clarify their thoughts prior to these being written down and could also be used to discuss the work, once completed, to check on how it could be improved. By Years 5 and 6, pupils are expected to consider contentious issues such as the use of vivisection in research. They respond well when given such high levels of challenge.
94. Standards of reading are below average by the end of Year 2 and are in line at the end of Year 6. Pupils make good progress in gaining the basic skills of working out unknown words by splitting them into smaller parts that they then blend together. This gives them confidence to tackle simple texts and to gain pleasure from reading them. The school puts a strong emphasis on teaching the pupils letter sounds (with linked hand signals) to lay a solid foundation to their learning. Parents also play a significant role in giving extra practice on a regular basis to reinforce the school's work. Good dialogue between teachers and parents is maintained throughout the school via diaries that maintain a record of the books read. They also give parents the opportunity to make comments and ask questions about the progress being made by their children.
95. As the pupils get older, they develop their library skills. They know how to find books containing the information they are seeking and develop skills in note taking and interpreting the evidence for their own studies. The school library, with its computerised record keeping and its thorough system of classification, provides a very good facility for learning that every class exploits. Although pupils in Years 1 and 2 become skilled at recognising new words, they have more difficulty in fully understanding their meanings than do pupils in most schools. This limits the development of their learning in different subject areas. However, pupils develop a genuine appreciation of books both as sources of pleasure and as resources for learning. One initiative deserving of recognition is the 'paired reading', whereby older pupils give weekly help to younger children in other classes to develop self-confidence and a love of books.
96. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 to reach average writing standards. However, this good progress is not maintained through the older classes. By Year 6, standards return to below average. Success in the earlier years is due to the good

development of letter sounds and of letter formations on paper. Skills, introduced well in the Foundation Stage, are built upon successfully. Pupils are given opportunities to develop their own thoughts in print. Skills taught in the literacy lessons are further developed across other subjects. For example, in history, Year 2 pupils imagine they were present at The Great Fire of London. Their stories included, 'The wind got stronger and stronger and wouldn't stop' ... 'We got a fright. We couldn't believe our house was on fire' ... 'We ran as fast as we could to the Church so we wouldn't die'. This level of involvement brings the past back to life and makes writing exciting.

97. There is not regularly the same spark or the development of skills from Years 3 to 5. The actual skills of handwriting are not systematically taught. For some, this limits pupils' fluency. Several do not regularly have opportunities to write at length. On occasions, they are allowed this freedom and then their work becomes livelier and more individual. For example, they produced some very exciting work in an English / geography homework challenge, when seeking information about a country of their choice that 'Barnaby Bear' might wish to visit. Others in Year 6 wrote imaginatively about what it would be like to be a child evacuee in World War Two.
98. The English curriculum is enriched annually by visits from authors, poets and illustrators. These often take the form of workshops where pupils are challenged to search their own imaginations for ideas, such as 'It's not fair!' ... 'She's allowed in and I'm not!' ... 'His pencil is sharp and mine's blunt!' This helps them to realise they may have a talent for poetry writing. This is seen later in more sensitive work, such as a Year 4 pupils' poem which includes, 'Blue is for a blueberry, waiting to be found, Blue is for relaxing in a swimming pool.'
99. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. There are consistent strengths in the teaching of many basic skills, the high expectations of pupil behaviour and in aspects of their work presentation. There is also very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and the teaching of English to pupils from ethnic minority groups. Within these groups, individual targets for improvements in English are mapped out clearly and concisely, ensuring good progress is achieved in small, well defined stages. There are also particular strengths in Years 5 and 6. Here the high expectations focus on developing pupils' thinking. This is seen in lessons where intellectual challenges stretch pupils of all abilities. It is also seen in the pupils' books, where the marking is very analytical and demanding, enabling the pupils to gain new levels of understanding. The assessment of standards in English is good, with annual tests scrutinised carefully to identify areas of weakness waiting to be rectified.
100. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have, pasted in the back of their writing books, a breakdown of the skills they have acquired and those they still need to develop. However, these are not used sufficiently by the pupils to set themselves individual targets and to respond to these in their daily lessons. Opportunities are frequently missed to extend the pupils' personal development by giving them greater responsibility for improving their own work. For example, they are rarely encouraged to make modifications to their original ideas, even in their drafting books. All lessons have specific objectives for new learning. These are not always precise enough for the pupils to understand and are not sufficiently explained to them or reviewed at the end of the lesson. Consequently, pupils are not always aware of what it is that they are supposed to have learnt during the lesson and how far they can assess their own progress.

