

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BEDLINGTON WEST END FIRST SCHOOL**

Bedlington

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122176

Headteacher: Mrs W E Blackett

Reporting inspector: Mr C Smith  
25211

Dates of inspection: 29<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> October 2002

Inspection number: 248326

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	West End Bedlington Northumberland
Postcode:	NE22 6EB
Telephone number:	01670 822328
Fax number:	n/a
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M J Humble
Date of previous inspection:	December 1997

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25211	Colin Smith	Registered inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Music	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Key issues for action
9952	Lillian Brock	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
25429	Anne Currie	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Science Art and design Educational inclusion	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
23887	Peter Nettleship	Team inspector	English Religious education Physical education	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

West End First School caters for pupils aged five to nine years and is situated in the town of Bedlington, near Morpeth in Northumberland. The school has increased in size since the last inspection and the intake is gradually changing as more children arrive from the growing private housing estates nearby. There are 275 pupils on roll, 137 boys and 138 girls. Thirty-two pupils are eligible for free school meals (13 per cent), which is average. Forty pupils (15 per cent) have special educational needs. The figure is lower than average this year but has always been close to the national average in the past. This is partly because of changes in the way pupils with special educational needs are now registered. Most of these pupils need help with learning, particularly in the areas of speech and language. Four pupils have statements. Almost all of the pupils are white and English speaking. Children enter school with a wide range of attainment but it is generally lower than the levels expected for their age, particularly in aspects of literacy and mathematics. There are signs this year that attainment levels are rising.

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

The school provides a good standard of education for its pupils. Standards are broadly average by the time pupils reach the age of seven and above average in English, mathematics and science when they reach the age of nine years. Pupils have achieved well from a below average starting point to reach these standards. Teaching is good and pupils are enthusiastic learners who behave well. Pupils are very well cared for and those with special educational needs make good progress towards their targets. The headteacher, along with governors and key staff, provides good leadership and management and clear direction for the work of the school. Overall, the school gives good value for money.

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

- Pupils achieve well to reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the age of seven and above average standards in English, mathematics, science, religious education and music at nine;
- Teaching is good overall and very good in the reception classes. This leads to successful learning;
- The headteacher, governors and senior staff together provide good leadership and management;
- The school provides a rich and interesting curriculum, which particularly helps pupils with special educational needs to make good progress;
- The school is very effective in promoting pupils' personal development. As a result, their attitudes to learning and their behaviour are good;
- The close partnership between home and school is a significant factor in pupils' learning.

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

- There are some inconsistencies in teaching and learning, such as the marking of pupils' work, that need to be eliminated;
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used sufficiently in the learning of other subjects;
- Targets are set for pupils but these are not shared with them as much as they should be. This makes it harder for pupils to know what they need to do to improve.

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

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

The many good features noted when the school was last inspected in December 1997 have been retained and improved upon. Teaching and the leadership of the school continue to be good. Standards at the age of seven have fluctuated but have largely improved along with national trends. The school has been very successful in assessing pupils' progress and targeting extra support towards those whose learning was not moving on quickly enough. Standards achieved by nine year-olds have improved and are now above average in the key subjects. Standards in ICT have improved from below average at the time of the last inspection to the levels they should be. However, there remains more to be done to incorporate the use of ICT into the learning of other subjects. The provision made for pupils with special education needs is now good and the school's attempts to cater for more able pupils has been

successful in English and mathematics, although less evident in some other subjects. Most aspects of the work of the school are carefully checked and the school is in a strong position to continue to move forward.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
Reading	B	B	C	C	well above average A above average B
Writing	C	A	C	C	Average C below average D
Mathematics	C	C	C	C	well below average E

Children achieve very well in the reception classes, in many cases from a low starting point when they begin school. More often than not, they reach the levels expected in their creative, physical and social development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. However, despite the strong teaching, it has been harder for some children to reach the levels expected in their language and mathematical development. A larger group of children are reaching the expected levels this year but this has not always happened in the past.

Pupils achieve well in the infant classes to reach the standards expected in reading, writing and mathematics and above average standards in science, by the age of seven. Trends in results have fluctuated over recent years, largely reflecting the presence of varying number of pupils with special educational needs. In 2002, for example, results were lower in reading and writing than in 2001 for this reason. Challenging targets to aim for are set each year. These are firmly rooted in careful assessments made of pupils' learning. Any pupils falling short of the goals expected are involved in very effective catch up programmes. These enable pupils to fulfil their potential and the school to achieve its targets. Pupils also achieve well in the junior classes. By the age of nine, when they move on to middle school, they reach above average standards in English, mathematics, science, religious education and music. In art and design, design and technology, ICT, history, geography and physical education, they achieve steadily to reach the standards expected. However, there are some inconsistencies in the amount of work pupils' produce. These are largely attributable to the very recent appointments of new teachers who are adjusting to the school's expectations and procedures.

Pupils with special educational needs are now making good progress. Following from the last inspection, their learning needs are better understood and the support they receive is more plentiful and better targeted. More able pupils achieve well in literacy, numeracy and science and many achieve good standards at seven and nine. However, they could achieve more in geography and ICT if their particular needs were incorporated into teacher's planning.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils listen attentively, are keen to learn and concentrate well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are courteous and respectful of the school's code of behaviour. Learning is lively but the school is peaceful.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships are very strong and pupils are supportive of one another. They respond very well to the many opportunities to find out for themselves and work together. The school actively and successfully

	promotes racial harmony.
Attendance	Good. Attendance continues to be above average and pupils arrive on time and eager to start their lessons.

The school has embarked on a 'Thinking for Learning' project. As a result, pupils are encouraged to stop and think before they act or speak. They are encouraged to solve their own problems rather than rely on others. The effects can be seen in their growing initiative, independence and confidence.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Very Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching is good. In two out of every three lessons observed, the teaching was good or better and only one lesson was unsatisfactory. Teaching is very good in the reception classes, where the teachers work very closely together. They plan in depth, sharing ideas and preparing resources. As a result, a wide range of exciting and well matched learning experiences is provided, which stimulate the children's interests and their desire to learn. In addition, reading, writing and number skills are very effectively taught and there are valuable opportunities for children to improve their spoken language.

Teaching in the infant and junior classes is mainly good but not as consistent as in the reception classes. Teachers in parallel classes discuss their plans for the week but they do not work as closely together as the reception class teachers. The established teachers are strong and effective. They know the pupils well and have good expertise in a number of subjects. In particular, they match the levels of work provided to pupils' different learning needs very accurately. This enables pupils of all abilities to learn at a good rate. In general, the more recently appointed teachers, some of whom are only in their sixth week, operate satisfactorily but not always at the high levels of their experienced colleagues. The effects are most evident in the quality of marking of pupils' work, the level of challenge in the work provided and in the different amount of work pupils complete in neighbouring classes. There is scope to improve this with tighter checking and control of how and what pupils record in their books.

Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well and the level of challenge in English and mathematics lessons is good. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well in every class because of the patience and skill of classroom assistants. The learning of the more able pupils, for the most part, is extended well in English and mathematics but their precise learning needs are not always planned for in other subjects, such as history and ICT. This is compensated for to some extent in the range and type of activities provided. In all subjects, pupils are encouraged to think, plan, predict, observe and reason out what they experience. This focus on 'thinking skills' offers plenty of scope for more able pupils to enquire and investigate to extend their learning.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Many rich and exciting learning experiences are provided with good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of enquiry and investigation.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Clear targets for these pupils to aim for are provided and good support to enable them to achieve them, characterise the provision.
Provision for pupils' personal (including spiritual, moral, social and cultural) development	Very good. Particularly strong in moral and social areas because pupils are involved in setting rules and decision making. Good in spiritual and cultural areas. A love of learning and respect for other beliefs is strongly encouraged. Pupils are well prepared for life in a culturally diverse society.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. Pupils' well being and safety are paramount. Their personal and academic development is carefully assessed but pupils would benefit from knowing more about the targets set for them.
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The school has a long tradition of positive relationships with parents. This close working partnership significantly enhances pupils' learning.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher continues to provide good leadership and management and is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and senior staff. They are leading the drive towards improvement well and enriching pupils' learning experiences effectively.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Despite recent changes of governors, the desire to be involved, move the school on and carry out their duties conscientiously continues.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Results are carefully analysed to identify, support and remedy any weaknesses. Teaching is observed regularly and feedback is provided to help teachers to improve. However, not enough attention is given to checking pupils' written work to iron out the inconsistencies.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Strategic planning and the deployment of resources are effective. The school uses information well to guide future planning. However, it is not as successful in seeking parents' views to ensure that best value is achieved in all respects.

The school benefits from experienced teachers and good levels of well-trained support staff. Accommodation is unsatisfactory because of the shortage of space, although this is being addressed. Resources are satisfactory; good in music but insufficient in ICT.

### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children like school, behave well, show maturity in relationships and try their best.</li> <li>The school works closely with parents and they appreciate being well informed.</li> <li>Teaching and leadership are good and this enables children to make good progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A few parents feel that there is too much homework and others not enough.</li> <li>About a fifth of the parents who returned the questionnaire commented that there were not enough out of school activities.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views. The homework provided is very good and reinforces children's learning well. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory.



## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. In the past, a significant number of pupils have entered school knowing little about letters, numbers or words. There are signs that children's attainment on entry is changing along with recent housing developments. For example, the children who have just started school this September are almost at the levels expected for their age but this is unusual. Given the lower attainment in previous years, children have made very good progress in the reception classes, and they continue to do so. They respond well to the interesting range of activities provided and the encouragement to think for themselves. In particular, their speaking and listening skills develop at a good rate. This year, most pupils are on course to reach the levels expected in their personal and social, language, mathematical, creative and physical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. However, it is clear from school records that a significant minority of children has not reached these levels in previous years, despite the very good teaching.
2. Pupils achieve well in both infant and junior classes. However, progress in classes with experienced teachers is often very good and in others satisfactory. There are some inconsistencies in just how much work pupils are expected to produce, which have gone unnoticed because the checking of pupils' work in their books is not rigorous enough. Trends over recent years have been difficult to interpret. Results have fluctuated, particularly in reading and writing, depending on the numbers of pupils with special educational needs in each year group. Allowing for the peaks and troughs, pupils have usually attained above average standards in reading, and at least average standards in writing and mathematics. In relation to their lower starting points, this represents good progress. The pattern emerging shows that when pupils enter school with below average attainment, they tend to reach at least average standards by the age of seven. When they enter school with average attainment, they reach above average levels. The school sets challenging targets to aim for. These are based on thorough assessments of pupils' learning at regular intervals. Teachers then identify which pupils are at risk of not reaching the levels expected, without additional teaching. Following this, the targeted pupils are given intensive support, their performance improves and the targets are reached. These strategies have been successful in both writing and mathematics and reading is the priority this year.
3. Pupils are also assessed at the end of Years 3 and 4 and the results are analysed in a similar way. The school and local authority together work out how much progress each pupil has made by measuring their attainment at the end of each school year. The most recent group of pupils to be assessed in this way in 2002 reached above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 4, before they moved on to the middle school. Given their attainment at the age of seven, their progress has been good. The current Year 4 pupils are achieving similar standards in English and mathematics this year.
4. An issue from the last inspection was to improve the progress of higher and lower attaining pupils. In each class, about one fifth of the pupils find learning difficult. Of these, varying numbers from two to five have special educational needs. These pupils are now making better progress than they did at the time of the last inspection. This is partly because assessment has improved and their precise learning needs are better understood. However, in addition, the school has increased the number of classroom assistants and parent helpers. This means that pupils with special educational needs benefit from good levels of adult support on almost all occasions. In particular, their

use of spoken and written language is systematically extended. In most classes, about one-third of the pupils are attaining higher than the levels expected. More challenging work is provided for these pupils, particularly in English and mathematics. This ensures that they achieve well in literacy and numeracy to reach high levels when they are tested at the ages of seven and nine. However, more could be done to extend the level of challenge for them in ICT and geography.

5. Pupils achieve well in English. A high priority is placed on extending pupils' spoken and written language. At specific points in most lessons, good opportunities for discussion are provided. This helps pupils to improve their articulation and extend their vocabulary. As a result, by the ages of seven and nine, many pupils have overcome their earlier difficulties to reach the levels expected. Standards in reading have generally been above average by the end of Years 2 and 4. Reading skills are taught well and reading homework is invaluable in providing essential practice. Improving pupils' reading for understanding is a current area of focus. Standards in writing are at the levels expected at the age of seven years and higher than average by the age of nine years. An initiative introduced last year to break down classes into small groups and teach pupils how to improve the beginnings, middles and ends of their stories, has paid dividends. Most pupils are now confident writers who know how to edit and improve their work.
6. Pupils achieve well in mathematics because teaching is mainly good and there is strong emphasis on applying the skills learnt to solve problems. This strengthens pupils' understanding and accelerates their acquisition of skills, such as subtracting and dividing. At strategic points in the school year, the headteacher becomes one of the teaching team. Smaller teaching groups are formed with the intention that the pupils targeted for specific improvements can be given intensive support. Last year, almost all of these pupils achieved and many exceeded the targets set for them.
7. Pupils also achieve well in science where standards have been above average at the ages of seven and nine in recent years. An interesting approach is used to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding before a new topic begins. This enables teachers to identify accurately the starting points for learning. Pupils are also assessed at the end of the topic to find out how much they have learned. This helps pupils and teachers to see the progress made and are an important factor in the good achievement. The school's involvement in the 'thinking skills' project features strongly in science. There is a distinct emphasis on predicting what will happen and on explaining why results are as they are. This leads to pupils having a better understanding of the different areas of science and than would otherwise be the case.
8. At the time of the last inspection, standards in ICT were too low and an issue to improve. Much has been done to strengthen the teaching and learning. For example, pupils now have weekly lessons where specific ICT skills are taught. Pupils are then given specific times to use the class computers to practice and improve their skills. As a result pupils now achieve steadily in ICT and reach the standards expected at the age of seven and nine years. That said computers are still not used enough to enhance learning in the different subjects. During the week of inspection, for example, computers were rarely used in mathematics or science. More needs to be done in this area.
9. Pupils achieve well in religious education to reach higher standards than those prescribed for schools in Northumberland by the ages of seven and nine years. This is an improvement on the last inspection. The real strength in the subject is the way pupils learn from religions. Pupils are helped to reflect on religious principles and values and apply what they have learnt to enable them to have a better understanding of themselves and others.

10. Standards have continued to improve in music, particularly in the junior classes, where pupils achieve well to reach higher than expected standards at the age of nine. Their listening, singing and composing skills receive a significant boost as they prepare for the many quality performances put on for parents and members of the community. Pupils achieve steadily to reach the standards expected at the ages of seven and nine in art and design, design and technology, physical education, geography and history. The school's approach to learning in many subjects consists of substantial opportunities for research and investigation and there are many homework assignments which broaden pupils' experiences. In this climate, all pupils are encouraged to find out for themselves and this enables the more able, gifted and talented pupils, particularly, to move their knowledge and understanding to higher levels. However, In geography and ICT, particularly, the learning of the more able pupils is not always extended as much as it could be.

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

11. Pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour are good. Pupils like school and this is reflected in the above average attendance. All these positive features have been maintained since the previous inspection and the management of behaviour has improved. Pupils mature and grow into responsible citizens and all are fully included in all activities.
12. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Most of them concentrate well, work hard and are proud of their work. These positive attitudes enable all pupils to make good progress. This justifies parents' confidence in the school. Year 2 pupils' enthusiasm for finding 'halfway' numbers in a mathematics lesson, contributed well to their success in learning. Young children show good attitudes to learning after only a few weeks in school. Pupils throughout the school take a pride in their finished work and enjoy showing it to others.
13. Behaviour in the school is also good. Pupils know the rules and most respond to them well. There are occasional examples of inappropriate behaviour but teachers do not allow these to interrupt the flow of the lesson. Movement around the school is orderly as seen when pupils move to and from assemblies. Pupils are generally well behaved at lunchtimes and playtimes and no examples of unpleasant or aggressive behaviour were observed during the inspection. There have been no exclusions for the past nine years.
14. Pupils' social development is very good. Pupils understand the impact of their actions on others and several instances were seen when pupils showed kindness to each other. In class, they spontaneously applaud the contribution of others. There is a newly formed school council that is just getting into its stride. It has instigated an impressive number of improvements for pupils for example a range of play equipment has been purchased to enhance the quality of break times. There is a great deal of mutual respect within a calm, relaxed atmosphere. Teachers and other adults have established good relationships with their pupils. Specific time is put aside for pupils to discuss how they feel and to begin the process of building trust and understanding. Pupils with special educational needs are respected members of class groups.
15. Pupils' personal development is very good. They listen attentively to others and work sensibly in pairs and groups. All pupils take pride in their own and other's achievements. Pupils in all year groups take responsibility for classroom tasks and carry them out sensibly. Initiatives like the 'Thinking for Learning' project and 'Philosophy for Children' give pupils ownership of their own learning and of the choices they make in and out of school. Year 4 pupils confirm that they feel well prepared for the transfer to Middle School. Parents confirm that pupils thrive and 'grow' within the 'family' of Bedlington West End First School.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. Teaching is good as it was at the time of the last inspection. Improvements have been made, particularly in providing work at the right level for more able pupils in most subjects and for those who find learning difficult. During the inspection, two-thirds of the teaching was good or better with only one unsatisfactory lesson.
17. Teachers manage pupils well. This is based on good relationships and teachers' caring attitudes. Praise is given freely but it has to be earned and teachers operate system of firm but fair discipline. Where the management of pupils is at its best, teachers inject a sense of importance into learning and expect pupils to respond with interest and enthusiasm. In a Year 4 English lesson, for example, the teacher said, 'Come on...we can think of a more powerful verb than that!' These factors ensure that a positive learning atmosphere is provided in which pupils can concentrate and give of their best.
18. Teaching in the reception classes is very good. The three teachers involved work closely together, share ideas and use very similar approaches and resources. The depth of planning is reflected in the range of imaginative and stimulating activities provided. Good examples include making biscuits and fruit kebabs, which engage the children's interest and arouse their curiosity. There are good levels of adult support on hand to make the most of the opportunities to develop children's spoken language. The important skills of recognising letter shapes and sounds and sequencing and counting numbers are particularly well taught. For example, when explaining the significance of the letter 'p,' the teacher used a puppet and played a memory game very effectively to help pupils to recognise and remember the letter and the sound it makes.
19. In infant and junior classes the important literacy and numeracy skills are taught well. Teachers know that some pupils' speaking and listening skills are not strong and have to be worked on. Therefore, in almost all lessons some time is devoted to improving elements of pupils' spoken language. During discussions, for example, pupils are often asked to predict what they think will happen and explain what they have learnt. Reading skills are taught well and almost all parents ensure that their children practise regularly at home. The elements of writing, such as spelling, handwriting and punctuation, are taught systematically and pupils have good opportunities to apply the skills when they write stories and accounts. Pupils are taught to review and edit their written work and encouraged to make alterations. As a result, pupils know how to improve the style and the flow of their written work. Mathematical skills are also taught successfully. Teachers encourage pupils to use learning aids, such as number lines and hundred squares to help them to see patterns and relationships between numbers. They are also given many opportunities to apply these skills to solve mathematical problems. These strategies are effective in developing their understanding.
20. Teachers have good expertise in a number of subjects, notably English, mathematics, science, religious education and music. They draw well on their own good knowledge to set interesting and varied activities. A good balance is maintained between learning through listening, observing and discussion and investigating to find out for themselves. Teachers use resources imaginatively to help pupils to link what they know already to new steps in learning. For example, in a religious education lesson, pupils examined different types of greeting cards to help them to learn about celebrations and festivals. Teachers are skilled communicators who explain new ideas clearly, often using illustrations and real objects to help. When designing puppets, for example, a Year 2 teacher operated a string puppet to show pupils how it could be made to move. Such approaches make learning more interesting and

meaningful. The teaching of ICT has improved since the last inspection but insufficient use is made of ICT in the learning of other subjects.

