

INSPECTION REPORT

**LONGHORSLEY ST HELEN'S CHURCH OF
ENGLAND (AIDED) FIRST SCHOOL**

Longhorsley, Morpeth.

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122283

Headteacher: Mrs E Bainbridge

Reporting inspector: Mrs M Lewis
22787

Dates of inspection: 7th – 10th October 2002

Inspection number: 248339

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Drummonds Close Longhorsley Morpeth Northumberland
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs H Henderson
Date of previous inspection:	February 1998

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
22787	M Lewis	Registered Inspector	Music Physical education The Foundation Stage English as an additional language	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Leadership and management Key issues for action
8988	J Cross	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
3240	D Wilkinson	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology	Quality and range of learning opportunities
30954	B Ashcroft	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Geography History Special educational needs Educational inclusion	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Helen's Church of England Aided First School is smaller than most primary schools. It takes pupils aged from three to nine years. It is a popular school. The number of pupils has risen steadily over recent years. During the inspection week 83 full-time pupils (39 boys and 44 girls) were in the main school and 15 children were attending part-time in the nursery. Children in the nursery start school with a broad range of attainment but overall pupils' attainment is average for their age. The school is situated about seven miles from Morpeth and serves the village of Longhorsley and the hamlets and farms in the surrounding rural area. Almost 30 pupils travel to school by taxi or by bus. Nearly all pupils are of white ethnic origin. A below average number of pupils (six) are on the register of special educational needs. In the main, they have learning difficulties. One pupil has a statement of educational needs. This is broadly average. No pupil is in the early stages of learning English. A below average percentage (almost 5 per cent) of pupils is eligible for school meals. The school has been granted 'Investors In People' status. It also holds a government 'Award for Excellence in Achievement.'

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Helen's is a very good school with many very good features. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and pupils do very well and achieve high standards. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very well. Pupils achieve highly in English, mathematics and science at the ages of seven and nine years. The leadership and management of the school are very good. All pupils are included and valued by the school. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are well above average in Years 2 and 4 in English, mathematics and science;
- Teaching is very good overall and this helps pupils make rapid progress in their learning;
- Children in the Foundation Stage make a very good start to their education;
- Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support and do very well;
- The headteacher provides very good leadership and management of the school;
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to the school are very good. Relationships in the school are excellent.

What could be improved

- Pupils' achievements in information and communications technology (ICT) could be higher.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection in February 1998. Standards have risen to be well above average in reading, writing, and science in Years 2 and 4. Tests results in Year 2 have been exceptionally high in mathematics for the past two years. Teaching has improved and there is more very good teaching across the school. Teachers' planning has improved in all subjects. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved to be very good and relationships throughout the school are excellent. The school now provides very well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leadership and management of the school are now very good.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
reading	A	A*	A	A	very high A* well above average A above average B
writing	B	A	A	A	average C below average D
mathematics	A	A*	A*	A	well below average E

The school has sustained a rising trend in its results for pupils in Year 2 in recent years. Test results for pupils in Year 2 over the past three years show that in comparison with all schools pupils do very well. Standards in writing have risen to be well above average since 1999. Results in reading have been maintained at well above the national average and were excellent in 2000. Standards in mathematics have risen. In both 2000 and 2001 pupils' results were in the highest five per cent of all schools nationally. In comparison with schools having a similar intake, standards in all three subjects were well above average for 2001. In 2001 the school's performance in science was also very high in comparison with the national average.

Pupils achieve high standards mainly through very effective teaching and the very good start that children have in their language and mathematical development in the Foundation Stage. Although no national comparisons are yet available for the most recent test results for Year 2 pupils in 2002, results in reading, writing and mathematics are likely to be of a similar standard as the previous year. The school sets challenging and realistic targets based on the information it gains through tracking pupils' progress. It has met these successfully in past years.

Inspection findings show that pupils achieve very well. They do far better than in most schools. In Years 2 and 4 standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science. Standards in history, geography, music, dance and games are above average. In art and design, pupils in Year 4 attain above the average for their age and pupils in Year 2 pupils achieve at the average level. Pupils attain average levels by the end of Years 2 and 4 in design and technology and ICT. Pupils' achievement in ICT could be better. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.

Children enter school with broadly average attainment but in response to the very good teaching particularly of literacy and numeracy in the Foundation Stage they make very good progress and begin Year 1 with above average attainment in these areas. Children also achieve very well in their personal, social, emotional and physical development. Consequently, they acquire social skills and independence that are in advance of their age. In other areas of learning children achieve steadily to reach the levels expected of them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and their work. They respond very well during independent activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils show a high standard of behaviour in lessons and at play.

Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Relationships are excellent throughout the school. Pupils respond maturely to the opportunities they are given to take responsibility.
Attendance	Very good overall. The school has a below average rate of unauthorised absence and pupils arrive punctually at school.

Pupils of all ages show great interest in their work and are proud of the school. Their very good attitudes to learning and very good behaviour make a significant contribution to their achievements.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is very good overall. It is particularly strong in the Foundation Stage and in Years 3 and 4. Very good teaching is represented across the school in all key stages, although some lessons in Key Stage 1 lack pace. Pupils throughout the school make very good progress achieving well in their learning. All teachers provide challenging work to pupils of all abilities particularly in English, mathematics and in the Foundation Stage. They plan lessons very effectively and have high expectations of what pupils can do. Teachers assess pupils' work well and match work successfully to meet the needs of all pupils. The teaching and support given to pupils with special educational needs is very good and they make very good progress. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding of the National Strategies in numeracy and literacy so that the basic skills in English and mathematics are taught very well. Teachers in Years 3 and 4 are particularly skilful in helping pupils learn different ways of working out calculations in mental arithmetic. Science is taught well and teachers make good use of independent investigations and practical activities to help pupils understand scientific enquiries.

Visiting specialist teachers in music and conversational French make a good contribution to the standards of pupils' learning. They develop a good understanding of French culture. Specialist teaching in physical education is very good. Although broadly satisfactory, the teaching of ICT does not concentrate sufficiently on the teaching of skills. Teachers do not check well enough what pupils have already learned and can do, both at school and from home.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum offers a good range and quality of opportunities for first hand experiences including educational visits and visitors to school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Teachers and support staff are effective in their support and pupils make very good progress and achieve well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. The school puts a high emphasis on pupils' personal development and provides very good opportunities for pupils to develop in all aspects of this area. The school promotes pupils' understanding of equality for people from all backgrounds well.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. All pupils are looked after very well and good provision is made for their health, safety and welfare. The assessment of each pupil's achievement is good and very good personal support is given to all

	individuals.
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There are very good links with parents and most make an excellent contribution to their children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and a clear sense of purpose and direction for the school. She has successfully established an effective and committed team of staff. The assistant headteacher gives her very good support.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governing body fulfils all of its statutory requirements and provides very good support for the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The headteacher, staff and governors evaluate the school's performance proficiently in an annual audit.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school manages its budget well and uses its funds wisely for the benefit of pupils. It ensures best value for money when making spending decisions. It seeks and acts upon parents' views.

The school has adequate qualified teachers and support staff. Learning resources are good. Although teachers organise classes very well the hall is too small for the teaching of gymnastics.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The children like school and they make good progress; The school is well led and managed and parents feel comfortable to approach the school with questions and problems; The teaching is good and the school expects the children to work hard; Behaviour in the school is good. The school works closely with parents; The school helps the children become mature and responsible. It provides an interesting range of activities outside of lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small proportion of parents would like more information on how their children are getting on.

Parents overwhelmingly support the leadership and management of the school and the aspects of school life. Inspectors agree with their positive comments. They consider that the teaching is very good, as is pupils' behaviour. A small proportion of parents felt that they did not have enough information on their children's progress. The evidence from the inspection supports this. Annual written reports to parents do not tell parents enough about what individual children know and can do.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards have improved since the previous inspection. Throughout the school pupils achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science and by the age of nine years, pupils in Year 4 achieve standards above average in nearly all other subjects. They do far better than in most schools. Pupils make rapid progress in their learning from the Foundation Stage onwards.
2. In 1998, test results for pupils in Year 2 showed a very good improvement immediately following the last inspection in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has maintained high results since then and has kept pace with the rising national trend.
3. In comparison with all schools nationally over the past three years, results in reading have been well above average and in 2000 were very high. Results in writing have risen from above average in 1999 to be well above average for the last two years to 2001. Pupils' results in mathematics have been outstanding and in the highest five per cent of schools nationally for both 2000 and 2001. The 2001 results of teacher assessment in science, where there are no national tests, showed that pupils attained very highly and in the highest five per cent of schools nationally. Well above average results were achieved in reading, writing and mathematics in comparison with schools with a similar level of free school meals.
4. Although at the time of the inspection, national comparatives for the most recent tests in 2002 were not available, the school's results in reading, writing and mathematics are likely to be of a similarly high standard to those in 2001.
5. The school has recently received a government 'Award for Excellence in Achievement' and a 'Basic Skills Award.' It achieved its targets for English and mathematics in 2001 and 2002. It has set challenging and realistic targets for pupils in Years 2 and 4 which are well informed and based on the information gained through tracking pupils' progress.
6. Children do well in the Foundation Stage. They make a very good start to their education in both the nursery and the reception classes. When they begin in the nursery their overall level of attainment is broadly typical for three-year-olds in communication, language and literacy, mathematical and personal, social and emotional development. Children are taught very well in the Foundation Stage. As a result of the emphasis the school gives to the areas of language and literacy, mathematical, physical and personal, social and emotional development, most achieve well and exceed the goals expected for their age in these areas by the time they begin Year 1. They make sound progress in knowledge and understanding of the world and in their creative development and by the time they start in Year 1 reach the levels expected of them.
7. Inspection findings show that pupils throughout the school achieve well above average standards in all areas of English, including reading, writing, speaking and listening, mathematics and science. This is due to the school's continuing emphasis on the main subjects of English, mathematics and science and the rich curriculum it provides in most other National Curriculum subjects. In both key stages pupils do well and attain above the average in history, geography, music and physical education. Pupils in Years 2 and 4 attain average standards for their ages in design and technology, and

ICT. In art and design pupils in Year 2 attain average standards although by Year 4 standards rise to be above average. Although the school has sufficient computers, at both key stages pupils do not achieve as well as they could in ICT. This is due to several factors. For instance, national expectations in the subject have risen recently and the school has not kept up well enough with recent requirements and changes in the curriculum for ICT.

8. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs are helped to make very good progress. They acquire literacy and numeracy skills more slowly than the other pupils but they work hard and achieve well making good gains in their learning, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. They receive very good support and work in these subjects is adapted for them at the correct level. Good individual educational plans are in place for each pupil. In 2002, 100 per cent of pupils in Year 2 who sat the tests in reading, writing and mathematics achieved at the nationally expected level. The same picture applies in the teacher assessment of science.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development have further strengthened since the last inspection. Together with the happy, caring environment and ethos of mutual respect within the school, they are a key factor in pupils' high achievements.
10. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards school and their work. From their first days in the nursery and reception classes the school's supportive climate for learning motivates the children and generates enthusiasm. Throughout the school pupils show great interest in their work. They want to succeed and are eager to please their teachers. They work hard independently and also when collaborating in a small group. During a literacy lesson in the Foundation Stage, for example, pupils aged between three and six years got on just as well with their group activities whether led by the teacher, the helper or unsupported. Pupils listen very attentively to teachers' explanations and are good at waiting their turn to speak. From the nursery onwards pupils are mindful not to interrupt the teacher. They are encouraged to try to find things out for themselves and this increases their independence as learners.
11. Pupils with special educational needs show equally good attitudes towards their work. They are keen to learn and concentrate very well during lessons. They enjoy excellent relationships with the adults who work with them and with their classmates which enable them to make very good progress.
12. Inspection findings fully agree with the views of parents about the very good standard of behaviour achieved by the school. Pupils are very well behaved in lessons and around school, including the playground. This enables them to concentrate on their learning without distractions and to play together happily in their free time. Some of the nursery and reception children choose to play in the main playground with older pupils rather than in the familiarity of their own, well equipped area. This is a measure of the pleasant atmosphere and excellent relationships that exist throughout the school community and the long established tradition and expectation that older pupils look after younger ones. Parents appreciate that on the very rare occasions that any form of bullying takes place the staff quickly and effectively respond to eradicate it. There are no exclusions from the school.
13. Pupils' personal development is excellent, helped by the school's first rate provision for their personal, social and health education, and active encouragement for them to become good citizens. Parents who replied to the inspection questionnaire were unanimous in that the school helps their children to become mature. Pupils of all ages

enjoy sharing responsibility for numerous small tasks around the school. They also respond extremely well to opportunities to take part in community events such as the recent commemoration of the life of The Queen Mother and the Golden Jubilee celebrations in the village. Their maturity as learners also enables them to get the most out of educational visits. For example, a recent visit by pupils in Years 3 and 4 to a local Museum of Antiquities in relation to their topic work on the Ancient Greeks was a great success. One of the several parents that accompanied the visit commented upon the pupils' ability to quickly establish positive relationships with the museum staff. They said that discussions and small workshops had 'Brought the Ancient World to life'.

14. Attendance is very good overall but exceptional circumstances involving long-term absence has caused slightly below average attendance during the last year for which there are national comparisons. This particular year was the only one of the last five when the attendance level fell below the national average of 95 per cent. In schools as small as St Helen's approved long-term absence disproportionately affects overall attendance because each child represents about two per cent of those above statutory school age. The school's rate of unauthorised absence is below the national average.
15. Pupils generally arrive punctually. Well established routines, which allow them into their classrooms considerably earlier than the official school start time, ensure a purposeful start to the school day. Pupils swiftly get out work to do as soon as they get inside and are fully settled by the time school starts. Few arrive later than registration, even though many travel to school by bus or taxi from outlying areas.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. The quality of teaching is very good overall and is a strength of the school. All teaching during the inspection was at least satisfactory or better. It was very good in over two fifths of lessons and good in almost two fifths. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection when the quality of teaching was satisfactory overall and there was considerably less good and very good teaching and some unsatisfactory teaching.
17. Very good and good teaching is evident across all stages of the school although some lessons in the mixed class of Year 1 and Year 2 pupils lack pace. Teaching is very good overall in the Foundation Stage and this gives children a very good start to their education. The quality of teaching is very good overall in Years 3 and 4 particularly in English and mathematics. Visiting specialist teachers in music, and conversational French make a good contribution to pupils' learning in these subjects and raises pupils' attainment to above average. Specialist teaching in physical education is very good.
18. The improvement in teaching since the previous inspection is due to the steps taken by the school immediately following the inspection and the introduction of the three-part lesson in literacy and numeracy which is also used in lessons in most other subjects. In addition teachers have had a concentrated programme of staff training in the Foundation Stage and in some subject areas especially in literacy and numeracy. For instance, the school has recently concentrated on developing the sessions at the end of numeracy lessons and in teaching the development of pupils' writing. Staff have worked together on producing a sound policy for teaching learning and on auditing all subject areas. Well structured schemes of work are in place and nationally recommended guidelines have been adapted to meet the needs of the school and in particular teaching of the mixed age classes. Teachers' planning of lessons has improved to take into account the different ages of pupils in the class and activities provided for learning are matched well to the different levels of pupils' abilities.

19. The school has developed a systematic programme for the monitoring of teaching by co-ordinators in English, mathematics and science. The headteacher monitors teaching and learning across the school as part of performance management and governors who are linked to curricular subjects also monitor some lessons. This emphasis on monitoring, undertaken by all the full-time teaching staff, has made a strong contribution to their professional development and teaching expertise.
20. There are many strengths in the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers provide a high level of challenge to pupils in English, mathematics and in the Foundation Stage. For instance, higher attaining pupils in a mathematics lesson in Year 4 were challenged to halve 25 and to use decimal places to reach 12.5 and 6.25 before converting to a vulgar fraction. Children in the reception class learned to discriminate between each other's eye and hair colour and record their results pictorially in a chart. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and expertise of the National Strategies in numeracy and literacy so that the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very well throughout the school. The teaching of reading has high priority. Many pupils arrive in school early and for instance in the mixed Year 1 and 2 class pupils are often heard read by the teacher before the school day begins. Teachers plan very effectively using the school's schemes of work and this ensures that generally pupils build systematically on what they already know. Lessons have clear learning objectives which are clearly explained to the pupils. This is particularly the case in English, mathematics, science and in the Foundation Stage. Teachers take into account pupils' previous learning before planning the next step. However, this is not the case in ICT where pupils' skills are not checked well enough to ensure that in lessons they build sufficiently well on what they already know and can do. Teachers manage pupils very well overall. They have excellent relationships with the pupils and always have time to discuss with them. They use encouragement and praise well and value the pupils' contributions to lessons which results in pupils doing their best at all times.
21. Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously and regularly. They encourage pupils' well with positive comments but seldom give suggestions of how pupils could improve their work.
22. Older pupils have personal targets to achieve and this helps towards giving them responsibility for their own learning. Teachers know all the pupils very well and check their work carefully. However, the recording of what each pupil knows and can do in subjects other than mathematics and English tends to be cumbersome. It is merely a record of the work the whole class has done, rather than what individuals know and can do. It does not inform further development or give useful points for improvement.
23. Teachers have high expectations of the children in the Foundation Stage and this means that they have a very good start to their education. They respond well and make very good progress exceeding the learning goals in most areas of learning by the time they begin in Year 1. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is well organised in accordance with the recommendations for their age and a significant proportion of children move smoothly into the early stages of the National Curriculum before they leave the reception class. Staff use resources well and parent helpers and the student nursery nurse make a good contribution to children's learning. Staff emphasise the development of children's personal, social and emotional skills from the beginning and teach the basic skills of language, and mathematics particularly well. Parents give excellent support to their children in the Foundation Stage and this helps accelerate their learning particularly in reading.
24. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. All staff are strongly committed to moving the pupils' learning forward in a steady and systematic way. Pupils learn alongside others in their classes and receive very good support from

teachers and teaching assistants. The school uses the expertise of outside agencies in assessing pupils' needs and all staff and parents are kept well informed of the targets on individual learning plans and of how to assist the children. Staff relate well to pupils with special educational needs. They value their contributions and promote their self-esteem effectively. This ensures that they are well integrated into lessons.

25. Teaching in English is now much better than at the time of the last inspection when it was satisfactory. It is very good in Years 3 and 4 and although there is some very good teaching for pupils in Year 1 on balance it is good overall, in Years 1 and 2. Pupils get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage and continue to make good progress in their learning and attain well above average standards at the end of both Years 2 and 4. The strength of the teaching in literacy is the emphasis given to pupils' skills in speaking and listening and in reading. Pupils learn to read with expression and with an understanding of the story and the characters. In literacy sessions the school gives a significant time to the phonic programme in Years 1 and 2. This helps both pupils' spelling and 'Sounding out' of words. Pupils' learning is carefully checked in reading and writing and the teachers know exactly what the pupils need to practise and learn. Teachers have a good understanding of teaching writing and in Key Stage 2 strive to ensure that pupils use powerful words and correct punctuation in their written work.
26. Teaching in mathematics is very good overall although on balance it is stronger in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1 where some lessons are less stimulating and lack pace. Nevertheless, pupils make good progress in their mathematical learning and by the end of Years 2 and 4 standards are well above average. Teachers make very good use of the three parts of introduction, activity, and follow up in numeracy lessons. The mental arithmetic session at the beginning of mathematics lesson is used very well for developing pupils' mathematical thinking and showing them a variety of ways to work out computations in addition and subtraction.
27. Teachers use ICT effectively across different subjects of the curriculum and in particular in English, mathematics and science. Whilst the teaching of ICT is satisfactory overall there are some shortcomings. National expectations have risen and teachers have not fully come to terms with the latest changes such as the need to develop some ICT skills such as, saving and retrieving, earlier in Key Stage 1. The school has been in the last cohort of teachers in the county to receive additional national training in ICT and consequently teachers are still in the process of implementing changes and new requirements. This delay has impacted adversely on the development of the subject. In addition teachers do not check carefully enough what pupils already know and can do and what they need to do next.