101. Resources for English are good and are well used by staff and pupils. The library is a particularly attractive area and used to good effect. Increasingly, computers are being used to develop literacy skills. The computer suite is well used by every class to apply new skills so that pupils are able to gain a good awareness of how important information and communication technology will play in their future lives. ICT could improve still further the provision for pupils with special educational needs and extend the development of the more able pupils identified by the school. One particular area of success in the teaching of English is the way that the subject is used to promote issues of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Pupils benefit from developing feelings of self-worth through creativity, and consider issues of right and wrong when given the opportunity to debate together in groups. They regularly hear stories from around the world to gain sympathy for, and an understanding of, the lives and feelings of other people. This widens their own horizons and tests their own feelings and values.

MATHEMATICS

102. Standards seen at the end of Year 2 are below average. However, by the end of Year 6 most pupils reach the standards expected for their age. Since the previous inspection standards at the end of Year 2 have fallen, but have remained broadly similar for pupils in Year 6. The dip in standards can be accounted for mainly by the significant proportion of pupils currently on the school's register for special educational needs. There have also been some periods of unsettled teaching in that year group. Mathematical development is often below average when pupils enter Year 1. Assessment data shows that there is no significant difference between the achievements of girls and boys. Although data shows that some aspects of mathematics have improved steadily over time, pupils still do not achieve as well as those in similar schools.
103. Given their attainment on entry to the school pupils make steady progress over time. By the end of Year 6 most have a sound knowledge of number and place value of decimals. They complete mental and written calculations accurately and understand fractions and their equivalent percentages. Pupils have a good knowledge of shape and angles and use ICT appropriately when interpreting and presenting data.
104. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 and achieve as well as expected in relation to their abilities. Their basic knowledge and understanding of number, shape and measure is satisfactory and simple written calculations are generally accurate. However, mental recall of number facts and pupils' use of mental strategies to solve number problems are not so well developed.
105. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Although some good and very good features were seen during the inspection, the work in pupils' books shows that for many the pace of learning is satisfactory. Teaching is stronger for pupils in the Year 5/6 class and this is reflected in their more consistent progress. They were seen to make very good progress in some lessons because of the extra pace and challenge, which the teacher built into her lesson. There was also a rigorous mental 'warm up' in lessons that prepared the pupils very well for their main activity. Work was carefully pitched at the right level for different ability groups and expectations of all pupils were high. By the end of the lesson, all pupils could calculate securely the interior angles of triangles. Higher attaining pupils solved more complex problems, which tested their understanding of angles round a point as well as angles in a straight line.

106. Good progress was seen in the mixed Year 4/5 class when pupils linked their earlier work in ICT to data handling as a means of solving number problems. By using a special (Venn) diagram to sort numbers, they learned that some multiples of numbers belong to more than one set, effectively consolidating their understanding of multiplication facts. Learning was particularly good for lower attaining pupils, who responded well to the practical challenge set and were very well supported by the class teacher and the teaching assistant. Higher attaining pupils, although using bigger numbers, were not so rigorously challenged.
107. Teachers' planning is satisfactory. Where teachers embrace fully the National Numeracy Strategy, clear objectives are set and there is a good balance of time between direct teaching and practical work. In the best lessons, this improves the pace of learning. In some lessons, however, the pace is too slow because the teacher's explanations are too long. When this happens there is too little time left for pupils to consolidate their learning through practical work. Mental and oral sessions sometimes lack pace and rigour also, and do not challenge sufficiently pupils' quick recall and mental agility. All teachers manage pupils very well. They are very consistent in both their expectations and their use of praise to reward and encourage pupils. As a result, very good relationships are established. In the most effective lessons, pupils show respect for their teachers, behave well and generally work hard.
108. Teaching assistants work very skilfully with small groups and individual pupils who have recognised special educational needs. They support them during lessons by clarifying ideas and questioning to help them keep pace. They know the pupils well, are sensitive to their different needs and make a very valuable contribution to their learning. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress, because of the extra-targeted support they receive and because all staff are fully aware of their needs.
109. ICT is used appropriately to support learning. A good example was seen in the Year 5/6 class when two pupils used a computer programme to help them estimate and measure the sizes of different angles. Homework is used well to support pupils' learning of basic skills. For example, pupils in Year 2 are given some challenging word problems and number investigations. There are however, inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' marking. Where the best practice is seen, pupils' work is clearly evaluated and comments indicate how work might be improved. At other times, marking is superficial and does not contribute to assessments.
110. The subject is well led and managed by an experienced co-ordinator. Since the previous inspection she has ensured that the National Numeracy Strategy is fully embedded into the school's curriculum. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are now good. This is a good improvement. The quality of teaching and of pupils' work is monitored regularly and pupils' targets are reviewed frequently to ensure that they are challenging enough. There are good resources including ICT software and these are used effectively to support learning. Mathematics is currently a focus of the school's improvement plan. Rigorous monitoring has enabled the co-ordinator to identify some areas for development and amend planning in order to deal with aspects such as problem solving and improved mental arithmetic.