21. The level of challenge in the work provided is well matched to pupils' different learning needs in literacy and numeracy. In these subjects, teachers' planning shows exactly what average, more able and pupils with special educational needs are expected to learn. As a result, pupils understand the work they are given to do and are able to make good progress. In subjects like ICT and geography, teachers do not always specify how pupils' different learning needs will be met. Consequently, there are times when the learning of the more able pupils is not extended as much as it could be. However, this is compensated for to some extent because teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to investigate and find out for themselves. Under these circumstances, pupils can find their own level. Teachers are very aware of the need to explain to pupils what they are about to learn. This leads to greater involvement in the lesson and encourages pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. However, this could be taken a step further by making pupils aware of the targets set to bring them up to the next level.
22. In almost all lessons, pupils with special needs learn effectively. Their precise learning needs are well understood by teachers and classroom assistants. Reading, writing and mathematical skills, which they have trouble in learning, are taught repeatedly but in a variety of ways to avoid tedium creeping into their learning. In most lessons, they are given small groups support, often guided by a classroom assistants and this is where their learning is most effective. In a Year 3 literacy lesson, for example, pupils with special educational needs successfully learnt to improve their sentences by adding descriptive language. Following a discussion with the classroom assistant, they wrote 'A robber is *creeping* into the bank.'
23. Teachers make very good use of homework to extend and reinforce pupils' learning. This process begins in reception classes and covers reading, writing, mathematics and a host of assignments in preparation for new topics being introduced in school. Teachers spend a lot of time in setting the homework tasks and in marking the responses. Their efforts are rewarded in pupils' increased achievement and in parents' better understanding of what their children are learning in school.
24. Changes are taking place in school as pupil numbers grow and new teachers are appointed. The school has benefited from a core of very experienced and capable teachers who have been present since the last inspection. The new teachers, some of whom only started a few weeks ago, are gradually adjusting to the school's high expectations and effective teaching methods. The headteacher's policy of placing a new teacher with an experienced one is sound. Where the two teachers work together closely, agreeing on the learning tasks and worksheets to be used, the quality of teaching in both of the twin classes improves. However, not all pairs of teachers operate at this level. As a result, inconsistencies arise in the amount and quality of written work in pupils' books and in the quality of marking of pupils' work. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, for example, the introductory discussion was too long and the level of challenge was too low. Yet the timing, pace and the challenge in the literacy lesson in the parallel class were some of the strongest features. The differences between classes affect the rate at which pupils learn. They make quicker progress where more is expected of them and subsequently reach higher standards. There is scope to improve the sharing of planning and teaching approaches to enable good practice to spread. Similarly, if more attention were paid to checking pupils' work in their books and folders, the inconsistencies in productivity and marking could be quickly spotted and remedied.

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

25. The curriculum makes a good contribution to the educational standards achieved by pupils and has improved since the last inspection. The provision for music is strong, with very good opportunities for pupils to develop and refine their composing and performing skills. Religious education also has a high profile and the subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development. Guidance on how and what to teach has been significantly improved since the last inspection to ensure that pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills build up smoothly from one year to the next. In particular, all aspects of ICT are now taught, although there are still not enough opportunities for pupils to use ICT to extend their learning or research skills in other subjects, such as mathematics and science. Pupils are given more opportunities to use a wider range of materials in design technology than was the case at the time of the last inspection.
26. The school provides good opportunities to extend pupils' personal, social and health education, including drugs awareness. There is a very strong commitment to promoting citizenship. Debates are held to discuss moral issues, such as, 'Is it always wrong to steal?' Rules are drawn up by each class and are used to maintain good order. Democratic decisions are reached in lessons, such as when voting whether to practice physical education skills for a long time in a crowded space, or for a shorter time in a larger space!
27. The school has now moved from mixed age classes to two classes in each year group. This gives the opportunity for teachers to share ideas and plan together. However, some teachers work more closely together than others and actually use the same tasks in the parallel classes. Other teachers talk together but go their own way in the lessons. As a result there are differences, for example in the learning of science in Year 4. As new teachers take up their appointments, the stronger partnerships tend to work better and lead to more consistent learning.
28. The curriculum for reception children is good. It is very well planned and a rich assortment of activities is provided to stimulate children's interests and to help them to acquire the important literacy and numeracy skills. Pupil numbers have increased since the last inspection and the space available is limited until the new building work is completed. In the meantime the best use is made of the limited space and support staff take children outside to develop their physical skills, using the large wheeled toys and the adventure playground. Throughout the day, children have good opportunities to make their own choices about what they are going to do, although they cannot choose to carry out their activities outside.
29. There are effective measures to include all pupils in all activities. Those with special educational needs, in particular, benefit because the curriculum is adapted for them and they receive good levels of support. For example, in an ICT lesson, the additional support enabled two pupils with special educational needs to remember the sequence of commands need to operate a spell check program. Assessments made of pupils' learning are used to group pupils according to ability for many activities. More able pupils are often identified for extra help as well as the lower attaining ones. The headteacher's personal involvement in the day-to-day teaching makes it possible for teachers to work with smaller groups. Virtually all pupils are English speaking. Where this is not the case, additional support is provided, particularly in Literacy and Numeracy lessons. The very small numbers of pupils with English as an additional language benefit from being integrated into mixed groups and then given individual support. This enables them to achieve as well as other pupils.
30. Provision for literacy and numeracy is good. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented successfully with good opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas, read regularly and polish up their writing. The Numeracy Strategy has also been

developed well to improve pupils' understanding and develop their problem solving skills. Teachers attach considerable importance to developing pupils' thinking skills through initiatives such as 'Philosophy for Children' and the 'Thinking for Learning' programmes. These are helping pupils to solve problems, give reasons for their answers and find out more for themselves. This approach is particularly effective in science, and is a factor in the good standards achieved.

31. A small number of parents feel that the school does not offer enough extra-curricular activities. Overall, the provision is similar to that in other schools. Although there are only a few clubs that operate throughout the year, such as a science club and choir, there are periodic activities, such as football, basketball and rugby coaching courses. The curriculum is also extended well through visits to local places of interest connected to pupils' work, for example, in history and geography. The good links with the community, the church, neighbouring schools and colleges, enrich pupils' learning, helps them to develop future interests and provides continuity as they move from one school to the next.
32. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. The very good provision influences pupils to act responsibly. These strong features of the last inspection have improved further.
33. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. The school provides many good opportunities for pupils to reflect on the world around them and to celebrate the achievements of others in daily acts of collective worship. For example, during an assembly, pupils reflected on the lives of Saints and contributed their own ideas on their favourite Saint 'Saint George is brave because he fought a dragon'. Music in assemblies and in the classroom provides pupils with a rich spiritual experience and they sing enthusiastically and well. Further opportunities are provided in lessons, for example when Year 3 pupils studied poetry about the weather. During a reading of a Christina Rossetti poem, 'Who has seen the Wind', pupils were quick to contribute ideas of the effects of the wind. For example, one pupil suggested 'The wind is tap dancing through the air.' Teachers seize the opportunity to raise pupils' self esteem in lessons and in additional school activities.
34. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The school is very effective in teaching pupils the principles that distinguish right from wrong. In an assembly, for example, the story of Saint Elisabeth gave pupils the opportunity to reflect on 'Having the courage to do what they feel is right.' In personal and social education lessons, pupils develop a good understanding of moral issues. Consistently high expectations of behaviour from staff promote a calm, friendly environment. Pupils enjoy receiving rewards and understand the sanctions imposed for poor behaviour.
35. The provision for pupils' social development is very good. All members of staff foster good relationships between pupils and between the pupils and themselves. Teachers provide many opportunities in lessons for pupils to develop their ability to work co-operatively and collaboratively. Pupils have raised funds for a number of local and national charities and keep in touch with local senior citizens. For example, they helped one elderly lady to celebrate her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. Pupils have a forum to express their views through the school council and there is a health and safety group of pupils who report to the senior management. These factors enhance their social awareness and their concern and respect for others.
36. 'We are all Unique' is the message on a display in a Year 1 classroom. The school makes good provision for the cultural development of pupils. For example, there is an after school French club and pupils have tasted food from different cultures and visited a Mexican restaurant. They also experience a range of music from other cultures as seen when they left an assembly singing an African chant. In addition to a

study of Christianity in religious education, pupils study other faiths. Representatives from other faiths, for example a Muslim and a Buddhist, have visited school to talk about their culture and their way of life. Pupils' own culture is studied well in geography and history, for example, when they study the local environment. The school prepares pupils well for life in a multicultural society.

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

37. The school is a caring community in which to learn. Class teachers know their pupils well and this is evident in the thoughtful observations seen in end of year reports. Teachers are diligent in consulting parents about anything that may affect pupils' enjoyment and well being. The procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. Although there are very pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, the school actively and successfully promotes racial harmony. Examples and experiences of other races and cultures are brought to the pupils' attention, through stories and studies in other subjects. These successfully encourage pupils to develop understanding, tolerance and respect for all cultures.
38. The school monitors academic and personal progress well. The information gathered is always passed to the next teacher or school to keep them well informed. In particular, the well written individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are shared with all parties to ensure that the right provision continues. Pupils benefit from personal and social education lessons, which includes health education, drugs awareness and personal safety. These good features help pupils to develop a good understanding of safety and of themselves and others. There is a 'can do' atmosphere in the school and pupils see mistakes as part of the learning process. Pupils' achievements in and out of school are celebrated in assemblies and pupils are given the opportunity to express their opinions in discussion sessions. As a result, pupils feel valued as stakeholders in their school and take care of it.
39. Procedures for monitoring and ensuring good behaviour are clearly understood by staff and pupils and are consistently implemented throughout the school. Pupils and parents confirm that bullying is not a problem and the few minor incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Children value the rewards for good behaviour and good work and staff rarely need to use sanctions. Reception children are given a secure start and quickly learn the routines, the provision for their personal development is good. The school offers parents a home visit in order to ease the transition and new entrants visit the school to sample some activities. Pupils in general are supportive of each other and know where to seek help when they need it. Year 4 pupils said, 'We also care for teachers and help them when they are sad'. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good. Registers are neat and in good order and absences are monitored regularly. Procedures for child protection are very good. There is a designated teacher and a deputy who have shared their expertise with all staff. They keep their training up to date and liaise with outside agencies when appropriate. There is a Safety Management Team that includes governors and regular risk assessments of the premises are carried out and recorded. Any issues are dealt with according to urgency or available finance. Risk assessments are carried out before pupils go on a visit. All these very good procedures ensure that all members of the school community work and play in a safe environment. The school lives up to its mission statement in the prospectus – 'CARE - about others, ourselves, quality learning and the environment.'
40. The arrangements for assessing the pupils' attainment are good and have improved since the last inspection. Teachers check carefully what children know and what they can do at regular intervals during the reception year. The information is used well to set challenging work for all children. In infant and junior classes, pupil's learning in English and mathematics is tested regularly. The results are analysed accurately and



tabulated on tracking sheets for every pupil. This builds up into a very detailed picture of pupils' strengths and weaknesses and shows where extra support is needed. The school also maintains very detailed records of pupils' personal development. These are updated regularly, then passed on to the next teacher to pave the way for a settled start in a new class. Pupils are also encouraged to assess their own learning. For example, in many topics, pupils begin by listing things that they would like to find out. At the end of the topic, they then assess how much they have actually discovered. This helps them to be more aware of what and why they are learning. Specific work for pupils with special educational needs is particularly well targeted following accurate assessments made of their precise learning needs.