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

28. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is very good. It includes all the recommended areas for children of this age and provides a wide range of worthwhile experiences. It is well organised and enables the children in the Foundation Stage unit, to get off to a very good start. Teachers plan well to meet the children's needs placing a strong emphasis on speaking and listening skills and children's personal, social and emotional development. Since many of these pupils make very good progress and are ready to move on during their reception year, the school bases its curriculum on a combination of the recommended National guidelines for children aged from three to six years and the beginning of the National Curriculum in Key Stage 1. Pupils of reception age receive a very effective curriculum alongside the younger Year 1 pupils.

29. The curriculum in the rest of the school is very good and much improved from the time of the previous inspection. The pupils receive very rich learning opportunities based on many first-hand experiences.
30. The school has adapted the National Strategies for literacy and numeracy well in order to match the needs of the mixed age groups of pupils found in each class. The school takes the opportunity to practise and develop literacy and numeracy skills in other subject areas. In science, for example pupils use measuring skills in their experiments and record their findings by ordering their writing in a systematic way. Similarly, in religious education they use their writing skills to retell stories. However, there are missed opportunities in subjects such as design and technology for pupils to develop their literacy skills because the school uses worksheets too indiscriminately.
31. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The pupils identified have individual education plans with realistic but challenging targets. Both the class teacher and the co-ordinator keep a good check on each individual pupil's progress. As a result, this is very good. The school works closely with parents and outside agencies in supporting these pupils and they often have additional adult help with their lessons.
32. There have been successful changes since the previous inspection in the way which the teachers plan the curriculum. There is now much better guidance on the content of what teachers teach and when they must teach it. The school has successfully adapted the nationally recommended guidelines for all curricular subjects to meet the needs of the mixed age classes in the school. There is now a clear two-year cycle of topics to enable subjects to be taught as discreet lessons whilst establishing effective links between subject areas. Consequently, pupils receive a broad and well balanced curriculum with the progressive development of skills built into the teachers' planning for each term. There are, however, shortcomings in the progressive development of skills in the teaching of ICT. For instance, the school delays the teaching of some skills such as saving and retrieving skills at Key Stage 1 and does not sufficiently build on the skills pupils bring into school from their learning on computers at home.
33. The curriculum for pupils' personal, social and health education is excellent and underpins much of the ethos, attitudes and behaviour management of pupils. The 'Tree of Life' books in which pupils record their work is testimony to the wide range of issues considered. This well considered programme of work helps pupils to become mentally and physically stronger and helps them to keep safe. The school makes good use of the experiences, skills and knowledge of visitors such as the school nurse who works successfully with pupils. Further experiences include, amongst many others, the visit of the 'Life Education Centre', which is a mobile classroom provided by the local education authority to widen pupils' knowledge on a variety of health and safety related issues.
34. The school makes excellent use of the wider community to enhance its curriculum provision for pupils. People from the wider community, such as artists, musicians and writers visit the school to share their talents with the pupils. Pupils regularly visit places of interest such as local industry, supermarkets, and art galleries. They take part in a wide range of events within the community such as the Brinkburn Music Festival. These activities give pupils exciting opportunities to extend their learning; for example, they attended an art gallery and created their own stained glass windows. The Year 4 pupils undertake an annual residential visit to Kielder Forest and Reservoir to broaden their horizons and experiences.
35. The school has very good links with its partner institutions. There are good relationships with the middle school where the majority of pupils continue their

education. There are successful links with the cluster of neighbouring schools through combined activities for both staff and pupils. For example, the pupils from the four small schools in the cluster take part in joint activities at the nearby national trust property, Wallington Hall, where they experience such activities as sculpture, flag making and dance.

36. There is a range of extra-curricular activities for pupils including football, rugby and a science investigator's club. These activities are open to both boys and girls. The school, through its statement of aims and values and through its practices, is fully committed to ensuring all pupils are fully included in all activities. This seemingly limited range of extra-curricular activities need to be set against the schools' desire to give as many rich experiences to pupils during the school day. This is because some pupils are unable to take part in activities at the end of the school day due to commitments to catch taxis and buses home. For example, the school offers French lessons for all pupils and all children receive recorder lessons. Provision for these extras to the basic curriculum is very good.
37. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection. Considerable effort and imagination are used on behalf of the pupils. The school is a happy and welcoming place and staff work consistently hard to achieve this.
38. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good and results in them confidently expressing their personal thoughts, opinions and feelings. The school has a very strong Christian ethos which is explicit in its ethos statement and aims and is exemplified in its daily life and work. Teachers raise the self-esteem of all the pupils by ensuring that they are all treated equally and feel valued in school. Opportunities are given for the pupils to help and respect each other. For example, older pupils take care of younger ones during break times. They comfort them and bring them back into school if anyone is hurt. Teachers give the opportunities for pupils to discuss their thoughts, feelings and emotions with them. Pupils have good learning opportunities to obtain an insight and explore natural forms. For example, in a science lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4, they were amazed at the compactness of a human skull and from examination of X-rays of the number of bones that made up the human skeleton. Spiritual awareness is supported very well during the daily life of the school, in the dining hall, and when the whole school is assembled together for a musical practice for events such as the Harvest festival. Pupils listen to music quietly and have time to reflect on the main message of collective worship in prayer. The local vicar is a regular visitor in school and takes collective worship on a regular basis.
39. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. There is a very clear behaviour code in school and this is applied consistently and sensitively. Children all know the rules as they have helped to negotiate them. The school does all that it can to help pupils develop into decent human beings. Teachers and other adults in school are all good role models and are consistent in their approach to behaviour management. The excellent provision for pupils' personal, social, health and moral education and citizenship in school gives pupils the opportunity to think about and discuss moral issues. For instance, at the time of the recent countryside march for Liberty and Livelihood, pupils in Years 3 and 4 have had recent discussions, very relevant to them, on whether or not fox hunting should be banned.
40. The provision for pupils' social development is very good. The school provides many very good social experiences including an annual residential visit for pupils in Year 4. Children meet people from other walks of life, such as artists and storytellers when they visit the school. The pupils are given many opportunities to make educational visits to outside places of interest, such as visits to Newcastle to the Hatton Art

Gallery, the Science Museum, the theatre and to Cragside in Northumberland. Pupils help to raise money for worthy causes such as the 'Operation Christmas Child'. Teachers provide many opportunities for the children to work together in groups. They help each other, take turns, treat each other fairly and share equipment well. Each class has helpers for routine tasks.

41. The provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. Pupils appreciate their own local culture and other cultures. They explore aspects of their own locality and plan routes around the village. They take part in various activities, such as the Morpeth Pageant and the Brinkburn Festival, and learn about the culture of the North East. There are many visits to museums and places of interest. Theatre and music groups frequently perform in school. The French lessons in school help greatly in the pupils' development and awareness of French customs and the differences between people of different nationalities. The school recognises festivals in other faiths, such as Diwali, and the pupils learn about children in other countries. The Jewish Day and the visit to the synagogue were particularly stimulating for the children. The work following their visit made a good contribution to promoting pupils' understanding of the need for racial equality.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42. Staff help and guide the pupils very effectively. They know the children and their families well and work tirelessly to create a safe, supportive and caring community for everyone involved with the school. The quality of this provision has gained the school 'Investors in People' status and accreditation in four elements to date of a 'Healthy Schools' award.
43. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support from their teachers and support assistants. Their individual education plans contain targets to raise self-esteem and in lessons staff ensure that the pupils play a full part by asking them thoughtful, probing questions.
44. The school also places a very high emphasis on supporting pupils' personal development. They are suitably encouraged to form caring relationships, play an active part in the life of the village and share local and national concerns. Pupils' personal 'Tree of Life' books from reception onwards record this work very well. These books show pupils' progress in learning skills that enable them to make informed choices about keeping healthy and staying safe from harm.
45. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. All staff expect the pupils to behave well at all times. Pupils devise and agree a suitable code of conduct which successfully fosters their awareness of acceptable behaviour. The reward system to encourage high behavioural standards, good work and best effort is simple for the staff to apply and functions very well. Pupils receive marbles to place in a jar which when full earns them collective enjoyable treats. This actively promotes team effort. Staff have a fair and consistent approach to unacceptable behaviour and provide very good support for the few who find it hardest to be well behaved. Parents appreciate the school's swift and effective response to any rare incidents of bullying.
46. Attendance is monitored closely. Parents are good at letting the school know why their child is absent, helped by the ready availability of forms that prompt them to give all the necessary details for accurate completion of the registers. Governors are appropriately involved in considering requests from parents for family holidays or other prolonged absence in term-time. Suitable work is found for those who are absent long-term that

enables them to reintegrate into lessons successfully on their return to school and achieve as well as others.