SCIENCE

111. Pupils' attainment in science is below the expected level by the end of Years 2 and 6. This is mainly because too few pupils reach the higher than average level. Whilst an appropriate number of children attain the national average, the school does not

yet identify those pupils who are potentially more able in the subject and create an appropriate teaching programme for them.

112. Most pupils make sound progress through both Key Stages although this is uneven across some year groups. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the effective support they receive and by the setting of activities that are well matched to their ability. Pupils with English as an additional language are also well supported and make satisfactory progress. Pupils' learning in science is well supported by practical activities and this enables them to consolidate an understanding of scientific knowledge. The school has adapted a national scheme for teaching science and this is used consistently to ensure appropriate coverage of life processes, materials and their properties and the physical processes of science. Pupil progress is sound in these areas throughout the school. However, progress is unsatisfactory in the pupils' development of scientific enquiry, as rather too much of the work is over directed and pupils have insufficient opportunities to undertake independent tests of their own, devising or to record and state conclusions in their own words.
113. Standards and progress in science have not improved in line with national trends and are now lower than those reported in the previous inspection. In part this can be attributed to other factors such as a higher proportion of pupils with special education needs in the current Year 6, frequent staff changes and the relatively high number of pupils who move between schools. However, improvements are also needed to teachers' subject knowledge of investigative science. In addition, more effective arrangements need to be made for identifying and challenging those pupils with above average attainment and a flair for science.
114. The teaching of the knowledge and understanding of science is satisfactory. It is good in Year 1 and occasionally very good in the Year 5/6 class. Lessons are carefully planned. The use of lesson objectives to inform the pupils at the outset of a session what they will be taught is used effectively. The endings of lessons are sometimes, but not always, used to check with pupils what they feel they have learned. Scientific language is taught well. Some effective use is also made of information and communication technology to support learning in the subject. For example, the Year 5/6 class used electric probes and a graph plotting programme to record how the temperatures of ice and boiling water converged to room temperature. This activity was enhanced by the teacher asking the pupils to draw a predictive chart first, in order to compare their ideas with later findings. A further contribution to this work was made by some astute and helpful marking by the teacher to get a pupil to explain why he had made certain predictions. Helpful and effective marking is a strength of the school's teaching of science. Pupils' knowledge and understanding is probed well by some searching questioning and appropriate intervention during activities.
115. The methodology behind undertaking an investigation or a test is taught soundly. However, the pupils are then given too few opportunities to demonstrate that they can think creatively, pose questions to open a scientific investigation and anticipate the form of evidence needed or the equipment required. Many also find it difficult to present their findings in an appropriate range of ways and to use their own scientific knowledge to understand and explain outcomes. Some teachers over direct their pupils during aspects of scientific inquiry.
116. Pupils' work is generally neat and well presented, with carefully drawn and labelled diagrams. Most take pride in their work. A few teachers are beginning to give pupils more opportunities to record their own findings and to draw their own conclusions,

but this is not common practice. Where it does occur, pupils respond well and their progress is heightened. Most pupils show good, positive attitudes to science and their behaviour is good and frequently very good. Because they pay close attention to instruction and settle to the task quickly, most make sound progress. They co-operate well in pairs and work well in groups. There were many instances observed of pupils helping each other and the good teaching encourages this.

117. The subject is led and managed satisfactorily and the temporary co-ordinator has introduced some effective features into the teaching programme, such as the integration of aspects of personal, health and social education with an emphasis on healthy eating. Some of these aspects are also linked well to work in ICT. However, the teaching of investigative science and the appropriate match of work to the ability of the individual have not been fully addressed. Aspects of the assessment of pupils' work could also be improved. Learning resources are good. Homework is used successfully to reinforce and extend work in school, particularly in the junior classes.