41. Assessments are well used to identify areas of the curriculum that need to be improved; for establishing groups of pupils who need special help to reach a higher level, and for tracking pupils' academic and personal progress. For example, when standards in writing were found to need improvement, groups of pupils were selected for additional help to enable them achieve higher standards. Targets are set for each pupil to reach before the end of each academic year, such as a target 'to improve sentence writing'. However, these targets are not shared with pupils as openly as they could be. For example, they are not pasted in to their books or written on cards as constant reminders. Consequently, pupils are not sufficiently aware of exactly what they have to do to improve and their learning does not progress as quickly as it might. In some classes, this information is fed informally through the good dialogue that is seen in the comments written in pupils' books. However, not all teachers are as thorough and analytical in their marking.

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

42. Parents view the school as a good one which their children enjoy attending, as they did at the time of the last inspection. They describe the school as happy, caring and supportive. Most parents find teachers approachable and they feel able to discuss any worries or concerns with them. This was borne out during the inspection when many parents talked to teachers before and after school. At the meeting prior to the inspection and through the large number of responses to the questionnaire, most parents show good support for the school and its work.
43. The quality and quantity of information that parents receive is good. They receive regular newsletters about events and activities taking place in the school as well as information on what pupils are learning. Because of this, parents can offer maximum support to their children. The prospectus is attractive and gives good information to parents in order to allay any anxieties they feel before their children start school. There is an induction meeting for parents of children new to the school and a consultation evening each term when parents are given information on the progress their children are making. Reports to parents are of good quality and most contain targets for improvement. Through the good communications parents learn more about the school and their children's education.
44. The contribution of parents to children's learning at school and at home is very good. Parents are very knowledgeable about the homework schedule and whilst some parents consider that there is too much homework, they still support children in completing it. The reading diaries are an excellent form of communication. Parents and teachers exchange ideas and suggestions, and modify and adapt the materials and methods until the mix is just right. When changes are introduced, workshops for parents are held to help them to support their children. The warmth of communication generates much good will towards the school, which is evident in the 15 parents and grandparents who help regularly in school. For example, two grandparents helped a group of Year 4 pupils to perfect their sewing and weaving techniques. There are five parent governors, giving parents a strong 'voice' in the school.

45. The Parent, Teacher and Friends' Association offers very good financial and social support to the school. For example, they raised £7,500 towards the cost of the adventure playground. The association also brings the community together in a range of social occasions helping to maintain the 'family' atmosphere. Some parents expressed a wish for a wider range of extra-curricular activities. Inspection findings are that along with lunchtime clubs, sporting and musical activities and visits out of school, the provision is satisfactory.

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

46. The school is well led and managed and pursues its aims very successfully. This was also the picture at the time of the last inspection. The headteacher provides clear direction and the school benefits from her strong commitment to the inclusion of all pupils and positive and productive partnership with governors and staff. The good relationships that exist with parents are reflected in their willingness to contribute to many aspects of the school. The headteacher has successfully dealt with the key issues identified by the last inspection. A key strength of these improvements lies in the rigorous analysis of the school's test results and the action taken to bring about improvement. In the past, these have included a whole school focus on mathematics to remedy identified weaknesses. This year, the school is committed to raising standards in reading. The school has a good and supportive deputy headteacher. She is a highly competent teacher with many management responsibilities in other areas and is central to decision making.
47. The leadership provided by subject leaders is good. They take their work seriously and are strongly committed to driving their subjects forward. They check teachers' planning for their subjects each half term, note points for action and provide feedback to teachers. They, along with others, observe teaching or work alongside colleagues in lessons to enable them to evaluate standards. The headteacher also observes lessons and provides verbal and written feedback to help teachers to improve. Assessments results are analysed carefully and pupils who need extra support are quickly identified. Swift action follows and their learning improves. Despite these strong features, the school's evaluation of its performance is only satisfactory. Pupils' work in their books and folders is not checked as often as it should be. This is why some inconsistencies in the marking of pupils' work and in the amount of work completed go undetected. The Foundation Stage co-ordinators provide very good leadership. They have a clear overview of the provision in the reception classes and successfully ensure that this is of a consistently good quality. The recently appointed co-ordinator for special educational needs carefully monitors the programmes of work for individual pupils. She ensures that there are strong links with school staff, parents and outside agencies. As a result, these pupils make good progress, which is an improvement on the last inspection.
48. Strategic planning for the future is good and has improved since the last inspection. The school development plan now contains very firm priorities, supported by clear action plans. Such planning has been effective in recent years, for example, in raising standards in writing. The school improvement plan includes valuable information on how success will be measured. This helps governors to check the progress the school has made towards achieving its targets. The school's educational priorities are supported through good financial planning. A number of governors have financial expertise and together with the headteacher successfully link the educational goals with their financial implications. A budget surplus of 10 per cent has arisen. The school has grown in size and now generates a greater income. Governors in their minutes of meetings have recorded their unease at not spending the money. However, lack of space and the local authority's intention to provide an extra classroom are holding up planning decisions. Governors have identified the provision

of an ICT suite as essential. This has been costed and is expected to link with the forthcoming classroom improvements. Governors monitor the work of the school effectively and have recently agreed to link each governor to a curriculum area to further enhance this practice. They are kept very well informed by the headteacher. Proposals put forward by the headteacher and other staff are questioned and considered in depth before decisions are made. Five years ago the governors sent out a questionnaire to find out how parents felt about the school. However, this has not been repeated and there is scope to improve the consultation process to ensure that parent's views are fully taken into account.

49. The headteacher's and class teacher's performance is soundly managed. Teachers' professional targets for improvement are closely linked to the objectives in the school improvement plan. The governors have recently appointed a number of teachers new to the school. They have been sensibly deployed to work alongside an experienced teacher in the corresponding year group. However, the way in which new teachers are guided and advised could be better. For example, more could be done to tighten the requirements for them to work more closely with their partner teachers in the planning and provision of pupils' work. This would help to iron out some inconsistencies.
50. There are a sufficient number of teachers who make an effective contribution to pupils' learning. A decision was made to significantly increase the number of support staff, particularly to provide extra help for pupils with special educational needs but also to work alongside all pupils in lessons. This has been successful and has significantly improved the provision made for pupils with special learning needs.
51. The accommodation remains inadequate as at the time of the last inspection. The school hall is too small to accommodate the whole school comfortably for collective worship or other school events. This results in separate assemblies and pupils rarely meet as a whole school. In addition, physical education lessons are hampered by this lack of space and pupils sometimes have to take turns to be involved in some activities. There is no grassed area and although the school makes the best of this situation by using the playing fields of nearby schools, this is far from satisfactory. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall. They are good in music and this contributes to pupils' good achievement. Although ICT resources have been improved, the number of computers remains below average. As a result, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use their ICT skills in other subjects and limits opportunities for teachers to monitor the skills development of individual pupils.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

52. The headteacher, governors and staff should now:

- a) Remedy the inconsistencies in pupils' learning in different classes by:
- strengthening the induction procedures to ensure that teachers in parallel classes have similar expectations of what pupils should learn;
  - teachers planning together to select the most effective methods and approaches to ensure that the tasks provided for pupils in parallel classes are broadly similar;
  - teachers ensuring those more able pupils are challenged sufficiently in ICT and geography;
  - senior staff and subject leaders more rigorously checking the quality of work in pupils' books and folders.

(Paragraphs 2, 4, 10, 21, 24, 27, 47, 68, 73, 80, 88, 95 and 100)

- b) Improve the use of ICT in the teaching and learning of other subjects.

(Paragraphs 8, 10, 20, 25, 66, 68, 73, 79, 83, 86, 97 and 104)

- c) Enable pupils to know more about how they can improve their work by,

- informing them of the targets set to move their learning on and reminding them to aim to achieve these targets at regular intervals;
- bringing up standards of marking of pupils' work in all classes to include comments to show pupils what they need to do to improve.

(Paragraphs 24, 41, 47, 69, 73, 91)

## 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	30

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	9	27	16	1	0	0
Percentage	0	17	51	30	2	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 approximately two percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		275
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		32

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		40

#### English as an additional language

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

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.9
National comparative data	5.6

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	24	36	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	15	20	21
	Girls	31	31	32
	Total	46	51	53
Percentage of pupils At NC level 2 or above	School	77 (88)	85 (93)	88 (91)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	21	21
	Girls	31	32	35
	Total	52	53	56
Percentage of pupils At NC level 2 or above	School	87 (88)	88 (88)	93 (95)
	National	85 (88)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

### Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
270	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
1	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 – Y4**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.7
Average class size	27.5

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y4**

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	278

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4.6

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

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001/2
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	£
Total income	499,598
Total expenditure	474,522
Expenditure per pupil	1,764
Balance brought forward from previous year	45,733



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	275
Number of questionnaires returned	188

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	66	29	3	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	56	36	3	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	44	1	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	42	16	1	5
The teaching is good.	62	36	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	40	9	1	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	26	1	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	29	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	49	41	6	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	62	32	1	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	36	2	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	40	13	10	13