47. Arrangements to prepare the pupils for transfer to middle school are excellent. The process begins in Year 3 when children from several feeder schools successfully work together to build confidence and establish friendships. A shared residential stay and six pre-visits to the middle school in Year 4 further help pupils to transfer smoothly from a small to a much larger school.
48. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic attainment and progress are good overall. This process begins in the Foundation Stage where pupils' progress is carefully tracked from their assessed starting points in the recommended areas of learning. In English and mathematics assessment data from standardised tests and the non-statutory tests taken by pupils in Years 1, 3 and 4 is used well to plan what will be taught and to set realistic yet challenging targets for pupils' future performance. In science and other areas of the curriculum, teachers' assessments are mostly used well to plan future lessons. However, the procedures for assessing pupils' progress in ICT are not sufficiently useful. The system in the teachers' 'Red Books' is cumbersome and unnecessary because it tells the school little beyond what the pupils have studied. This information is readily available elsewhere. Teachers have insufficient assessment information available in ICT to enable them to build progressively on the skills and earlier learning of individual pupils.
49. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and are careful to give encouraging feedback. Whilst they occasionally give helpful, challenging comments to improve pupils' work insufficient attention is paid to this aspect of marking.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. The school's partnership with parents goes from strength to strength and the impact that parents now have on their children's learning is excellent. Very effective links are established with parents right from the outset in the Foundation Stage unit through pre-school activities, home visits and induction meetings. The school is very popular and has a good reputation in the community. It is central to the life of the village but not insular. Staff make every effort to include parents from outlying areas in as equal a partnership as those from the immediate vicinity.
51. Parents have very positive opinions about the school, one commenting that it gives them a 'Feel-good factor'. They particularly appreciate the way that the school is led and managed and the quality of teaching. Inspection findings agree with all of their perceptions about the school's strengths and those who hinted that they could be better informed about their child's progress.
52. Formal autumn and summer consultations with class teachers offer parents very good opportunities to discuss their child's progress and they are welcome at any other time to raise concerns with the staff. The annual written reports, although satisfactory overall, do not tell parents enough about what their child personally can do, the progress they make and the next steps towards their development. There is too much emphasis upon what the whole class has covered in lessons, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
53. Parents of children with special educational needs are kept very well informed about their progress. Copies of their school individual education plans are made available to parents and these also include ways for parents to help their children to make progress at home.

54. The school is very good at conducting its own surveys of parental opinion and responds suitably to their suggestions. For example, in response to comments about homework the school issued clear guidance about expectations in each year group and now notifies all parents about forthcoming topics.
55. The staff very actively encourage parents to get involved with their children's learning at school and at home. The school has a vast collection of mathematical games that are graded by age for families to loan out each week. This scheme helps to raise standards by encouraging families to spend time together on fun activities that reinforce what is taught in lessons. The school also involves parents in researching information for topics with their children. For example, pupils in Year 2 studying 'Habitats' were asked to think about their own homes with help from parents. One child had decided to look through the property pages of the local newspaper and had 'Written a small thesis' on different types of accommodation, such as barn conversions and bungalows. Parents support their children very well with homework. They appreciate the guidance the school gives on hearing their children read and the very informative curriculum meetings, such as those held recently on numeracy and health education.
56. Staff appreciate the willingness of parents and midday supervisors to volunteer assistance in school, at the swimming baths and on the many educational visits that enrich pupils' learning. The parent and teacher association is very active in organising social and fund raising activities. These funds enable the school to subsidise the teaching of French and purchase books and equipment for the benefit of the children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

57. The leadership and the management of the school are very good. They are a major strength of the school and make a strong contribution to the high standards of pupils' attainment, their very good behaviour and attitudes to learning, and to the excellent provision for pupils' personal development. The aims and values of the school are reflected exceptionally well in all areas of the school's work. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
58. The headteacher juggles her commitment of teaching and the co-ordination of a main subject area with the responsibilities of running the school very successfully. She has been successful in fulfilling the increasing demands of her role in a popular school and in striving consistently to maintain high standards. She makes a strong impact on the quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage, in Year 1 and in English throughout the school. With a regular teaching commitment of four days each week in the Foundation Stage, the headteacher leads by example and has created a hardworking and effective team of teachers. She is dedicated to promoting high standards in all aspects of the life and work of the school and provides a clear direction for school improvement and sustaining the school ethos. She has the confidence of parents. All parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire agreed that the school is well led and managed.
59. The headteacher has established an effective team of staff with a common purpose. The assistant headteacher fulfils her management, teaching and co-ordinating roles very effectively. In her management role, she is fully involved in decision making and gives very good support to the headteacher. She leads Key Stage 2 and teaches the mixed class of Year 3 and 4 pupils. In addition she co-ordinates mathematics, special educational needs and design and technology successfully and liaises with the local

middle schools. She shows strong commitment to all aspects of school life and is also a school governor.

60. All teachers, including the part-time teachers, have responsibility for several subjects of the curriculum. Staff meet on a regular basis and work to an agenda for their developmental meetings. All are involved in auditing their subjects, devising action plans which contribute to the school's development plan. Expectations of subject co-ordinators in English, mathematics and science are high. They successfully maintain high standards in each subject and have monitored the teaching and learning within a planned programme. Since the previous inspection co-ordinators have effectively developed schemes of work in all subject areas adapted to meet the needs of mixed aged classes.
61. The management of special educational needs is good. There is a good policy for special educational needs and school practice is up-to-date. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early. Individual education plans are well prepared and well targeted with the right amount of challenge for pupils. Targets are monitored and reviewed frequently and the co-ordinator liaises productively with parents, outside agencies and specialists such as the hearing impairment service. The work of the classroom assistants is well directed and organised across the school to provide support for pupils with special educational needs.
62. The contribution of the governing body to the effective running of the school is very good. The governors take their responsibilities very seriously. They are committed to providing the best education for the pupils and sustaining high standards within its caring atmosphere and the preservation of its religious character. They work closely with the local community for the benefit of the school such as when the community hard court area was instigated and built.
63. Governors keep well informed and up-to-date with their training. They have a good understanding of the life of the school on a daily basis. Most governors are assigned to a curricular area and regularly review the development of them. They visit the school regularly to discuss with co-ordinators and monitor lessons in progress. Governors support the school in many practical ways such as assisting on educational visits. They have a good understanding of the school's areas for development and how it has improved. Since the previous inspection there has been a focus on enlarging the accommodation. Successful improvements in extending the classrooms in each key stage have taken place and this has relieved the cramped conditions evident at the time of the last inspection. The school is now embarking on further development of the school hall and computer suite. The governing body is innovative in its outlook and involves members of the community and business sector for the benefit of the school. The governing body has a committee structure in place and governors work hard on their collective roles and in making contributions to the audit of the school development plan each year. School development planning is thorough. It is audited thoroughly each year by all the stakeholders in the school. Parents are given opportunities every other year to complete questionnaires and their views are taken into consideration. The results of the annual audit form the basis of the following year's development plan.
64. Financial planning is good. The budget is balanced and managed very well. Additional funds are used appropriately to support pupils' learning. The budget is used for the benefit of the pupils currently in the school and supports the school's educational priorities well. All of the recommendations made following a recent financial audit by the local authority have been addressed and implemented. None were significant.
65. The headteacher and governing body have a very good understanding of the principles of best value and apply these very effectively in making decisions. For example, the

school has contracted privately for the maintenance of the school grounds and has sought the best quotation available. School results are carefully analysed and the school actively seeks parents' views and acts upon them. The school has high unit costs which is a feature of small schools with an experienced staff. Pupils arrive at the school with average attainment and achieve highly. The school gives good value for money.

66. The school has sufficient number of qualified and experienced teachers staff to match the demands of the curriculum. Support staff and volunteer helpers also make a valuable contribution to the pupil's learning. All staff have received training in the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. Regular opportunities are given to the staff to attend other courses and to visit other schools. The school is outward looking and staff have visited schools in Holland, France and Newfoundland. Induction procedures are in place for any new teachers. Other staff and students are given clear guidance and support when they are inducted to the procedures of the school. The headteacher conducts professional development discussions with the staff and they receive clear targets which help them develop. The school is closely associated with two universities and provides placements for teachers in training so sharing good practice.
67. Whilst the accommodation is satisfactory overall, the lack of space, particularly in the hall, places great demands on teachers' organisational skills and time. The hall is prohibitively small for whole class indoor physical education such as gymnastics or dance. Most computers are housed in a narrow corridor between two classrooms and this makes it difficult for teaching skills in ICT and impacts on pupils' progress. The school is taking measures to address this and building alterations are due to take place shortly. The school field, pond and environmental areas are assets that extend pupils' learning and very good use is made of a newly built hard court amenity in the village for outdoor games.
68. Resource provision is very good in mathematics, and music. Portable games equipment for physical education is very good. Many interesting and stimulating resources have been obtained to support the learning. Resources are good or satisfactory in all other subjects. All the resources are stored well and are easily accessible to teachers and pupils. This makes the most efficient use of time in lessons.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

69. The school should now:
 - a) Raise standards further in ICT by:
 - ensuring that pupils systematically build on their previous learning experiences and the skills they have acquired from both in and outside of school with the use of improved assessment procedures;
 - improving the attention given to the development of pupils' skills in teachers' planning with clear reference to the requirements of the National Curriculum.