ART AND DESIGN

118. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection and remain higher than those typically seen at the end of Years 2 and 6. The art curriculum is well planned to include a good range of creative opportunities using different media. Pupils' skills benefit also from the enrichment brought by visiting artists and sculptors.
119. Pupils throughout the school make good progress and achieve well. There is no significant difference between the standards achieved by girls and boys. Basic skills are taught effectively and pupils build up skills and techniques using sketchbooks, printing, collage and three-dimensional work. Artwork is also linked well to other subjects. For example, some impressive batik work was inspired by a visiting Indian artist, who also taught pupils some traditional dance from that country. Collage techniques and colour are combined well by pupils in Year 2 to create the dramatic effect of the Great Fire of London. Visiting local artists have stimulated pupils' imaginations, contributing well to their achievements in abstract painting and clay sculpture.
120. Pupils who have learning difficulties, and those who learn English as an additional language, progress as well as others. They are supported very well in lessons by class teachers and teaching assistants, who know their specific needs well and ensure that the work set is achievable and enjoyable.
121. ICT is used well by pupils to design and create artwork. A good example is the work in the style of Matisse created by rotating shapes in a spiral pattern. This was developed by the pupils from their original collage design. The display also includes pupils' written views as to the advantages and disadvantages of using a computer to create pictures. These opportunities to reflect on art contribute well to the pupils' personal and spiritual development.
122. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are confident with the subject and use their own knowledge and skills effectively to plan interesting and challenging lessons. In a Year 2 session, the teacher used the work of different artists and designers to generate ideas for the pupils' repeated print designs. After a clear illustration and explanation, pupils prepared their own work space before beginning their prints. The teacher used the opportunity well to encourage good personal development by reminding pupils about co-operating and to think of others when using resources. During the activity pupils worked enthusiastically. Plastic cups and

corks used as printing blocks were both manageable and effective and pupils' mathematical as well as creative skills were tested as they worked out the sequences of their patterns. Extra teaching support ensured that pupils with special educational needs were fully included and extended. All pupils managed to create a fish mono-print as well as a repeated design to be used as a background.

123. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were similarly challenged by good teaching. They developed their earlier work on skin tones by examining portraits by well known artists such as Reubens, Renoir and Mogdigliani. There was some good discussion about the approach and techniques used by different artists before the teacher asked pupils to sketch portraits themselves showing the opposite characteristics to those seen in their chosen portraits. Pupils clearly understood the task and demonstrated some good skills when working on the tone and line of their drawings.
124. The co-ordinator for art and design provides good leadership and manages the subject well. She has developed a relevant curriculum, which provides good support for all teachers and helps them plan a systematic approach to the development of artistic skills in their pupils. Assessment arrangements are sound and provide a clear overview of pupils' progress. A school art portfolio is being added to the current system of retaining selected pieces of pupils' work from around the school. This is helping to ensure that the quality of provision and the standards reached are both being maintained. Good resources are used effectively to help pupils develop their skills and techniques. The school is currently working hard to achieve the Silver Artsmark Award, an acknowledgement and record of pupils' high standards in the subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

125. Standards in design and technology are above average by the end of Year 2 and are at the expected level for pupils by the end of Year 6. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress whilst those in Years 3 to 6 make satisfactory progress overall, as do those pupils with English as an additional language. Pupils with special education needs tend to make good progress as their targets are sharply defined and they are well supported by staff in general. There are no significant differences between the standards attained by girls and boys. The standards reached by the pupils at the end of Year 2 have improved since the previous inspection, whilst standards have remained at a satisfactory level by the end of Year 6.
126. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress because appropriate emphasis is placed on developing their skills of designing as well as making. They are given sufficient opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of food and textiles as well as construction and modelling work. The teachers' use of the digital camera to record the pupils' finished products is an effective addition to their design and make files and is a good example of ICT strengthening pupils' work in design and technology.
127. By the end of Year 6, the pupils make some of their models and artefacts to a high standard, supported by good planning and research work. However, between Years 3 and 5 progress is more variable, and working with textiles and some aspects of design are not given sufficient attention. Whilst pupils' design work is recorded very carefully and supported by well drawn sketches, more precise, advanced designs are not being developed to the full and accurate measurements are used insufficiently. The pupils' finished products also tend to be evaluated less critically.