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**

53. Children achieve well in the reception classes because the quality of teaching is very good. This was a very strong feature at the time of the last inspection and the high quality provision for young children has been maintained.
54. Children enter one of the two reception classes at the start of the academic year in which they are five. Only a few have not been to a playgroup or nursery. Initial assessments, completed soon after children start school, show that children have a very wide range of skills, which overall are below average in speaking and listening, mathematics and personal development. This year's intake is more able, but their skills are still slightly below those normally found in literacy and numeracy. Assessments made of their learning later in the year show that children achieve well. In the past, most have attained the standards expected nationally (referred to as the early learning goals) in most areas of learning. However it has been much harder for children to reach the levels expected in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development, by the time they complete the reception year. This reflects the very good teaching children receive. Looking at this year's intake, most are expected to achieve the standards expected in all areas and some are likely to exceed them in the area of personal, social and emotional development.
55. There is a very good system of induction, including home visits by teachers and support staff, which ensures a smooth and happy start with good parental involvement. Good links are developed with local playgroups and nurseries. Children initially attend part time to allow them to become familiar with routines and to get to know staff in small groups. Children only attend full time for the last two weeks before half term. The inspection team does not feel, as a few parents do, that the process is too long. These parents comment that as their children have already been attending nurseries, part-time in school is unnecessary. Teachers are aware of the parents' views and intend to explore the issues further. The co-ordination of work in the reception classes is very good. Teachers and support staff have a very clear understanding of how young children learn. They plan effectively together and work extremely well as a team.
56. The leadership and management of the foundation stage are very good. The teachers and support staff are very well co-ordinated and work together very effectively. This has resulted in a strong and effective team. All children benefit, particularly those with special educational needs. Their specific needs are quickly assessed and identified and activities are carefully planned to help them to improve

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

57. By the time they leave the reception classes, most children achieve, and some exceed, the standards expected as a result of the very good teaching. Teachers are extremely effective in encouraging children to develop confidence in their relationships with both adults and classmates. Children play and work together very well in a variety of activities, such as taking turns on the computer and listening carefully to what other children have to say. During one session, when there was one beanbag missing, one child spontaneously said to another 'You can share mine'. The children work in a confined space but they cope well and there are very few disagreements. Adults provide good role models for children, showing respect for each other and working as a team. There are clear routines, which encourage children to learn what is acceptable behaviour, for example taking turns to speak and not calling out. As a

result, children build good relationships with others and they begin to understand one another's point of view. Children respond very well to the varied activities provided and they develop very good attitudes to learning. They learn to make their own choices and to be very independent. In physical education lessons, they learn to change with very little adult help and they fold their clothes on the table so that they do not lose them. In the classroom, equipment is easily accessible and children work together to tidy up at the end of the session.

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

58. Most children make good progress in this area. This year they are on course to reach the levels expected but have not always done so in previous years. Children benefit from very good teaching of language and literacy. Well-planned opportunities, to develop early literacy skills and to extend children's vocabularies and speaking skills, are interwoven into all activities. Children listen with enjoyment to stories, which are well read and carefully chosen. One, for example, was about a girl who was new to school and the difficulties she had. This gave the class teacher good opportunities to reinforce the need to be friends with everyone and to play together. Children develop a clear understanding of the importance and relevance of print, and know the function of the author and the illustrator. Staff are competent in using opportunities to reinforce children's language skills through good questioning. For example, they talk to children who are drawing pictures about the story of Rama and Sita and encourage them to remember parts of the story. One child showed her understanding by responding that 'The monkey king was good'. The puppets the children made to go with the story provided further opportunities for children to speak as they used the puppets to act out the story. Occasionally, the teacher dominates talk in whole class sessions, giving insufficient opportunities for children to contribute.
59. Children are beginning to demonstrate early writing skills and they are encouraged to use their growing knowledge of letter sounds to write at least the initial letter of words. New letter sounds are gradually introduced. A good example of the interesting activities that are provided was the arrival of a parcel when the class was looking at the letter 'p'. It contained a present and a postcard from Postman Pat. Inside the box was a variety of items all beginning with the letter 'p'. This very successfully helped children to listen to letter sounds and match them to letter shapes.

### **Mathematical development**

60. This year, most children are likely to achieve the early learning goal in this area but this has not always been the case in the past. Teaching in this area is very good. Teachers ensure that children fully understand any new mathematical terms, for example, by talking about ideas such as 'full' and 'empty' during activities in the sand and encouraging children to count in a variety of settings. Children respond by using terms such as, 'I've got five altogether'. Staff know children well and, as a result, the activities are well suited to their needs, especially in number work. For example, appropriate challenge is provided for higher attaining children who are reliably counting to 10. They are asked how many bricks they would have if they added one or two more to their pile. There is a good balance between mental and practical activities and the use of the drumbeat in one lesson encouraged listening skills, as well as reinforcing counting skills.

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

61. Many children enter the reception classes with only very basic general knowledge. Very good teaching, and a wide range of activities, helps children extend this knowledge. This year, most children are on course to reach the standards expected by the end of the year. Children learn to use the computers with confidence, working through programmes using the mouse to select what they want. For example, they sequence pictures to show an apple being eaten in a logical way. They have a clear awareness of their families and the way they are able to do different things as they get older. In physical activities, they begin to recognise how their heart is beating faster as they move around more. Good use is made of the school grounds to observe changes, such as leaf colour in autumn and how plants grow. Children look at and taste various items of fruit. With guidance from the teacher they extend their vocabulary and learn to express their preferences and to give reasons. They go on to design and make their own fruit kebabs. A good example of the way staff respond to opportunities was seen when a caterpillar was found in the classroom. The teacher used the occasion well to let the children look at it and talk about how it moved, stressing the need to treat it carefully and to place it outside on a leaf.

## **Physical development**

62. Teaching is very good and children make significant progress. Most reach the standards expected by the end of the reception year. The space in the classrooms is restricted and the outside adventure playground and large wheeled toys can only be used when the classroom assistant takes out small groups and the weather is fine. Staff are aware of the shortcomings caused by their temporary lack of space and do their best to compensate by making use of the community hall and the school hall on a regular basis. Children show a good awareness of space and each other as they move around and most move confidently. They show good levels of concentration and perseverance, for example when they were trying to balance a bean bag on their foot and lift it up. An example of very good teaching was seen during a music and movement lesson. The teacher used a commercially produced tape but stopped it at frequent intervals to ensure that the children understood what was required and to help them refine and practise their skills. She had very high expectations of behaviour and of the quality of the children's actions. Children showed sound skills in hopping, skipping and jumping in and out of the spaces. They showed their maturity and previous good training when they quickly found their own space and then selected a partner to work with. Children use felt pens, pencils, glue, scissors and paint brushes with increasing dexterity. Other activities, such as threading beads and making jigsaw puzzles, show that they are developing satisfactory manual skills.

## **Creative development**

63. Children make good progress as a result of the well thought out provision and good teaching. There are valuable opportunities for creative play and the best use is made of the limited space available. The activities are very imaginatively presented, for example with pictorial menu cards to give ideas of the types of food children can ask for in the home corner. Both boys and girls play with the dolls' house acting out various events. These activities give good opportunities to extend children's speaking skills. Children create imaginative pictures using a range of colours and materials. Recently they used leaves and twigs collected from outside to make collages. During the movement lesson they used their imaginations well to pretend being various types of fireworks, such as rockets and Catherine wheels. Musical experiences are frequently provided and play an important part in learning through rhymes and games.

## ENGLISH

64. Pupils achieve well in English to reach average standards by the age of seven and above average standards by the age of nine. In the years since the last inspection, pupils have usually reached average levels in writing and above average levels in reading. However, in the 2002 national tests for pupils aged seven, standards in reading fell below average for the first time. Although almost one third reached above average levels, there was a significant proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the particular year group who were unable to reach the standard expected. Subject leadership is good. The subject leader has promoted English well by organising courses, observing teaching and giving demonstration lessons. Weaknesses highlighted in the previous report have been resolved. For example, the challenges given to more able and less able pupils are now helping them to make consistently good progress in reading and writing. Weaknesses have also been identified accurately through analysing test results. Improvements, for example in handwriting and spelling, have been made subsequently.
65. Many pupils start school with weaknesses in spoken language. They do well to reach average standards of speaking and listening by the age of seven and nine. Valuable discussions take place at the beginning and end of lessons. These are used to clarify ideas and to reinforce learning. Pupils are encouraged to think through problems and make predictions. As a result, they listen attentively and are keen to contribute their own questions and comments. For example, when reading the story of a toy pup called Dogger, the teacher asked what an illustration told them about Dogger's owner, Dave. One pupil replied, 'I think the bare patch shows us he must drag Dogger along the floor.' However, some pupils are still not articulate speakers and their good quality responses are not sufficiently audible to their classmates. Discussion skills developed in literacy are extended well to other lessons to improve pupils' learning.
66. Standards in reading are average by the age of seven and are above average by the age of nine. Pupils of all abilities achieve well. Infant pupils acquire a good range of strategies to enable them to work out unfamiliar words. For example, they become skilled at sounding out letters or breaking down words into manageable parts to help recognise them. The key reading skills are taught systematically, though insufficient use is made of computers to develop these further. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Special courses for small groups, supervised by classroom support assistants, have proved very beneficial in raising standards close to average levels, both in the infant and in the junior classes. The contribution of parents in raising reading standards is considerable. This is because the school maintains excellent channels of communication through reading diaries. These inform parents of the work being undertaken and are also used effectively to pass comment between home and school about the progress being made and any problems encountered. By the age of nine, books are explored both as a source of pleasure and as a mine of information. A love of literature is instilled successfully. Pupils use their reading skills well to find information from books, although insufficient use is made of ICT for this purpose.
67. Standards in writing are average by the age of seven and above average numbers of pupils reach the higher levels. The good achievement continues in junior classes with many nine-year-olds reaching higher than average standards. Pupils enjoy writing and make good progress because it is predominantly their own work and is largely centred on their direct experiences. Little copy writing is undertaken, once basic letter recognition and formation have been mastered. By the age of seven, pupils are expected to express their ideas in print and then to check their work for errors. This 'ownership' develops confidence in their own ability, as well as pride in their own achievement. When told at the beginning of one lesson, 'Today you are going to be authors', the whispered response was, 'Yesss!' The work of more able pupils is

produced at greater length, and with more accuracy and complexity, but everyone's work bears the stamp of individuality. Personal experiences are outlined at length by Year 2, with such asides as 'My mam said its safe enough to ride round the cold a sack (cul-de-sac) for hours and hours.' Work in the junior classes becomes more structured, with pupils shaping their ideas for stories and poems on planning sheets. They are given stimulating challenges to fire the imagination. Initial ideas are modified and improved through discussion and redrafting. After a close study of the painting 'Hunters in the Snow' by Pieter Breughel, with notes being made, then verses refined, a Year 4 pupil's finished poem included these perceptive lines:

'The kingdom is icy cold,  
Its people long to sledge or skate  
On the frozen river and frosted lake,  
To take away the boredom and the chilling!'