(paragraphs 7, 27, 32, 48, 125, 131)

In addition to this key issue for action, the following less significant weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- improve the quality of the information contained in pupils' annual written reports to parents to include what individuals know, understand and can do; (paragraph 52)
- develop more manageable and useful ways of recording assessment information; (paragraphs 48, 108)
- improve the quality of teachers' marking so that it helps pupils to develop their knowledge of what they have learnt and where they need to improve. (paragraphs 49, 92)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	26
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	11	10	5	0	0	0
Percentage	0	42	39	19	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents almost four 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)	13	84
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y4]
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	6

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	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.5
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	5	6	11

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	11	11	11
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	11	11	11
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
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 of pupils on roll
82
0
1
1
0
0
0
0
0
0
0
0
0
0
0
0

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0

No ethnic group recorded

0

0

0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21
Average class size	27

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	28

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13
Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0
Number of pupils per FTE adult	6.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0

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	2002
	£
Total income	228178
Total expenditure	226675
Expenditure per pupil	2411
Balance brought forward from previous year	-1574
Balance carried forward to next year	-71

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	105
Number of questionnaires returned	46

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	85	9	4	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	80	17	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	67	30	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	52	30	0	0	9
The teaching is good.	74	26	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	57	35	7	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	89	9	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	22	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	74	24	2	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	91	9	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	85	13	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	63	33	2	0	2

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

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

70. The school admits children from the age of three to the 13 place nursery class. Five part-time sessions are held each week. Children are allocated a place for two sessions in the term following their third birthday. Four-year-olds have four sessions and in the January preceding their entry into the reception class, the oldest four-year-olds are allocated five sessions. The purpose built accommodation enables the curriculum for the Foundation Stage to be taught very effectively. Although the unit has no nursery nurse, children benefit from teaching by 3 part-time teachers including the headteacher, several helpers, some of whom are qualified teachers and in the current year from the assistance of a full time GNVQ student. This helps the children to quickly relate well to a range of adults who work with them. Pre-school contact with families is firmly established before children take up their nursery places and the school accommodates parents' wishes wherever possible in allocating nursery sessions. A small number of children move on to other schools for their full-time education but the majority of children stay at St Helens.
71. Children enter the nursery showing the full range of stages of development but overall attainment is average for three-year-olds. At the time of the inspection no pupil in the Foundation Stage unit was identified as having special educational needs.

Personal, social and emotional development

72. Teaching is strong in this area and by the time children begin Year 1 they exceed the agreed expectations for their age. At the time of the inspection, nursery and reception children had only been in school for five weeks. All children in the unit were well settled and the youngest nursery children enter the unit with a good degree of confidence. After less than half a term in nursery, children leave their carers confidently and choose an activity. A high priority is placed on this area of learning and support for it permeates the life and work of the unit. Children soon develop an understanding of the systems and daily routines and show a good degree of independence in making choices and for example, in getting themselves changed for a dance lesson in the hall. They quickly learn to put their clothes in a tidy pile and in the correct order for dressing again. Both teaching staff and helpers have a shared understanding of appropriate expectations and consistently maintain a calm and positive approach to supporting each child. This helps children develop an understanding of social conventions and of what is acceptable behaviour. The youngest children happily work alongside each other but know that they must take turns. Older children in the reception class work well together and also with the small group of the youngest Year 1 pupils in the unit. For instance, they supported each other when they collected information for a picture chart for hair colour. Teachers plan carefully and this ensures a good range of purposeful activities that stimulate children's interest and encourages good attitudes to learning.

Communication, language and literacy

73. Teaching is very good in this area. By the time children leave the Foundation Stage their attainment exceeds the agreed expectations in all aspects of this area. Teachers and helpers develop children's speaking and listening skills very well. Carefully directed questioning helps children build on the skills that they have and develop their confidence further. In large and small group work teachers develop pupils' vocabulary

well and help them understand the meaning of words. For instance, when the teacher demonstrated the differences between old and new household items, she gave good opportunities for children to guess what objects, such as a carpet beater and a washboard might have been used for. They were able to make good suggestions and listened well to each other's. Teachers encourage children during their independent activities and engage them in conversations. For instance, when children were in the 'Role Play' area in the house corner, the teacher began a discussion on their favourite fast food. Teachers always acknowledge what the children say so that they know they are valued and their confidence is constantly promoted.

74. Teachers develop children's enthusiasm for books. Their expressive reading of stories and careful questioning encourages interest and helps them understand what is happening in the story. Most children in nursery and reception develop good early reading skills and have excellent support with their reading at home so that by the time they begin in Year 1 they exceed the early learning goals for this area. They quickly learn to handle books appropriately, to talk about the pictures, the people and animals in the stories. They can name a range of favourite stories such as Billy Goat Gruff, the Little Red Hen and Spot the Dog. Children soon understand that words have meaning and in reception most can read simple stories using their well developed sight vocabulary. They begin to build up simple words with three and four letters and use expression as they read, mirroring that of the adults who read to them.
75. Teachers give good opportunities for children to develop skills in writing and by the end of their reception year, attainment overall exceeds the expected learning goals. In the nursery they use a wide range of pencils, chalk, felt pens for drawing and making marks to represent writing. In the 'Office' they enjoy using paper and envelopes for sending 'Letters'. Children in the reception class learn to control a pencil by tracing over letters and words and underwriting their own sentences written by the teacher. They write their own names and simple labels and captions for instance for the things that a dog needs such as, food, water, toys and walks. By the end of the reception class they make their own books and write simple sentences, with recognisable letters and words. They use capital letters and full stops correctly for sentences such as, 'Bingo wanted to dig.' when writing independently.

Mathematical development

76. The quality of teaching is very good in this area. Children make very good progress and many exceed the standards expected of them by the time they complete their reception year. The progress the children make owes much to the provision of practical experiences to which they can return to explore and reinforce their learning. Children in the nursery and reception class are familiar with counting activities. They have many opportunities for sorting and matching objects and putting them in order of size and shape.
77. Teachers are good at using opportunities to reinforce children's learning in counting. For instance, children in the nursery count the parts of their bodies, they know how many people there are in their families. In activities, they count and match objects. For instance, in a group activity such as laying the table with cups and saucers, plates and cutlery. Staff constantly reinforce counting in both the nursery and reception through counting rhymes and songs such as, Five Little Elephants and Ten Fat Sausages. Consequently most children count and recognise numbers to 10 readily and match objects to numbers. They learn to write numerals to ten, count and record these accurately in workbooks. Counting aloud is built upon and by the end of the reception class, children become confident with larger numbers. By the time they leave the

reception class, children are beginning to add simple numbers in their heads such as $3 + 3$ and $2 + 6$.

78. Staff use their skills of intervention and questioning very successfully to help children learn and to reinforce mathematical language. They use interesting ways to stimulate their interest. For instance, in a very good lesson for reception children, the teacher developed their understanding of mass and the vocabulary of more or less, longer and shorter, heavier and lighter very well. Children compared the weights, shape and sizes of a variety of fruits. They worked with the teacher in a small group and were given the opportunity to predict which fruits they thought were the heaviest and through the practical weighing activity put them in a sequence of the heaviest to the lightest.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

79. Pupils make good progress in this area of learning and attain the level expected of them by the time they begin Year 1. Teaching is good. A stimulating range of topics is planned over two years through which children can learn by investigating and observing for themselves. During the half term in which the inspection fell children were concentrating on the topic of 'Myself'. This had been well explored by looking at their own family, their bodies and how they could keep themselves safe and eat healthily. As part of a 'Drugs Awareness Nursery School Initiative', children were helped to make choices with the use of a puppet. Following a walk around the village keeping to footpaths, the children were able to explain very clearly and confidently how the puppet needed to keep safe on the roads and in the park. Reception children successfully collected data on their eye and hair colours to make a pictorial chart. During the inspection some older pupils who had just begun in Year 1 showed that they could add simple numbers in French as well as in English. Children make good use of computers in the Foundation Stage unit and learn to use a variety of CD-ROMs such as, dressing a Teddy Bear and Take the Spider Home. This promotes their skills of operating a mouse successfully. They also learn to use a tape recorder and headphones confidently.

Physical development

80. The quality of teaching is very good. Most children make very good progress throughout nursery and the reception class and attain above the expectations for their ages by the time they begin in Year 1. They are given daily opportunities to handle pencils and scissors, to roll and cut dough, to spread glue and to manage small construction equipment. This helps them to develop their manipulative skills appropriately. Teachers give opportunities in both free choice and directed activities to improve control. Children are given time to practise and refine skills for themselves. Good use is made of the small secure outdoor area for both nursery and reception children to develop skills through playing with larger equipment such as wheeled toys. Children use the outdoor space appropriately for organised ring games and purposeful, energetic play. During the inspection a play area was set up as a building site and both boys and girls wearing hard hats enjoyed experimenting with a hoist and a tool box as well as using water to fill a variety of containers. These activities encouraged good social skills and interactions amongst the children as they took turns in the activities. Children in reception use space well when running and jumping in the hall and are aware of themselves and others within it. Most are confident when travelling along a bench. They understand that they can use their arms to improve their balance.

Creative development

81. The teaching is good. By the time they leave and begin in Year 1, children attain broadly in line with the agreed expectations for their ages. In both the nursery and reception class, children have an appropriate range of opportunities to develop their creativity. Teachers plan well to provide both structured and independent opportunities for children to explore, experiment and express their ideas and feelings. Most children enjoy using malleable materials such as dough, paint, crayon and collage materials and develop increasing control of the media. They often find pleasure and surprise at the outcomes such as when they explored shaving foam on a tabletop and found they could make patterns which could be made to disappear in order to start again. Children enjoy music. They sing together and do so tunefully, with enthusiasm, and sustain pitch appropriately. All children have opportunities to learn ring games, experiment with non-tuned and tuned instruments to accompany songs and to perform in assemblies and concerts. Dance is taught very well and children experience a wide variety of music and can make up their own dances. They twist and turn to the beat of the music and use a variety of steps. Children enjoy using scarves to help develop their movements. They make appropriate progress in expressing their ideas by acting out roles in their play. Children in the nursery sustain a chosen role for some time and sometimes play alongside others. Adults provide well timed intervention to extend and improve the quality of this imaginative play acting.