128. Only a limited number of lessons were available to gain a secure judgement on teaching and learning. Planning and past projects suggest that the quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory in Years 3 to 5. Teaching is very good in the Year 5/6 class. The school has adopted a national primary scheme for design and technology and has adapted it well to the needs of the pupils. Some work is also linked well to other curriculum areas, which provides good purpose and a wide range of contexts for the finished work. For instance, Year 4/5 pupils designed and made Greek vases. The Year 5/6 class made an Anderson shelter derived from a study of the Second World War. This was well supported by information they obtained from Internet sites and by visiting a World War camp, admirably linking their work in science, history and ICT in a meaningful way. The pupils' model shelter was linked to computer control for a plane to fly overhead. The lights and a radio can be turned on in the shelter. The pupils are justifiably proud of their work and explain it all to visitors enthusiastically, showing good knowledge of the processes involved.
129. Another feature of the good practice being developed in some classes is an increase in pupils' independent working. This results in flair and imagination being seen in much of their work. The current work of Year 2 on 'My Vehicle' produced a wide range of models that use a wide selection of materials and techniques. The results form a delightful range of transport, from the traditional van to a rocket vehicle. This work also shows how well pupils have been taught to design and to evaluate their work. Their plans include annotated diagrams, numbered sequences of instructions, drawings of specific detail such as axle construction and boxed text to highlight changes. A boy could explain his changes. 'When it was finished one wheel was shorter than the others. I was sad so I changed the wheel. It works better now.'
130. At times homework is used successfully to support learning in design and technology. For example, some older pupils were asked to create the idea of a 'Pandora's Box' based upon their history study of Greek mythology. The pupils' attitude to design and technology is very good. They work with care to create good designs. Many also work well independently, selecting their own resources and designing from their own ideas without too much teacher intervention.
131. The subject is led and managed satisfactorily and enthusiastically. The co-ordinator monitors her colleagues' planning and regularly scrutinises pupils' work. She responds well to teachers' suggestions and requests for help. The school has a helpful policy and a nationally approved scheme that has been successfully modified to provide strong cross-curricular links. The work is soundly resourced and these are well organised. A very effective link has been made with some 'Business Ambassadors' (local structural engineers). A helpful assessment framework has also been introduced. More emphasis could be given to pupils' skills in design within Years 3 to 6.

GEOGRAPHY

132. By the end of Years 2 and 6 pupils' standards are at the level anticipated for their age. Most make sound progress due to at least satisfactory teaching and learning and the provision of a broad curriculum that develops skills and knowledge to an appropriate level. Girls and boys achieve broadly similar levels and show equal enthusiasm for their learning in class. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make sound progress and have no difficulties in accessing the full curriculum, mainly through the support they are offered. The reading of worksheets, for example, is not usually a problem and, when

writing, the activities set by the teacher are well matched to the pupils' overall abilities. Although the progress made by higher attaining pupils is satisfactory, it could be extended by more challenging work that would raise their interest in geography and provide greater variety to their learning. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

133. Much of the inspection evidence centred on route making, mapping and a knowledge of the local environment, although there were some past examples of regional geography and studies of countries overseas. In Year 1, pupils made a detailed study of where they live and record their simple routes to school that include local landmarks. This work was appropriate for their age and reflected sound knowledge of the streets around the school and of the area surrounding their own homes. Pupils in Year 2 are given some good opportunities to compare different regions (some of them abroad) and to develop their geographical vocabulary over time. The imaginary Isle of Struay in Scotland is compared in detail to Durham. Further comparisons are made between their own area and the Mexican village of Tocuaro. Some pupils used the Internet well and found that in recent times an area of Mexico had suffered an earthquake and this led to further comparisons and research.
134. Pupils in Year 3 also compile their own maps showing suggested routes to the local supermarket. Although pupils show an increasing knowledge of mapping symbols, the efforts of several have not developed in sophistication or detail since their earlier attempts in the infant years. The topic in Years 4 and 5 was linked to settlements in history and pupils showed satisfactory knowledge as to why settlements sprung up where they did and what factors governed their growth. Their knowledge of approved Ordnance Survey symbols is sound for their age. In Years 5 and 6 pupils made a detailed study of the water cycle, linking the work successfully to science, language and mathematics. This led to a study of rivers and the impact of rain and melting ice on water levels and the land use. This topic was well taught and pupils showed satisfactory recall of the main points of learning and could apply their new knowledge to different rivers around the region and in the world.
135. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and there are strengths in the Year 5/6 class, where the teacher uses available material imaginatively and challenges the pupils to learn plenty for themselves. There is scope for more use of ICT in the development of pupils' knowledge, although the Internet is already quite widely used in the junior years. Homework is used well. The entire school was given a project to illustrate where in the world 'Barnaby Bear' might visit. Many pupils took up the challenge and helped produce a large display of maps and information depicting places as diverse as Skegness, the Amazon and New Zealand. Teachers also use resources well. Assessments are those suggested within the national framework for geographical learning and are used satisfactorily to check on progress and learning.
136. The curriculum meets statutory requirements although there is some danger that, where geography alternates with history on the timetable, the pupils' skills are not always being consolidated effectively and then developed further. The new co-ordinator for the subject is aware of this potential problem by seeking to identify the essential skills that should pertain to each year group. Geography is soundly led and managed and the new co-ordinator shows good awareness of subject priorities. Resources are good, particularly the use made of attractive texts and stories drawn from the Literacy Strategy. Several year groups are able to use the local and more distant environments to good advantage and pupils have enjoyed visits to Hall Hill Farm, local shops, Rainton Meadows and Newcastle Airport. The lessons being

undertaken in French by Year 6 pupils have also helped their understanding of the geography of that country.