68. Teaching is good. However, lesson observations and the work completed in pupils' books, shows some variations. These ranged from one below-average lesson to five that were good or better. Features that were consistently present in the best teaching were, the strong emphasis given to developing pupils' thinking skills; the high levels of challenge that stretched pupils of all abilities, and; the skilled use of assessment to enable pupils to gain new insights and grasp new ideas. Literacy skills are well developed in many other subjects. This gives added relevance to new learning as pupils see how it can be used. However, to raise levels in the subject still further, the best practice needs to be shared more than it is. For example, the marking of pupils' work is encouraging but does not always help pupils to learn through their errors. The use of computers is better exploited in some classes than others and the quality and quantity of work produced is often different in parallel classes within some year groups. Checking work in pupils' books is not rigorous enough to identify and remedy the inconsistencies.
69. The school gauges pupils' progress well through termly assessments and annual tests. Targets are established for every pupil to achieve by the end of each academic year. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress termly, when these targets are discussed. However, plans to involve pupils in using the targets to move their own learning forward are only just being introduced. As they already accept responsibility to plan and to modify their own work, this final responsibility will enable them to have clearer goals and strengthen any weaker areas. Classroom assistants provide very good support, delivering 'catch-up' programmes or working with groups within the class. Less able pupils work very hard and gain self-esteem through achieving success regularly. For all pupils the subject allows opportunities for them to discuss, read and write about things that they perceive to be relevant to their own experiences. The better teaching then stimulates pupils to react sensitively to these studies. For example, Year 3 pupils considered the effects of wind, as it buffets rain to 'roar like a lion', causes leaves to tremble, 'because they are scared' or just rattles along. Pupils enjoy using their imaginations on such creative challenges and this shines through in their sensitive responses.

## **MATHEMATICS**

70. In recent years, the standards reached by pupils aged seven have been broadly average and have followed the national trend. However, two years ago the staff noticed that standards were not as high as in reading, writing or science and had not been improving. To remedy this, a rigorous system of assessment of pupils' learning was introduced. The results were analysed carefully and the areas that many pupils found difficulty with were identified. Two important changes were made. Firstly, more attention was given to the weaker areas, such as subtraction, and these were revisited in many lessons. Secondly, pupils who appeared to be falling short of reaching the level expected were given intensive support from the headteacher and

other members of staff. Results began to improve again. The measures introduced to raise attainment still continue and these affect older pupils as well as younger ones. Standards in junior classes have also been improving and by the age of nine, according to the school's own assessments, pupils' attainment in 2002 was above the national average, and standards in Year 4 are broadly similar this year.

71. Assessments of children's attainment on entry to school show that in the past a sizeable minority had poor mathematical skills. Pupils have therefore achieved well to reach the levels expected by the age of seven and to exceed them by the age of nine. The school has enthusiastically opted to take part in a 'thinking skills' project. This has had a positive influence on the way the way important skills, such as addition and multiplication, are taught. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented as it was intended, to help pupils to know what is happening and why. A very strong emphasis is placed on understanding, and problem solving is regarded as the ultimate skill. Consequently, in almost all lessons, pupils are encouraged to use the skills they have acquired to solve problems and are frequently asked to explain how they have worked out the answers. These factors significantly improve their learning.
72. Pupils are achieving well in all areas of mathematics, including number, shape and information handling. In every class, about one fifth of the pupils experience difficulty in learning mathematics. Half of these pupils have special educational needs. They benefit from good levels of support provided by teachers and well-trained classroom assistants. Using and remembering the correct mathematical terms can be a real barrier. This is where the small group work is invaluable because they have lots of good opportunities to talk and share ideas. In one lesson, for example, two Year 1 pupils were learning to find the correct coins to buy various items. The classroom assistant played the role of shopkeeper. As the pupils counted out the coins she was able to check their accuracy and make them think again if they chose a 2p instead of a 1p coin. These strategies work well and help pupils with special educational needs to make good progress. Each class also contains approximately one-third of pupils whose learning it at a higher than average level. These pupils are usually given more challenging tasks and are expected to work independently, which they do to good effect. However, on occasion, they have to complete the easier examples before they get on to the more challenging work. This is only of value if their pace of working is quick, which is not always the case.
73. Whilst there are many strengths in the subject there are also one or two weaknesses. These are mainly related to the amount of work that pupils do in different classes. For example, in some classes, usually those with the more experienced teachers, pupils are highly productive and record their work in a variety of ways. However, in other classes, the work in pupils' books shows a lower output. There is also room for improvement in the marking of pupils' work. Whilst it is very good in some classes it is less helpful in others, particularly in pointing out how pupils can improve. Pupils do not enough knowledge of the targets that teachers have set for them. Therefore it is harder for the pupils to know what they need to do to reach the next level. ICT is very seldom used to extend pupils' learning, despite the availability of many imaginative programs available. The subject is well led. The subject leader is very effective in setting a good example and in checking the quality of teaching and the results obtained by pupils in other classes. However, not enough attention is paid to the work that pupils complete in their books and folders to trigger the necessary action to iron out the differences.
74. Teaching is mainly good and is very good in the subject leader's class. Lessons are carefully planned and care is taken to provide different levels of work to match pupils' different learning needs. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, some pupils were adding numbers to five whilst others were making up number sentences of their own and successfully adding numbers to 20. In most lessons, the mental starter is effectively

used to speed up pupils' calculation skills. These sessions also provide good opportunities for pupils to acquire the correct use of mathematical terms, which many pupils find difficulty with. Occasionally, this part of the lesson is too long and pupils' attention begins to wander. The most successful part of mathematics lessons is often the introduction and explanation of new topics. Teachers are skilled communicators who make effective use of demonstration and illustration to help pupils to understand. In a Year 4 lesson, for example, the teacher overlaid large maps of the school grounds on grid squares to enable pupils to understand how any position could be defined by its co-ordinates. The 'hunting the co-ordinate clues' in the playground lesson was very practical and greatly enjoyed. Learning is also fun in the infant classes, particularly when teachers introduce games. For example, in Year 2, pupils were given cards with different numbers on and were then asked to change places to put the numbers in the correct order. When the teacher says, 'You will never be able to do this', the pupils are even more determined. Resources such as number squares and geared clocks are very effectively used to make learning visual. The analysis of assessments of pupils' learning showed that pupils were experiencing difficulty in recognising patterns in numbers. This has significantly improved with the introduction of number lines on which pupils can explore and experiment with a variety of number sequences.

75. The attention to problem solving is a real strength. Sometimes this is introduced by way of a specific task, such as finding the rule this enables the missing numbers to be identified. Even younger pupils do this by filling gaps in 100 square. In addition, teachers ask probing questions to make pupils think. Teachers commonly use the phrase, 'Put the number into your head,' to encourage pupils to see a mental picture. In a Year 3 lesson, for example, this approach was particularly successful. The teacher told pupils to halve different numbers and then asked what they noticed about the numbers that could be halved. Several pupils commented that 'Only even numbers can be halved'.

## **SCIENCE**

76. Pupils achieve well to reach above average standards at the ages seven and nine. Approximately one third of the pupils reach higher than average levels, which is a significant improvement on the last inspection. Standards have risen because teaching has improved, particularly in the areas of scientific enquiry and investigation. Better guidance on what and how to teach enables teachers to ensure that pupils can build on what they have learnt earlier. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and they make good progress. In a Year 4 lesson, for example, specific help with spelling and vocabulary was provided to enable pupils with special educational needs to record the results of their experiments.
77. Teaching and learning are good. A strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' own ideas and allowing them to explore and find out for themselves. Pupils also learn how to record their work methodically. For example, they begin by drawing diagrams to show what they have done, then they describe the processes and finally write up their experiments independently. By the end of Year 4, most pupils write well sequenced accounts of their experiments and explain correctly how one variable can be altered without affecting the others. They predict well what will happen and have a good understanding of the need for fair testing. At the start of a topic, teachers assess what pupils already know and use this information well to plan future lessons. In Year 3 for example, some pupils thought that shadows could only be formed outside or in sunshine. In the subsequent lesson, they used torches and learnt how shadows behaved with artificial light. The activity was well structured and enabled more able pupils to extend their learning. For example, they began to select items carefully, such as an open weave basket, to find out if they would create the interesting shadow patterns, they had imagined.



78. The school's involvement in the 'Thinking Skills' project has had a pronounced effect on pupils' learning. Teachers ask searching questions to make pupils think and to encourage them to explain their ideas. In Year 2, for example, the teacher posed questions such as 'Can we use fabric for a fruit bowl?' or 'A knife made of paper?' and she insisted that pupils gave clear reasons why they could not. This prompted pupils to explain their ideas and extended their learning well. Most teachers have the confidence to allow pupils to explore independently and then to draw together their findings. On the rare occasions when this does not happen pupils' learning is less successful. Time to explain ideas and findings is often the essential ingredient of the good lessons. For the most part, teachers have very positive relationships with pupils and high expectations of their ability to work with good concentration. This results in pupils behaving well and showing good attitudes to their work. Pupils enjoy the practical nature of the tasks and they readily share equipment and their ideas. They listen with respect to what others have to say.
79. Pupils' literacy skills are developed as they learn to record their work in a variety of ways and to use the correct scientific vocabulary. Teachers also give good opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. They also reinforce and extend their numeracy skills in measuring and recording their findings. However, not enough use is made of ICT, either to record results, for example in graphs, or to find out information.
80. Subject leadership is good. The subject leader has good expertise and provides effective support for colleagues. There is a clear commitment to improvement. She informally checks what is happening around school but does not regularly work alongside colleagues to look in depth at the work produced. As a result there are some differences in the quality of work produced in parallel classes. The subject leader organises a very successful lunchtime science club. This helps pupils develop their interest in the subject, as well as extending and reinforcing their learning. Facilities in the local area are used well. For example, fun days are organised, such as the 'mini beast day' for Years 1 and 2, when parents come and help with various activities. Pupils from a local secondary school come in to help with experiments during the biannual science week. Homework is used well to reinforce pupils' work and it involves parents effectively in their children's learning. These factors strongly influence learning and help to raise standards.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

81. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and they are at the levels expected at the ages of seven and nine. Pupils now make steady progress as they move through the school. Classroom assistants offer good levels of support for pupils with special educational needs and this enables them to make similar progress to others in the class.
82. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In the lessons seen, teaching was sound in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 and 4. Before this term, the subject leader along with another member of staff, took art lessons across the school. This system worked well as they were able to share their expertise to extend all pupils' learning. Now each teacher is responsible for the art lessons with his or her own class. The subject is soundly led and managed. Plans have been put into place to ensure that pupils' skills and knowledge are gradually built up as they move through the school. Teachers give pupils the confidence to explore and develop their own ideas. The subject leader expressed their approach as 'Whatever they do is right, it's their interpretation'. This approach particularly benefits artistically talented pupils who have lots of scope to experiment and express their ideas in a variety of ways. Pupils work very sensibly, purposefully and independently, but also share ideas and equipment readily. The

sessions at the end of the lesson are used well to allow pupils to express their views and to appreciate one another's work.