ENGLISH

82. Standards in English are well above average, both at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave school at the age of nine years in Year 4. The school has continued to maintain its results at a much higher level than the national average for some years. Standards are far better than the broadly average attainment reported at the time of the previous inspection.
83. Pupils make very good progress in both key stages. Pupils with special educational needs also make very good progress towards the individual targets set for them. This is because of the extra help they receive from both the teacher and support assistants. The support assistants help individual pupils gain the most from lessons. They have strong relationships with pupils and ensure that the pupils have a sense of achievement in what they do. The school caters well for all its pupils and the teachers are careful to target questions and work which is suitable to the mixed ages and abilities of the children found in each of the classes.
84. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening across the school are very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when they were judged as good. The very high standard of behaviour in school has a marked effect on the progress pupils make in speaking and listening. Teachers give many opportunities for pupils to give their opinions and contributions to lessons. Pupils from an early age listen respectfully to others and are interested and keen to join in lessons. They show that they have followed the telling of a story or the introduction to a lesson by the intelligent responses they make. Even the youngest pupils listen intently. For example, when a pupil responded to the story of 'The Dancing Hen' by identifying the hen cuddling the dog in the picture. She had indeed, like the other pupils, realised that the dog was the hero of the story and not the hen of the title. By the time pupils reach Years 3 and 4 they speak with assurance and in their discussions use extended sentences and a rich vocabulary for their age.
85. Pupils listen well to each other. In their group work at computer time one group's conversations followed the lines of, 'What if we were to try this?' and 'Why would you

do that?' Pupils often debate things amongst themselves in a mature way. The pupils' regular involvement in presentations within the community, including school assemblies, further develops their speaking and listening skills. Within other subjects such as science, teachers are keen to extend pupils' vocabulary. During the week of the inspection, pupils were accessing a CD-ROM to extend their knowledge of the medical terms given to the common names of bones and parts of the body.

86. By the time pupils reach the end of Key Stage 1 and are aged nine in Year 4, their achievements in reading are very good. At both key stages, the school puts a great deal of effort into ensuring that adults regularly listen to and support pupils in their reading. Teachers, adult helpers and the strong links established with the home through school reading diaries, all make a significant and valuable contribution to this aspect of the work. The book in which the adults make comments clearly illustrates the progress pupils are making and is testimony to the enthusiasm of parents and school alike. Pupils arriving early for school are encouraged to get on quietly with their reading in the classrooms. Teachers often take the opportunity to listen to children read prior to the official beginning of school. The school makes effective use of the National Literacy Strategy. It provides a good structure to ensuring that pupils observe punctuation and read dialogue expressively. It helps pupils to be able to decode and predict words from contextual clues. A good example of this was observed in a lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2 where the teacher had blocked out words with 'Post-it' notes, in the story of 'The House Cat'. The pupils also had the opportunity to identify words with common spelling patterns. The school devotes a significant time to the phonic programme and this is proving beneficial in improving both pupils' spelling and reading. Where necessary, pupils 'sound out' letters to read an unknown word, testimony to the fact they have been taught well in this respect. The majority of pupils show a real interest in books and can talk about their favourite stories. When questioned about their reading, pupils show a good understanding of what they have read. One young child, reading a book called 'Highland Cattle', quickly referred to the text to show where it told us that the cattle came from Scotland and a characteristic of them was their long horns.
87. Pupils' attainment in writing is generally well above the national average in both key stages. As part of a local initiative in the cluster, the school is currently monitoring boys' and girls' achievements in writing. The structured phonic programme the school has adopted is designed partly to improve pupils' spelling. Writing also remains a feature of the school's improvement plan. However, by the time pupils leave the school at the age of nine the standards of writing for many of the pupils are very high and a significant number achieve at a level commensurate with those nationally expected of eleven-year-old pupils. The writing in the school entrance hall entitled, 'The Story of Camille', a good friend of the artist Van Gogh, is an example of the very high standards achieved. Expressions such as 'skipping through the sunflowers', and 'he wore a golden straw hat' shows the emphasis and encouragement the pupils have had in the use of strong adjectives and verbs. Much of this writing is full of power and imagery. The work is structured well into sensible paragraphs. Punctuation is of a high standard, including the correct setting out of speech.
88. Pupil's handwriting at both key stages is of high quality. It is legible, well proportioned and formed accurately in printed text at Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, pupils use a cursive script, which is taught well. By the time pupils reach the age of nine they write legibly and fluently. They confidently produce highly presentable and extensive pieces of writing of very good quality.
89. Teachers give pupils opportunities to write in a variety of context and styles. In science, pupils are able to order accurately the events of an experiment. In Key Stage 1, pupils give accurately punctuated accounts of the life cycle of a butterfly. Examples of non-

narrative writing includes booklets they have written for example, 'Worms', set out in chapters with a contents page including headings such as, 'What worms do'. This type of work also helps pupils become familiar with the layout of non-fiction books and older pupils have a good understanding of how libraries are catalogued so they know where to find the information they seek. Each class has access to a wide range of both fiction, and non-fiction books to support their current topic. The school makes good use of the County library loan service.

90. One area of writing in need of further development is poetry. There have been too few opportunities for pupils to write poetry of their own and standards in this aspect of pupils' writing are weaker than in other aspects of the work. The school has made some response to this identified need. In Years 3 and 4, one lesson each week is being currently devoted to the teaching of poetry but pupils in Key Stage 1 have less opportunities to write poems beyond acrostic poetry.
91. The teaching is good in Key Stage 1 overall although on occasions there are some very good lessons. It is better at Key Stage 2 where it is very good. The teaching that takes place at both key stages has a direct influence on pupils' attitudes to their work, which are a significant strength of the subject. Pupils are keen to succeed, enjoy reading and will write extensively relative to their ages. Teachers keep pupils on their toes in lessons by the challenges they set for them. For example, within one lesson in Key Stage 2, the pupils brainstormed their ideas for selecting strong adjectives, began to compose their own poetry and then moved on to choosing alternative adjectives to use in the poem, 'Great Blue Whale'. The pupils came up with ideas such as 'squeaky locks', 'crooked windows' and 'colossal mouths.'
92. Marking of pupils' work is up-to-date. Teachers' comments are positive and encourage pupils, but too seldom give pupils enough clues about how to make improvements. Teachers are good at building on pupils' previous learning and most lessons start with consolidation and reminders to pupils of their previous work. Likewise, at the end of lessons teachers reflect with pupils on the lesson content in order to make on going judgements of how well the pupils are acquiring new knowledge.
93. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator understands the strengths and areas for improvement. The well established target setting process for individual pupils is helping to maintain the very high overall standards. Pupils use the computers for their written work but there are insufficient opportunities to allow pupils to present work in different styles such as posters and news.

MATHEMATICS

94. Since the last inspection, standards in mathematics have greatly improved. They have been consistently high or very high over the last four years when compared with the national average. Although no national comparisons are yet available, an early review of the test results for the latest year (2002) indicates a similar situation. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls throughout the school.
95. A number of factors have contributed to the improvement. The school has managed the improvements to the standards and progress extremely well. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented very successfully. All staff have received training and are knowledgeable about the recommendations. Lessons are always planned very effectively and the targets for the lessons are always discussed with the pupils at the beginning of the lessons. The subject leader co-ordinates the subject very well. She is very effective and has worked very well to improve the standards. For

example, she has monitored the teaching to see where improvements could be made. There is now good or very good teaching throughout the school. Results of tests are carefully analysed to see where pupils could achieve better.

96. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good and this makes them willing learners. They enjoy mathematics. Resources for the subject are very good and teachers use them well to support the learning.
97. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in developing their number skills in relation to their abilities. This is because teachers plan work at the right level for them and they are given very good support from the classroom assistants. For example, when an assistant was supporting a child in Year 3, his esteem was raised by the praise and encouragement he was receiving. He was able to complete the task as the questions such as, 'How can we make this sum make sense?' and 'Which is the biggest number?' were put to him. His knowledge of addition and subtraction was increased by the end of the lesson.
98. Pupils achieve very well throughout the school. This is directly linked to the good and very good teaching and organisation, particularly in the Year 3 and 4 class. Teachers know the pupils well and they have formed excellent relationships with them. This encourages the pupils to work hard in order to please their teachers and feel successful. Teachers set challenging tasks for all the children, including the more able ones. In Years 3 and 4, for example, the more able Year 3 children work in a set with the Year 4 children for three sessions each week. In one of these lessons pupils' knowledge of how to solve problems using larger numbers was developed effectively for both year groups. This was because of the careful matching of tasks to what pupils already knew. In another lesson the other group of Year 3 children completed similar work but used easier numbers. This ensured that all the children could solve the problems set.
99. In every lesson work is planned very effectively. Tasks are set which meet the needs of all the pupils. Pupils then progress at their own level. For example, in a lesson in a mixed class of pupils in Year 1 and 2, children used whiteboards to show their answers in the mental part of the lesson. Different questions were asked for each age group. For example, Year 1 pupils were adding numbers up to five whilst Year 2 pupils were adding numbers up to ten. By the time they reach the age of seven, pupils have a very good understanding of number skills. They can add and subtract accurately, their understanding of place value is developing and they can work out problems involving weight and length.
100. A particular strength of the teaching seen is in the mental arithmetic part at the beginning of the lesson when teachers use skills of questioning very effectively to involve all the pupils. Teachers maintain a good pace and challenge pupils very well. Teachers use resources such as number sticks and dart boards very effectively. This stimulates their interest and helps them understand. For example, in a very good lesson for pupils in Year 3, the teacher used the number stick to consolidate the children's knowledge of the numbers in the two and three times tables. In another lesson for pupils in Year 4, the teacher used an abacus well to reinforce how digits changed when adding ten to large numbers such as 1995.
101. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Pupils are taught a wide range of calculation strategies and they are encouraged to explain how they have worked out their answers. Such answers as, 'I put the biggest number in my head first and then add the other numbers' or 'I double the tens and then add the units', showed that the children understood what they were doing. Children complete a large amount of work during the lesson because they remain on task and sustain concentration throughout.