HISTORY

137. Standards in history are broadly in line with national expectations for the age of the pupils by the end of Years 2 and 6. There are no significant differences between the attainment of girls and boys across the school. Pupils make satisfactory progress in all classes relative to their prior attainment. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make mainly good progress due to a good match of work to their assessed level of ability and to effective support that gives them confidence and positive attitudes to their learning. Written tasks are not too demanding and good emphasis is given on them recording knowledge and understanding of history in other ways. The subject has made sound progress since the previous inspection with new topics now securely planned for and with standards and achievement at broadly similar levels to those reported in 1997.
138. Pupils in Year 2 show satisfactory knowledge and understanding of historical timelines together with events and famous people who have helped shape the past. Their two most recent projects were tackled in very different ways but pupils retain knowledge well enough and show good aptitude when comparing events in the past with their own modern world. Their work on the Great Fire of London was well researched and taught and brought pupils considerable insight into life and people of the times. Several pupils used their literacy skills well when compiling imaginative accounts of the fire and its impact on the life of a city. The final display in the school hall was well illustrated and brought about much discussion from pupils around the school. Their other project on Florence Nightingale was well underway during the inspection and pupils showed satisfactory awareness and knowledge of Victorian England and how nursing has changed over time.
139. A strength of provision is in the use made of artefacts. Year 1 pupils were able to handle a range of very early household goods and this gave them appropriate insight into Victorian England. A similar lesson in Years 5 and 6 encouraged pupils to deduce life in the past from handling artefacts. The same pupils were largely successful in identifying the purpose/use of an artefact and discussing its modern day equivalent.
140. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 undertook a major topic on past occupiers of Britain and studied the contribution made to this country by invading Celts and Romans. As with other year groups, pupils' knowledge and understanding is shown, on questioning, to be sound, but their written work is often disappointing and incomplete. More could be asked of higher attaining pupils, for example in completing their own work or carrying out more research from reference books and the Internet. There is also more scope for skills in ICT to be used more widely in the subject. Historical sources are, however, generally well used by many staff and pupils. History is used very effectively to support art and design. During the inspection, Year 4/5 pupils were proud to show their three-dimensional models of Greek pots and urns completed as part of their project on the Ancient Greek civilisation. Some sound work was also completed in a set of booklets depicting the Vikings and Egyptians.
141. By Year 6, pupils show more care with independent research and produce work that is less driven by the teacher. The class theme on World War Two had proven very popular. It also produced valuable opportunities for pupils to explore history in an imaginative setting. Pupils wrote sensitively and convincingly about evacuee children and what it might have been like to experience the Blitz. Following a visit to the Eden

Army Museum, pupils compiled publicity fliers that could be used to attract tourists to the camp. The same war project made useful links to ICT when pupils designed a working model of an Anderson Shelter and used a computer generated link to light it up and switch on a radio.

142. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory across the school. Teachers show good levels of knowledge and understanding of history projects and how best to weave this into meaningful exercises for the pupils. Pupils are also encouraged to record their work in exercise books rather than merely filling in gaps on worksheets. Although the end results are not always satisfactory, this approach is one to persist with as it encourages the raising of literacy standards through another area of the curriculum. The methods used to teach historical facts are satisfactory and frequently imaginative. Good use is made, for example of primary and secondary sources including attractive material drawn from the local authority's loan scheme. The management of pupils is good and little time is wasted in securing their interest and enthusiasm, factors that contribute well to pupils' learning. A few teachers need to rethink the work set for higher attaining pupils to ensure it retains their interest and provides suitable challenge for them to move on. Homework is used well to extend pupils' learning and to encourage independent research. Assessments made in history mainly refer to end of unit testing and are adequate for recording and reporting purposes.
143. The subject is led and managed satisfactorily by a new co-ordinator who has been quick to establish resources and other subject priorities as a means of improving pupils' standards and progress. There is a helpful scheme, which gives clear guidance on topics and how the subject can be used to strengthen the personal development of the pupils. It also gives valuable guidance as to how history can be meaningfully linked to other subjects. The Durham area is rich in history and useful visits are made to such diverse sites as Beamish Museum, Durham Cathedral, Durham Light Infantry Museum and Bede's World. Resources are plentiful, attractive and well integrated into learning across the school. The use of the Internet as a source of history is being exploited well at present but the school could usefully purchase additional software to support pupil research.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