83. Pupils learn to use a variety of media to create different textures and styles. For example, pupils in Year 2 worked with natural materials, such as dead leaves and twigs, effectively. They showed lively imaginations and creative use of materials when they used them to produce their very varied pictures. These included a representation of a rabbit, the Twin Towers in New York falling down and a flower. Year 4 pupils experiment in some depth with textures created from a variety of materials such as a feather, velvet and linen. ICT is used, for example, to experiment with a range of effects, such as marble, weaving and tiles, but there is scope for it to be used more often. Artwork is used well to extend pupil's learning in other areas. For example, pupils extend their cultural knowledge by study the work of famous artists, such as Paul Klee, William Hogarth and Ma Yong. Mary Cassatt's work portraying human relationships is introduced to enhance pupils' personal and social education. Displays around school are bright and attractive. They give value to pupils' work and reinforce learning across the curriculum, for example, in the hall where displays were related to the theme of sharing.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

84. Standards are at the levels expected when pupils reach the age of seven and the age of nine. The school has responded well to issues arising from the last inspection and some aspects of learning have improved. In particular, the curriculum has been extended and tools have been provided to enable pupils to work with a wider range of materials.
85. In some aspects of the subject, pupils achieve particularly well. Teachers recognise the importance of encouraging them to plan carefully before anything is made. Prompt sheets are introduced as early as Year 1 to encourage pupils to think ahead and lots of discussion takes place to help them to organise their ideas. The benefit of this is evident in the way they incorporate movement into their models. For example, they attach levers to create moving pictures and winding mechanisms to operate their model spiders. Equally, pupils are encouraged to look at their work critically and suggest how it could be improved. For example, a Year 1 pupil wrote, 'I was pleased with my model but I should have made the drawbridge bigger.' Pupils' skills of measuring, cutting and fastening materials together are typical for their age. However, there is scope to improve the way they finish off their work. It is noticeable that although their designs show good detail, include the materials needed and how movement will be achieved, less attention is given to the way the model will be painted or decorated. This is why the finished products are not significantly different from those produced by pupils of the same ages. Pupils achieve very well in one of the Year 3 classes where the teacher has particularly good expertise. In this class, some of the work completed is of a high standard, such as the spinning fairground rides and lifting and lowering movements operated by miniature pneumatic pumps.
86. Teaching is satisfactory but there are many good elements. Lessons are well managed, carefully organised and thoroughly prepared. In one lesson for example, a class of 30 Year 1 pupils all tasted different yoghurts and various fruits to decide which would make the best flavour. The lesson was conducted with almost military precision. There were no spills and by the end of the lesson pupils had learnt a lot about hygiene and how people's opinions differ. There were already beginning to recognise that the needs of the consumer are an important aspect of design and technology. Pupils are taught effectively how to research and develop design ideas. For example, before designing and making their own 'pop up' books, pupils examined a wide range of commercial products to find out how movement was created.

Support staff and parents make an important contribution to pupils' learning. They ensure that pupils with special needs have good opportunities to discuss and formulate ideas. As a result, these pupils learn to use the correct terms and widen their spoken vocabulary. Support from adults when they are constructing models enables them to achieve a pleasing result. These factors help them to make good progress. More able pupils have plenty of scope to extend their learning because the tasks require much investigation and discovery. Design and technology tasks are sometimes provided as homework assignments, over a holiday period for example. The combined results of pupils' work with parents' support is impressive, for example the mini egg timers made would have graced any shop window display. Despite these strong features, there is improvement potential, particularly in the way finishing skills are taught, the insufficient use of ICT and the way in which pupils' work is collated.

87. The subject is soundly led. The subject leader's enthusiasm and hard work ensure that the subject is regarded as important. Photographs are taken of pupils' work to inform the subject leader of what is happening through out the school. However, pupils do not have design and technology books in which to record their experiences and to reflect on the progress made and identify areas requiring improvement. This also makes it more difficult for the subject leader to check on standards throughout the school.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

88. Pupils reach the standards expected by the end of Years 2 and 4 as at the time of the last inspection. In all classes pupils are given good opportunities to investigate the local area. This significantly improves their understanding of and interest in the environment. The subject is soundly led. The subject leader has a good overview of the subject and a strong commitment to improvement. Teachers' planning is regularly monitored but there is not enough regular and rigorous evaluation of the quality of pupils' work. This results in some inconsistencies between classes in the provision made for different groups of pupils. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' personal development in raising their awareness and understanding of environmental issues and features of their own and other cultures.
89. By the age of seven, pupils have are a good awareness of the importance of some local features. For example, Year 1 pupils draw accurate maps of Bedlington and complete simple charts where they identify the features they like, such as Trinity Church and those they dislike, such as the traffic island. In this particular unit of study, homework is used effectively to extend pupils' learning by finding out what people in Bedlington do in their leisure time. In the lesson observed, pupils were learning how to frame geographical questions about the features of the road outside school. This practical approach is continued in Year 2 and builds upon what pupils have already learned about their local area. For example, following a trip to Newcastle, pupils were able to make comparisons between the two types of locality.
90. Good opportunities for practical work are continued in Years 3 and 4 where pupils develop their mapping skills through, for example, writing directions on how to get to a location from a specific starting point. They use their observational skills effectively when identifying features from an aerial photograph and offer well thought out reasons why features in Bedlington are located in specific areas. By the age of nine, pupils develop a satisfactory understanding of places beyond the local area. In lessons, they show a suitable awareness places and people and find countries and major cities on a world map using an atlas index and grid references.
91. Teaching is satisfactory overall and occasionally good. A particular strength in teaching lies in the commitment to the inclusion of pupils with special educational

needs. This is achieved through well-matched activities and extra adult support, which ensures that they make good gains in learning. Homework features regularly as a part of continued learning and includes looking in newspapers for weather information and identifying household products from different countries. Lessons are planned carefully to ensure that work is practical and meaningful to pupils. However, not enough attention is given to the learning needs of the more able pupils and, as a result, their work is often of a similar standard to that of the majority. The marking of work is not consistent across the school. In some classes, pupils are provided with good information on how they might improve their work, but this is not common practice. Teachers make limited use of ICT but where it is used it supports learning well. This was seen in Year 3 where pupils have produced databases and graphs to record their findings about land use in Bedlington.

## HISTORY

92. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and are at the levels expected at seven and nine. Most pupils make steady progress as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, and are successful in their learning, particularly during activities when extra adult support helps to guide what they are doing. An example of this was observed in a Year 1 lesson where they enjoyed making historical time lines as they placed pictures from babyhood to being six years old in sequence. The subject is well led but some aspects of management could be improved. The subject leader is fully committed to a 'hands-on' approach to history and the development of thinking skills. This is particularly promoted during discussion times in lessons and through a good range of visits to places such as a local colliery and Beamish Museum. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly in their understanding of different cultures from the past.
93. By the age of seven, pupils have learnt how to be historians by using evidence to reason out what life must have been like in times past. This is a direct result of the school's initiative to develop pupils' 'thinking skills'. In Years 1 and 2, teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to use their observational skills at a level beyond merely describing what they see. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, the teacher skilfully led the class to think and talk about what might be happening in pictures about the Great Fire of London and encouraged them to make their own interpretations. Pupils thought hard and offered many ideas, such as, 'Somebody might have been rich and somebody poor, so they threw a bomb'. Eventually the pupils worked out that most of the houses were made of wood and would catch fire easily.
94. By the age of nine, pupils develop a sound knowledge and understanding of the aspects of history being studied. Teachers provide opportunities for them to find out about history in a range of different ways. For example, Year 4 pupils devised interview questions they would have asked of Dr Barnardo had they lived during Victorian times. More able pupils are provided with good opportunities to write extended accounts. One pupil wrote a sensitive and moving letter as if she was a Victorian boy writing to his grandfather about the difficulties of working on building the railway network. Work on display in one of the Year 4 classrooms included an amusing advertisement written by the pupils seeking to employ a teacher for the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Ragged School.
95. Teaching is satisfactory overall and is sometimes good. A particular strength lies in the use of resources. For example, a careful link was made with mapping skills done by Year 2 pupils in geography earlier in the term and this helped them to work out features from a seventeenth century map of London. Good opportunities are provided across the school for pupils to extend their learning through homework where they are asked to find answers to historical questions, collect materials and complete

research projects. Work in books in Year 4, shows some inconsistencies between classes. In one class, work is carefully collected and marked but in the other class, pupils' work is kept loosely in files, is rarely dated and often unmarked. This practice hinders opportunities for teachers to check pupils' learning over time, and does not provide pupils with the information they need to help them improve their work. Although not used extensively, there are some opportunities for pupil to use ICT for researching information about historical events and periods.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

96. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection when standards were judged as below average. As a result of improved resources and a significant improvement in teachers' subject knowledge, standards are now at the levels expected at seven and nine and pupils make steady progress. The school has a high level of extra adult support in place to help pupils with special learning needs, and as a result, these pupils achieve well in learning keyboard skills. Subject leadership is good. The subject leader is new to the post but has a very clear understanding of where and how provision in the subject needs to be improved. A well-focussed action plan has already been prepared. A weakness remains, however, in resource provision. The school has not yet caught up with the national minimum expectation of the number of computers in a school of this size, although it is poised to remedy this through the purchase of extra computers in the near future. In addition, the governors have identified an amount of money towards setting up a computer suite and extending Internet facilities in response to the need to improve pupils' access to ICT. In the meantime, pupils have to take turns on the computer as the week progresses.
97. Since the last inspection, teachers have now been provided with a programme of work for the year. This ensures that all aspects of ICT, including using the Internet and sending and receiving e-mail, is experienced. Pupils do have experiences in giving computer commands to control the movements of programmable toys but this is at a very early stage of development. Improvement in the use of ICT in other subjects is not as marked. There is some evidence of pupils' skills being used across the curriculum, for example, word-processing in writing and databases and graphs in geography. Occasionally, pupils use CD-ROM to research information, for example, in history. However, teachers do not plan enough opportunities for pupils to use their ICT skills in other subjects, such as mathematics and science. This is partly due to insufficient computers and limited subject software but is also linked to some lack of flexibility in the planned use of the computers currently available.
98. In Year 1, data handling is appropriately introduced through ensuring that pupils develop an understanding of the process of gathering evidence. By the end of the lesson observed, pupils were able to talk confidently about information from different sources such as books, computers, television and newspapers. At seven, pupils word-process simple text with recorded work indicating that they are developing a satisfactory understanding of ICT tools. One pupil wrote 'To do this work, I needed to use the shift key and space bar.' They are developing an awareness of how data handling using computers can help in recording their findings, for example in producing simple bar graphs about favourite fruits.
99. By the age of nine, pupils are beginning to make satisfactory use of program tools to edit text. For example they change the appearance of their work by altering the size, colour and style of font. During lessons, pupils in Year 4 were learning the basics of the use of a 'Spell check' program. Most pupils were attentive as teachers explained the sequence of steps but those furthest away from the monitor found difficulty in reading the text and in a Year 3 lesson a small number of pupils struggled to concentrate during half an hour of instruction.

100. Teaching is satisfactory overall. A long-term programme of teacher training in ICT skills has resulted in all teachers having secure subject knowledge. This enables them to explain operations and techniques clearly and to set suitable tasks. Skills are taught well in individual lessons, however there are not enough opportunities pupils to extend improve their ICT skills in other subjects. This particularly holds back the more able pupils. There is scope to improve lesson planning to take more account of pupils' different learning needs when planning activities.

## MUSIC

101. Standards are at the levels expected when pupils reach the age of seven but are much higher than usually found by the time pupils reach the age of nine. The good features noted at the time of the last inspection have been built on and standards have risen further. Music has a high profile in school and the regular performances form a valuable bridge between school and the community. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the experiences and many are developing a love of the subject. Subject leadership and management are good. The subject leader is talented and committed to further develop the subject. For, example, she writes and scripts most if the musical performances herself. She also provides high quality specialist teaching in the subject.
102. Pupils achieve steadily in the infant classes in most of aspects of music and particularly well in their ability to interpret the mood of the music and detect changes in pitch. For example, when listening to excerpts from 'The Carnival of Animals,' pupils were able to identify ascending and descending scales played on a piano by following the changes in pitch with up and down movements of their fingers. Pupils have good knowledge of the names of percussion instruments, although they know less about how to improve the quality of their playing at this age.
103. Pupils achieve well in the junior classes. They sing with feeling and expression and can hold their own parts well whilst others sing or play a different melody. A quarter of the pupils learn to play musical instruments, such as violin, guitar, recorder and keyboard. These interested, and in some cases talented, pupils achieve well in their knowledge of notation and competency in playing. However, pupils' good achievement is mainly attributable to involvement in the many good quality musical performances the school presents. All pupils are involved in these and weekly music lessons are an integral part of the build up to the ultimate performance. Pupils see the purpose of their learning. Their composing skills reach a high standard, for example in writing and performing their own instrumental interpretations of the plagues of Egypt for their musical version of the story of 'Moses'. Similarly, pupils learn how to project their voices and hit the right notes in singing solo and choral pieces. Video recordings of these performances show that pupils reach high standards for their age. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they are encouraged to perform for an audience. This increases their self-confidence and enjoyment of music.
104. Teaching is good, although regrettably the specialist music teacher, who is centrally involved in the preparations, was not in school during the inspection week. This was doubly unfortunate because junior teachers exchange classes for music lessons to enable the music specialist to use her expertise effectively. Teaching in the lessons seen was satisfactory and there were good features in the way games were used to intensify pupils' listening. However, an examination of pupils' work, including recordings of their performances, offers compelling evidence of very effective teaching. For example, pupils' interesting and original descriptions and illustrations of 'Sea Interludes' by Benjamin Britten, shows how skilfully they have been taught to listen to and interpret pieces of music. Similarly, in the teacher's marking of their

performed compositions, comments such as, 'perfectly timed' and 'finished with a flourish on the xylophone,' show the teacher's depth of understanding and appreciation of their work. There are very few weaknesses in this subject. However, although regular use is made of recording equipment, computers are very seldom used for composing or researching the work of musicians. This limits pupils' understanding of how many modern day musicians work.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

105. Standards are at least at levels expected by the ages of seven and nine. In some aspects, such as dance, standards are higher. These findings broadly reflect those of the last inspection. Lessons are planned carefully to enable pupils to build up their skills systematically. This enables pupils of all abilities to work at their own level to practise and improve their performance. Pupils enjoy the subject because they benefit from a wide range of physical activities. Enthusiastic and effective leadership has considerably raised the profile of physical education in the school over recent years. There are many good quality sporting activities and events for pupils to participate in. The skills they gain taking part in events, such as football and rugby coaching, are reflected in their agility and control in physical education lessons
106. Standards in dance have improved since the last inspection. The school has developed a programme of activities, closely linked to work being undertaken in other subjects. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, the teacher uses a range of instruments to encourage the pupils to assume the characteristic movements of various jungle animals. Stimulating taped music galvanises them into action, They instantly use facial as well as bodily expressions and display agility, flexibility and control in their interpretative movements. A four-session course, run by a professional dancer, provided a stimulus for dance that remains alive. In a Year 3 gymnastics lesson, skills are well developed. Pupils move lightly and gracefully, concentrating their attention on developing sequences that include contrasting speeds, heights and directions. These are executed with good control and co-ordination.
107. The quality of the teaching is satisfactory. There are many good features including class control and the sequencing of the skills being taught from one lesson to the next. A strong feature of the teaching is the emphasis placed on pupils thinking about their work. For example, they are asked to recall details of previous lessons before new challenges are introduced. Lessons are inclusive with independent programmes provided for pupils with specific needs. For example, a pupil with physical disabilities was able to participate fully and be selected to give a demonstration to the class of a movement sequence that he had developed. However, there is scope to make some improvements. In one lesson, for example, the warm-up was not sufficiently vigorous to achieve its goal; in a second lesson pupils did not have enough opportunities to comment on their own and others' work. Multicultural themes are explored, such as the development of Indian dances. Good coaching in swimming enables three quarters of the pupils to achieve the basic 25-metre qualification. Almost all pupils learn to swim 10 metres and many swim greater distances, up to 200 metres. After Year 4, it is the responsibility of parents to develop their children's swimming further. Pupils also benefit from a good programme of coaching from outside experts. Recent visitors have greatly improved pupils' skills and interest in rugby, cricket, kickboxing and soccer. Each year the oldest pupils have the responsibility of organising the 'Potted Sports.' They devise games and rules of activities to test and develop skills via small group challenges. This typifies the school's strong commitment to give responsibility to the pupils and to provide a rich and stimulating series of activities to enjoy. Unfortunately the hall is too small to accommodate a full class of pupils undertaking a physical activity. Teachers are mindful of safety and often ask pupils to take turns whilst other observe. Whilst this encourages pupils learn by watching others work, it does not allow as much time for practice.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

108. By the ages of seven and nine, pupils work to higher levels than those expected in the schools within Northumberland. These findings indicate that standards have risen in the subject since the previous inspection. The main reason for this is the onus placed upon pupils to think. For example, prior to undertaking a visit to a local church, pupils drew up their own lists of, 'What we can learn by visiting a church'. Older pupils are expected to reflect on deeper and more spiritual issues. Such learning increases the pupils' knowledge and understanding but, more significantly, it helps to shape their attitudes and behaviour in a profound way. Experiencing and sharing together the trauma of the tragic loss of a much-loved teacher has forged very close links between the staff and many of the pupils. This is evident in the willingness of older pupils to share their innermost thoughts with such maturity and trust.
109. Pupils throughout the school achieve well. In Year 2, visits to local churches provide rich opportunities for them to gain first-hand knowledge of the Christian faith in action. For example, one pupil suggests that Christians go to church, 'To talk to God and pray to God and love Him.' By the end of the first lesson on their new topic, most pupils are able to identify which of a series of gift cards are linked to 'Celebrations,' such as birthdays, and which to 'Festivals,' such as Easter. They also show good recall of the Buddhist faith, following a recent visit by an English Buddhist. In a lesson observed in Year 3, the question posed was 'What is the Bible and what does it mean to Christians?' One pupil suggested that, 'It's like a letter from God' and another believed that for Christians, 'It's like holding the life of God and of Jesus in your hands'. Pupils take these discussions very seriously and many wish to contribute to them. In Year 4, elements of different faiths are studied. Similarities and differences are well analysed from books, from visits to churches and a Mosque and from studies on the Internet. Databases are built up well and analysed on the basis of the information gleaned.



110. The quality of teaching throughout the school is good. The subject is soundly led. The subject leader has only recently accepted responsibility for religious education. She has received good support from a local vicar, who is also a governor. Together, they have redrafted a new policy document that sets good guidelines for teaching the subject. However, she has not yet had the opportunity to see pupils' books from other classes to gain an overview of the quality of teaching and learning in each class. The strength of the best teaching is that the learning comes through answering questions, rather than from direct instruction. For example, pupils were asked to consider, 'What do you think Jesus was like?' A Year 3 pupil wrote, 'He called himself a candle. He meant that he would light the World and light people's way to good.' Having posed questions at the beginning of a unit, the pupils then return to them, at the end, to review what it is that they have learnt. This is a good form of assessment because the pupils have to evaluate their progress for themselves. The school has a small collection of religious artefacts that are used well. For example, a Qu'ran was shown to Year 3 pupils when holy books were discussed. It was handled and displayed with the reverence and respect that a Moslem would expect. In a similar way that religions aspire to be 'living' faiths, religious education is certainly a 'living' subject within the curriculum of this school.