102. All areas of the mathematics curriculum are taught well and opportunities are given for the pupils to extend their mathematical knowledge while using their mathematics in different situations. In a science lesson, for instance, the pupils arrange information in charts and graphs. ICT is used appropriately to support the learning in some lessons. Pupils use carefully selected programs to help them develop their mathematical skills.

SCIENCE

103. Pupils' attainment has greatly improved since the time of the last inspection. The teacher assessments for pupils in Year 2 were very high in 2001 in comparison with all schools. An early review of the results for 2002 indicates that results are likely to be well above average. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
104. Pupils with special education needs make very good progress in developing their scientific skills in relation to their abilities. This is because they are given very good targeted support. In a lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4, the support assistant asked her group good searching questions to get the children thinking about the X-rays they were looking at. This helped the group identify the X-rays of bones of the human body that they were studying.
105. Science is taught well. Lessons are planned with clear objectives that are explained to the children. Throughout the school very good use is made of investigation and practical activities to help the children understand in all the aspects of science. Pupils are taught to make accurate predictions and are expected to work independently when carrying out their investigations. They enjoy the practical work and develop very good attitudes towards learning. Pupils handle equipment carefully and work together well during investigations. They respond well to questioning and can explain why things happen as well as what they have observed, for example, why grass needs water and light to grow. They are competent in devising fair tests and obtaining results. These are recorded in different ways such as charts, lists or graphs. For example, pupils in Year 2 used a block graph to chart different colours seen through pieces of cellophane. Older pupils in Years 3 and 4 made lists of which fabrics last the longest after they had conducted their tests.
106. Teachers build very well on earlier learning and the knowledge and understanding that the pupils bring to the lesson. They use skilful questioning to stimulate the children's interest. Resources are used very effectively. For example, in a very good lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4, when the children were identifying different bones, the teacher produced a skull. This immediately caught the children's imagination and focused their interest in the lesson. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, for example, when the children were looking at X-rays the teacher was able to illustrate to a group of children the differences between a knee joint and an elbow joint.
107. Pupils achieve very well throughout the school. Their work is well presented. They draw careful illustrations that are labelled clearly. Pupils in Key Stage 1 know that to be healthy they need to eat lots of fruits and vegetables and that sugar is bad for their teeth. They understand from their work on materials that some changes can be reversed and others cannot. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have a very good understanding of scientific enquiry and the recording of their work, for instance, on magnetism and electricity is of a particularly high standard.
108. The subject is co-ordinated well and resources are good. The school uses the nationally recommended scheme of work and this has been adapted by the co-

ordinator to meet the needs of the school. Assessment is satisfactory. However, teachers' systems used for recording what pupils can do and understand are cumbersome and duplicate that already shown in teachers' planning. Science is used well in other subjects. Pupils use their numeracy skills well to measure and collect data and draw effectively on their writing skills to record their findings. Pupils make good use of ICT to locate information by using a CD-ROM.

ART AND DESIGN

109. Standards in art and design are broadly in line with the national expectation at the end of Key Stage 1 and above the national expectation by the time pupils leave the school in Year 4. Standards within Key Stage 2, have improved upon those reported at the time of the previous inspection.
110. In both key stages, the curriculum is enriched by visits to the many places of interests such as a local art gallery or by pupils taking part in the 'Artists in School Project.' Some of the best work is produced as a result of these experiences and they are a major factor in the higher standards of attainment within Key Stage 2. Often there are opportunities for both key stages to take part in whole school projects, such as when all pupils explored the process and technique of marbling to create the marble jar display in the school hall. This shared project enabled the pupils to explain different approaches to their work and evaluate what they did.
111. In Key Stage 1, teachers develop pupils' skills systematically, using a good range of materials. The teachers use the local environment and other first hand experiences as starting points for a lot of the work. This approach is effective. Pupils observe and record fine detail, such as when they make drawings and rubbings of leaves. The visit to 'Archie's Pond' created opportunities for pupils to attempt detailed drawings of pond life. On occasions, they use ICT successfully to create pictures using simple graphic programmes; for example, the colourful covers created for their 'Dragon Story Book.'
112. In Years 3 and 4, the work in the style of Van Gogh in the entrance hall is of a high standard. In their drawings of sunflowers, the pupils have created vibrant images of flowers dancing from the paper using pastel crayons. Pupils have also had the opportunity to study art from other cultures. Their efforts at reproducing Aboriginal stick paintings depicting the habitat and animals of the region are particularly effective with pupils paying good attention to detail. As part of their contribution to the Morpeth Festival pupils created three-dimensional head dresses using cane, tissue paper, and fabrics, much in the style of delicate insect wings. The work undertaken with a visiting artist has seen the pupils produce some striking images in the form of a collage of 'Bits and Pieces' to reflect the pupils' own individuality.
113. Although no lessons were seen during the period of the inspection, the pupils' work reflects the fact that teaching within Key Stage 1 is satisfactory and good at Key Stage 2. The contributions made by the experts have a profound effect on the experiences pupils receive and the standards attained. Teachers often work together on whole school projects to good effect. The St Cuthbert's Cross, created by the pupils with 2000 beads to celebrate the millennium, is another example of the purposeful and interesting context in which the work is often set for pupils.
114. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Over the last two years, the co-ordinator has developed a scheme of work to cater for the mixed age classes based on nationally recommended guidelines and adapted accordingly. This is a significant improvement from the time of the previous inspection when no scheme existed to tell teachers what to teach and when.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

115. Pupils make satisfactory progress and attain standards broadly in line with the national expectation at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time they leave school in Year 4. Standards are not as high in Key Stage 2 as at the time of the previous inspection.
116. At both key stages, pupils have good first hand experiences of observing and discussing the products of other people before embarking on design and make projects of their own. There are strong links with other parts of the curriculum. For example, when making fruit salads the pupils recorded the taste and texture of fruits which linked well with a 'Senses' topic in science. As in other subjects, the school links many aspects of the curriculum to visits and calls upon the expertise of others. These are very enjoyable and stimulating learning experiences for pupils and they respond well.
117. In Key Stage 1, pupils make a satisfactory start to designing. In their work with construction kits, they build to a defined brief given to them by the teacher. For example, the pupils in Year 1 were trying to create stable buildings at a scale commensurate with one of the toy people. With help, these pupils were successful and worked with interlinking bricks to create stable structures. In some of the work, there is too little evidence of originality of design. The sock puppets on display, whilst showing a range of skills such as cutting and gluing lacked a variety of ideas indicating that on occasions pupils' activities for designing and making are over directed by teachers. There are some good quality drawings in pupils' books where they have examined puppets made by others. Some pupils made a detailed analysis of the moving parts of marionettes and indicated which string controls, which limb of the puppet. These drawings show a good level of understanding on the part of pupils.
118. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have recently been examining structures. With the assistance of a visiting specialist, they have learned how to create strong structures by creating triangular shapes and forming them into tetrahedrons. They work with a wider range of materials than Key Stage 1 and develop their skills further. They regularly evaluate commercial products and produce their own designs. A recent visit to a supermarket led to some good work on health and safety and culminated in pupils making sandwiches. Some of their mock up designs for sandwiches, shown in exploding views, were of particular good quality.
119. The quality of teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. During the inspection a good lesson was observed in Key Stage 2 where pupils were following up their work on structures. The exciting and well-prepared resources gave great stimulus to the lesson and pupils had to recall previous learning and apply it in the practical task. At both key stages there is an over emphasis in the use of worksheets to support the recording of pupils' work. At Key Stage 2, too little time is given to allow pupils to record their evaluations. This weakness was also identified at the time of the previous inspection.
120. The management of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has recently produced a two year programme of work based on national guidelines in order to support teachers in their planning. However, standards have not been maintained at Key Stage 2 since the last inspection.

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

121. Standards in history and geography are above average at aged seven and nine and pupils make good progress. Standards have improved since the last inspection. The co-ordinator leads the subjects well and both subjects maintain a high profile in the school. The school has adopted the nationally recommended guidelines for teaching the subjects. These have been adapted to fit the needs of the school and are taught in alternate blocks each term. Resources to support pupils' learning are satisfactory and these are supplemented with the frequent loan of artefacts from museums. Effective use is made of a planned programme of educational visits which supports pupils' learning. A good example of this, was a visit using different forms of transport to North Shields and Newcastle airport when pupils travelled by bus, boat and train. Thoughtful and well planned use is made of the local area, for example, local connections with the Suffragette Movement, visits to the coastline of the North East and local village studies.
122. In Year 2, pupils are developing a sense of chronology and how times have changed in everyday life. They talk about different people from the past such as Florence Nightingale, Grace Darling and Guy Fawkes. Through their topic on Victorian Toys, the children showed their developing understanding of the passage of time and how people's lives have changed. Year 4 pupils talked knowledgeably about the work they had completed about the Ancient Greeks and the Romans. Teachers give pupils many opportunities to use their writing skills in history. In their study of the Ancient Greeks they retell myths and legends about Odysseus and Perseus at length. Their work is well presented and contains good illustrations.
123. In Year 2, the pupils are aware that the world reaches beyond their locality. They can find places on a map and pick out countries and seas. Studies of the local area have enabled the pupils to talk about the places they pass on their way to school and locate various places on a map of the village such as the school, the Mission and the oldest buildings in the village. They make comparisons with their own locality with Tocuaro in Mexico. Pupils' written work is neatly presented. In Year 4, pupils have extended their mapping skills and their study of Kenya has given them a good insight into the climate, living styles of that country compared with their own.
124. Only one lesson was observed during the inspection. This was in the mixed class of pupils in Years 3 and 4. The lesson was well planned and helped the pupils to place different countries on a map of the world by looking at picture clues.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

125. Standards in ICT at the end of Key Stage 1, and by the time pupils reach the end of Year 4, are broadly in line with the national expectation. Standards remain very similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection. The school does not sufficiently build upon the skills that pupils have previously acquired both in school and from experiences, they bring in from home. In some aspects of the work, the teachers do not teach skills such as, saving and retrieving early enough in Key Stage 1.
126. At both key stages, the pupils become familiar with a broader range of applications than in many schools nationally. These include amongst others word processing, graphic programmes, control technology and data handling. Consequently, the pupils' breadth of learning experiences is good especially when placed alongside their use of computers for information retrieval via CD-ROMs and the Internet. It is within the area of the systematic build up of skills and the consolidation of these skills that there are weaknesses.