144. Pupils are on course to reach the expected standards for their age by the end of Years 2 and 6. This is an improvement over the previous inspection when standards were below the levels expected for 7 and 11 year-olds. The development of ICT in its many forms is a relative strength of the school. Because of these developments, pupils now make satisfactory progress throughout the school although progress is slower in those classes where teachers still require some training. Progress is good in the Year 5/6 class where teaching is particularly effective. These pupils are now reaching above average standards in some aspects of the subject but standards remain average overall. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make sound progress. Accessing computers presents few difficulties for them and many respond well to the pictorial and graphic ways of working.
145. At the time of the previous inspection, insufficient use was made of computers in the wider curriculum and pupils made relatively slow progress. There have been significant changes since that time. The school has created a new computer suite that is well resourced with networked computers, a projector and interactive white board and Internet access. Although staff training in ICT has been affected by high staff turnover, there is still considerable expertise in both key stages and the facilities

of the computer suite are beginning to be used well. The recently appointed co-ordinator brings good ICT knowledge to the school and is supporting her colleagues well. The latest timetable arrangements now mean that pupils have sufficient time for their skill, knowledge and understanding all to be developed successfully, a feature missing at the time of the previous inspection.

146. By the end of Year 2, the pupils have learned the basic skills of operating a computer. They can load a program, use the mouse and keyboard and save their work. They are learning how to enter and edit their text and how to use the features of a paint program. In a lesson involving computer control, Year 1 pupils learned how to successfully guide a vehicle around a street map by inputting directions and distances. The strand of ICT that requires more attention for pupils in Years 1 and 2 is 'Developing ideas and making things happen', particularly in terms of forming tables and making sound.
147. By the time pupils reach Years 5 and 6 they can use some aspects of ICT very well. 'Finding things out' is a particularly strong feature. In one lesson, Year 5 and 6 pupils used Internet sites to research 'pro' and 'con' views on the topic 'Should animals be used in circuses?' This was then used in their literacy work as a basis of how best to present an argument. The pupils had been shown how to transfer data from a website to a written document and were using this skill to good effect. ICT is also being used increasingly to support learning in other subjects although this has not yet reached a good level. The strand of ICT that requires more attention in the junior years is 'Exchanging and sharing information'. Some aspects of this are already receiving sufficient attention, such as desktop publishing and the recent creation of a school website, but the uses of multimedia and electronic mail are in the early stages of development. The co-ordinator recognises current shortcomings and these form part of the subject's development plan for the coming months.
148. The pupils get a great deal of enjoyment and satisfaction from using ICT. Pupils drop into the school's cybercafe to do research, complete work, or play games. A visiting expert runs a computer club once a week. During the inspection, he bravely allowed the club members to critically analyse his own website! Some pupils take charge of a computer management system for the library that checks books in and out. The oldest pupils also use a computer to control stock of the 'healthy eating' tuck shop. This is helping pupils to understand the use of computer technology in everyday settings. During lessons, pupils pay close attention, work briskly, co-operate and help each other well. Behaviour is never less than good and frequently very good, despite the excitement being generated. This positive response has a significant impact on their own learning and progress.
149. The subject is well led and managed. The co-ordinator has only recently been appointed, but is experienced and is already making a marked impact in the subject. She is, for example, contributing significantly to the raising of standards in ICT both by her leadership and by exemplifying good practice in her own class. The school has effective policies for information and communication technology and the Internet, including safe and controlled access. The subject is well resourced and staff subject knowledge is improving rapidly. Assessment in ICT is satisfactory and is currently being developed further. The 'Digital Excellence' records of achievement provide good encouragement for pupils and give practical targets to which they respond well. The current use of electronic storage of pupils' work is not proving satisfactory as it does not give pupils themselves a ready view of the progress they have made. Teachers therefore use a printed format more frequently in order to respond to and develop their pupils' work. Standards in this subject are undoubtedly rising and in some areas are already above the expected level.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

150. Although not a compulsory subject on the primary curriculum, Year 6 pupils enjoy the benefits of a weekly French lesson taken by a visiting teacher from a nearby high school. This has mainly oral components and pupils were observed to be enthusiastic and confident when building up their basic vocabulary and learning to speak clearly with good understanding. Lessons normally finish with a simple written exercise that consolidates their learning. Lessons are often supported by sixth form students taking Advanced Level French. Apart from taking the early and invaluable steps in learning a foreign language, Year 6 pupils use their lessons as a springboard to learning about France in geography or for homework and have already built up an impressive display about the country.

MUSIC

151. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards in music are similar to those in most primary schools. Standards were judged to be high at the previous inspection. However, the specialist music teaching the school was then able to provide is currently not available. The school has been creative in finding talents to supplement those provided by the present school staff. This has enabled such initiatives as a school choir to be formed periodically, 'songs of praise' to be enjoyed regularly and specialist musical tuition to be established for violins and some brass instruments. On balance, pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school. This includes pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as a second language. Girls and boys sing and play with equal skill and enthusiasm. The temporary subject leader is keen to promote music as an additional source of expression and enrichment for the pupils. However, there is now a need for an audit of the instrumental resources in the subject. Some of the non-pitched percussion instruments no longer produce sounds of good quality and there are not sufficient pitched instruments to enable the composing of tunes to be undertaken. There is also a lack of instruments from a range of cultures for the pupils to play, hear and appreciate.
152. Pupils develop their skills of singing, playing, listening and composing systematically, through the teachers' use of a published scheme across the school. In the lessons and assemblies observed, pupils sang together in tune, though with a certain restraint that was only lifted by the spirited accompaniments provided by the pianist. Often the songs had actions, which the pupils perform with enthusiasm, or choruses, some of which elicited a more lively response.
153. Year 1 pupils are well aware of the names of a range of instruments. Year 3/4 pupils demonstrated an understanding of musical terms, such as 'ostinato', explaining, 'It's a pattern that is repeated.' They also created and followed simple 12 beat scores to provide 'action' accompaniments. Those receiving tuition on the violin, trombone and the tenor horn develop their musical vocabularies much further, using terms such as 'key signature', 'slurs' and 'even crotchets'. By Years 5 and 6, pupils have the skills to compose tunes to accompany lyrics they have written as part of their studies on World War II. One particularly patriotic 'call to arms' had as its chorus:
- 'Tittle tattle, continue the battle 'cos England is going to win,
Tittle tattle, who lost the battle, Hitler and his team.'
154. The melody was tuneful and enthusiastically sung although, unsurprisingly, the rendition reflected more the influence of The Spice Girls than that of Vera Lynne!

Music from around the World is regularly heard and this helps to raise the pupils' cultural awareness.

155. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Work develops well from lesson to lesson as new skills and challenges are introduced. There is limited use of recording equipment to tape pupils' performances though, as yet, computers are not used to create compositions or to undertake research about the great composers. Assessments are made of the pupils' progress at the end of each unit of work. The choir is formed to perform at annual events such as the annual NSPCC Carol Concert in Durham Cathedral. It is underused to lead the singing, for example in the weekly 'Songs of Praise' celebration.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

156. The standards seen in physical education have been maintained since the previous inspection. By the end of Years 2 and 6 pupils achieve the levels in gymnastics, games and swimming, which are expected for their age. Pupils throughout the school make satisfactory progress overall including those with special educational needs and any with English as an additional language. Almost all pupils learn to swim unaided by the time they leave the school. Many become competent and develop good water safety skills. The curriculum gives good and equal access to boys and girls.
157. Opportunities for pupils to foster their interest in sport outside of school time are enhanced by the school's links with a local sixth form college. Visiting students help to coach pupils in soccer, basketball and rugby as well as cricket and athletics during the appropriate season. Those who have particular talents are recognised and encouraged by the school. For example the school has supported a pupil's application to a soccer school of excellence and others are members of a local gymnastics club.
158. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall although there was good learning seen in some lessons during the inspection. In a gymnastics lesson, for example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieved well because of the extra support given by a group of students. Pupils worked well in small groups and showed good fluency and control in their movements and balances. They moved on and off the apparatus more confidently and worked hard to improve their overall performance because the students were there to help them. Good use of the digital camera gave some pupils instant feedback on their work so they were more able to improve on what they did. In a dance lesson, a group of boys improved their group performance after some evaluative discussion by others in the class. Pupils in Year 2 were given a 'mini test' of their bouncing and catching skills at the beginning of the lesson. After some clear coaching and time to practise, they had a re-run of the mini team game so they could measure for themselves how much they had improved. Most lessons are planned satisfactorily with a clear purpose and objectives. The pace of the lessons is usually brisk because teachers allow enough time for a range of activities. Pupils are managed well and respond well to the expected routines for safety and good behaviour.
159. The recently appointed co-ordinator leads and manages the subject satisfactorily and has already begun to gain a clear overview of the subject and formulated plans for development. Resources are generally good and used effectively. The school's extra-curricular programme has some additional sporting opportunities such as basketball that extend normal provision.