127. A major element of the present provision is in the area of communicating information through text. In Year 2, pupils have undertaken satisfactory work in this aspect. They have word processed a piece of acrostic poetry. They know how to use the spacebar, arrow keys, delete function. They select text size and print out their work with help. In addition the pupils have used simple graphic programmes to create colourful pictures to cover their topic books. They create pictorial scenes, for example of houses set on hillsides, using tools such as line, fill, paint and shape. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have extensive opportunities to use word processing for stories and accounts. When word processing they are able to select an appropriate size of font for their work. They are able to save work, retrieve it and amend it later. However, too little progression is seen in their saved work to indicate that skills are built upon appropriately. Some higher order skills commonly seen in other schools from pupils of similar background are missing. For example, where pupils combine work from two sources such as the use of graphic images alongside text. In addition, pupils have insufficient opportunities to develop the skills learned in the graphic work undertaken in Years 1 and 2 when they move on to Years 3 and 4.
128. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their understanding of control technology. Some of their early experiences come in physical education lessons in Years 1 and 2 when they learn about pathways involving right angled turns. Teachers build successfully on this work when pupils learn how to control a programmable toy. This work requires pupils to be able to estimate distances with some degree of accuracy and to have an understanding of right angled turns. Too little is done at this stage to record their work or to place higher demands on pupils to write simple instructions and then see how successful they are in practice. However, further demands are made in Key Stage 2 when pupils follow up their work at the computer with software that mimics the programmable toy. During the period of the inspection, pupils were being challenged to programme a robot in order that it could burst a series of balloons. The pupils progressed successfully from giving instructions one at a time to giving a series of instructions to burst all balloons one after the other.
129. At both key stages, pupils experience work in data handling. Within Key Stage 1, the pupils enter simple data about for example, their eye colour to produce pictorial and column graphs of their findings. In Years 3 and 4, the pupils have experienced branching database work. They are able to investigate databases, which allow them to identify seashore creatures such as razor shells. Pupils also have opportunities to extract information from databases. Sometimes they work with one variable such as eye colour and sometimes with two variables such as those pupils that match the criteria brown eyes and blue hair. However, there are insufficient opportunities given to pupils to enable these skills to become well established.
130. The school has its own web site, which the pupils have visited and helped with. Older pupils are encouraged to use the Internet for information retrieval and children use CD-ROMs as a source of information, for example, in supporting their knowledge of European countries. Younger pupils use CD-ROMs to make learning in mathematics more interesting.
131. The teaching over time is broadly satisfactory at both key stages. It is in the planning of the broad coverage of the curriculum where there are strengths and in the relative lack of attention to the teaching of skills sequentially that there are shortcomings. Teachers do not make the best use of assessment to find out what pupils can and cannot do and build up pupils' skills accordingly. During the period of the inspection, a very good lesson was observed in Key Stage 2 on the topic of control technology. The teacher had sufficient expertise to give succinct and purposeful instructions to the pupils whilst at the same time allowing pupils to use their own initiatives to solve the problems facing them. This worked well and stimulated each group to experiment with their own

ideas. Extension activities were well prepared to cater for those pupils who completed the main task. A satisfactory lesson was observed in Key Stage 1 where the teacher was introducing the pupils to some mathematics software. High demands were placed on the pupils in terms of the amount of information that they had to assimilate in the brief half hour session.

132. The pupils enjoy their computer time. They behave well and share their resources giving each other mutual support. They treat the equipment with care.
133. The limitations of the accommodation make it difficult for teachers to teach well within the computer corridor. Extraneous noise and lack of space make it doubly difficult for teachers to make best use of the bank of computers available. The recent acquisition of a multi-media projector should benefit pupils' learning. The governors are also planning building alterations, which should improve matters considerably. The management of the subject is satisfactory. The development of the national guidelines for the subject into a workable document for the school has been the most recent and successful focus of attention. However, the school was in the last cohort in the education authority to receive New Opportunities Funding and this has had an adverse impact on the development of ICT.

MUSIC

134. Standards of attainment are above average at the end of Years 2 and 4. Pupils make good progress throughout the school. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
135. Music has a high profile in the school. Pupils are confident in performing both when singing and playing instruments. All pupils have opportunities to perform frequently in community concerts and for special occasions such as a music festival and a Harvest Festival locally in Brinkburn Priory. The school holds a musical evening each year for pupils to demonstrate their skills on individual instruments. Visiting musicians such as a local peripatetic music team, festival players and an African drummer have visited the school recently to demonstrate and hold workshops for pupils which broadens their musical experiences.
136. Pupils in both key stages enjoy singing together and throughout the school they learn to accompany small and larger groups with instruments such as recorders, glockenspiels, and percussion instruments. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have a wide repertoire of songs and add actions. They follow a conductor, sing in tune expressively and are able to recognise the melody and improvise their own. For instance, in a lesson in Year 1, pupils followed the conductor and successfully passed a note around a circle. In Year 2 they followed the conductor imagining they were driving up and down hills to change from high to low sounds. As a result of good and imaginative teaching, pupils make good progress. They develop confidence as they build upon what they already know and increase their experiences. They become increasingly proficient in their performances.
137. Singing in both key stages is of a good standard. Pupils sing with very clear diction, learn new tunes and words from memory quickly. The teaching of singing by the specialist teacher is good. Methods used for pupils to understand the need for correct breathing are inventive and well matched to different levels of understanding for different aged pupils. For example, pupils are encouraged to pretend to take a glass of water before they sing and in a warm up they imagined taking a horse over jumps. They succeed well in learning and singing songs in two parts, for instance 'Cutting the Corn down' a song from Nigeria.

138. All pupils in Years 3 and 4 learn the recorder with a visiting teacher and a significant proportion of pupils read music proficiently and shows a good understanding of beat and note values. Pupils play recorders with good intonation and adjust their playing appropriately to the smallest voices of the youngest children. When accompanying songs on instruments, they maintain their own parts with a good awareness of others and understanding of how the different parts fit together in order to achieve an overall effect.
139. Music teaching is good in both key stages. The expertise and enthusiasm of specialist teachers makes a good contribution to improved standards, but class teachers support their lessons well and play an active part in continuing to practise and refine what pupils learn in lessons taught by specialists. Lessons are well planned and develop at a good pace. Pupils have opportunities to practise their parts individually and with each other. The management of the subject is good and the nationally recommended guidelines for music have been adapted thoughtfully to fit in with the school's overall planning. The wide variety of good quality instrumental resources readily available for use makes a good contribution to the quality of pupils' performances.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

140. Standards in dance and games are above average in both Years 2 and 4. This is higher than at the time of the previous inspection. No lessons were seen in gymnastics during the inspection. All pupils in from Year 2 upwards have swimming lessons. They make good progress. By the time they leave the school at the age of nine years, many swim the required distance expected for pupils aged eleven years.
141. Pupils in both key stages enjoy their lessons and have very good attitudes to their work. They are very well motivated and keen to do well. They take part in lessons enthusiastically, responding to and following teachers' instructions very carefully. In all lessons they pay good attention to the safety rules explained by the teachers and dress appropriately for their activities.
142. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and there is now a high proportion of very good teaching. During the inspection all lessons were taught by a specialist teacher of physical education and were well supported by class teachers who took an active part in lessons. Lessons are planned very carefully and take good account of what pupils have learned previously. Good reminders and encouragement are given to pupils of what they already know and of new the skills they are learning. For instance, pupils in a dance lesson in Year 1 built well on their range of steps such as, skipping forwards and sideways. They were able to dance to a wide variety of music and had acquired an understanding of using the space around them and different pathways for travelling. Very good learning took place when they were able to develop and practise their dance to show the difference in weight on the second beat of a movement. The teacher gave very clear explanations and suggestions to pupils to make them think. This impacted well on the quality of their work. They were able to watch each other's work, evaluate it and then work to improve their own.
143. Specialist teaching of games lessons is very good. In a lesson in hockey skills for pupils in Year 3 and 4 pupils they were given good opportunities pupils to practise and refine their skills of controlling a ball when travelling and shooting to score a point. The lesson was developed well by the teacher into a game for a pair and then a challenging small group game for four pupils. Pupils developed a sound understanding of the parts to be played as opponents and how to react and make decisions for keeping or

passing the ball. They worked co-operatively in their groups and learned the importance of the rules of a game.

144. Management of the subject is good and pupils are well organised to enable all to benefit from lessons in the small hall. However, the small hall is a drawback. The school has improved its scheme of work since the last inspection and now has a well planned programme based on the nationally recommended guidelines and adapted for the school. This ensures that pupils build on the skills they have already acquired and make good progress. The school has a good range of small equipment for physical education. Equipment is annually audited and updated. Good use is made of the new community hard court area which is within a safe walking distance from the school. The school offers seasonal extra-curricular coaching in football, rugby and cricket.