

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **FIRTHMOOR PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Darlington

LEA area: Darlington

Unique reference number: 132207

Head teacher: Mrs A Cabourn

Reporting inspector: Mr C Smith  
25211

Dates of inspection: 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> March 2003

Inspection number: 248941

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ingleby Moor Crescent Darlington
Postcode:	DL1 4RW
Telephone number:	01325 244001
Fax number:	01325 244555
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Watson
Date of previous inspection:	March 1999

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
25211	Mr C Smith	Registered inspector	Mathematics	What sort of school is it?
			Music	The school results and pupils' achievements.
			Design and technology	How well are pupils taught?
				What should the school do to improve further?
11368	Mrs K Lee	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
				How well does the school care for its pupils?
				How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30834	Mrs A Lowson	Team inspector	English	How well is the school led and managed?
			Physical education	
			Special educational needs	
			English as an additional language	
2041	Mrs V Reid	Team inspector	Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
			Education inclusion	
			Citizenship	
			Information and communication technology	
			Religious education	
30439	Mr M Heyes	Team inspector	Science	
			Art and design	
			Geography	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Firthmoor Primary is a new, larger than average size, school situated on the outskirts of Darlington. The area served by the school is amongst the most disadvantaged communities in England. House clearance, pending regeneration of the area, has reduced pupil numbers by 100 over the last two years and movement into and out of the area is high. There are 243 pupils; 144 boys and 99 girls and 45 children attend the nursery, part time. Most pupils are taught in single age groups, apart from two mixed age classes. Almost all of the pupils are white and all are English speaking. The free school meal figure of 52 per cent is much higher than the national average. One hundred and five pupils have special educational needs (43 per cent), which is also much higher than average, of which four pupils have statements. Approximately one third of the pupils with special educational needs have moderate learning difficulties, another third have emotional and social difficulties and the remaining third have difficulties with speech and language. Children enter the school with very low attainment.

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

This is a successful school that provides good value for money. Pupils achieve well in most subjects but because of their very low starting points, the high incidence of pupils with special educational needs and the constant stream of pupils moving in and out of the area, the standards reached in English, mathematics and science are well below the national average. Teaching is good and most pupils behave well and enjoy learning. The head teacher, senior staff and governors, together provide very good leadership. The learning of all pupils is carefully monitored and very well supported. This enables pupils, particularly those with special educational needs to make good progress.

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

- Infant and junior pupils achieve well in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), religious education and a number of other subjects.
- Teaching is good in most classes and very good in the nursery and the reception class.
- The school benefits from the very good leadership provided by the head teacher and key staff.
- Pupils are cared for and well managed. As a result, they have good attitudes and most behave well.
- The school provides a good curriculum, which caters well for pupils' different learning needs. This helps pupils with special educational needs and the more able pupils to make good progress.
- The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal development and assesses and monitors their learning and their development effectively.

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

- There is scope to raise standards in English by improving pupils' handwriting and spelling
- There is scope to raise standards in mathematics by improving pupils' mental mathematical and problem solving skills.
- The strenuous efforts already being made to reduce the rate of exclusions must be continued.

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

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

Firthmoor Primary is a new school that has not been inspected before.



## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	N/A	E*	E*	E
Mathematics	N/A	E*	E*	E
Science	N/A	E	E*	E

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

The standards reached in 2001 and 2002 by pupils aged 11, in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, were very low and mainly within the lowest five percent, nationally. However, children enter school with very low attainment and almost half of them have special educational needs. Assessments made of pupils' learning, who moved from the old Firthmoor school into the new one, show that they made good progress during their time in the school. However, a high number of pupils with very low attainment and behaviour difficulties, who transferred into the school, significantly affected the 2001 and 2002 results. Many of these pupils had experienced very fragmented learning in the past. This had significantly affected the development of their literacy and numeracy skills and, in particular, their knowledge and understanding of science, which is why science results fell in 2002. Standards achieved by the current Year 6 pupils, although still well below the national average, are higher in all of the core subjects than they were last year. The school sets challenging but realistic targets, which are reached by the pupils who do not change schools.

Despite their very low starting points, children achieve well in the nursery and the reception class where teaching is very good. By the end of the reception year, most children reach the levels expected in their physical development and they are not far short in their creative and personal and social development. However, very few children are on course to reach the levels expected in their mathematical development or in their knowledge and understanding of the world and their levels of language and literacy are still very low. Given the barriers to learning that many of these children face, they achieve well in many subjects during their time in school. By the age of seven, although results in reading, writing, mathematics and science are well below the national average, they match those of similar schools in writing and science and are higher in reading and mathematics. Although pupils achieve well in many aspects of English, they struggle with spelling and do not always form their letters correctly. Pupils achieve well in mathematics, but many pupils cannot think quickly and struggle to explain how they have solved a mathematical problem. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of science develops well because their learning is rooted in practical experiences through which their skills of enquiry also improve. Pupils also achieve well in ICT, religious education, history, geography, art and design and in elements of other subjects, such as singing and swimming. In all of these foundation subjects, pupils reach the levels expected. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the good quality support they receive. More able pupils also make good progress in response to the challenging work they are given to do. There is little to separate the performance of boys and girls.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good; pupils are keen to learn, enjoy school and take pride in their work
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory; most pupils behave well and show consideration towards others. However, a small number of pupils, usually boys in junior classes, are occasionally given to emotional outbursts, which can disturb the learning of others.
Personal development and relationships	Good; relationships are strong, pupils take their responsibilities seriously and respond well to opportunities to find out for themselves.
Attendance	Well below average over the last school year, however the two per cent improvement in 2002 is continuing. Exclusions have been high but are now reducing because specialist staff have been employed to provide support at school and at home.

New opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and show initiative, in projects such as the school council and the playground 'Buddy System' are important factors in developing pupils' sense of responsibility.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good and is the single most influential factor in pupils' successful learning. Teaching in the nursery and the reception class is very good. The wide selection of exciting and purposeful activities, made available to children, captures their interest and attention. Teachers and classroom assistants intervene skilfully as children explore and this improves children's understanding, skills and spoken language. Teaching is good in most infant and junior classes. Teachers manage pupils' learning and their behaviour very successfully. This is crucial in maintaining a calm and productive learning atmosphere, when a small number of pupils can exhibit challenging behaviour at any time. Teachers have expertise in most subjects and they understand that pupils learn more effectively when the content of the lesson is broken down into well-sequenced steps. Teachers are also aware that pupils need to see as well as listen, before they grasp new ideas. Consequently, teachers' explanations are crystal clear and are made even more relevant by the imaginative use of aids to learning, such as real objects, illustrations and very good use of ICT. Teachers frequently ask probing questions to make pupils think and to check their understanding. They have high expectations of their pupils and set challenging tasks. However, within this, they take careful account of pupils' different learning needs by providing work that is very accurately matched to pupils' different levels of understanding. This is why pupils of all abilities make good progress. Although pupils' work is marked conscientiously, teachers sometimes omit to point out how pupils can improve in subjects such as science and history.

Teaching is good in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Effective teaching of literacy enables most pupils to read fluently and with understanding and to express their ideas in writing. However, more could be done to eliminate pupils' weaknesses in spelling and handwriting, with more consistent attention given to these skills. The teaching of numeracy is also good and is resulting in greater accuracy of calculation and increasing confidence in solving mathematical problems. However, teachers do not always encourage speedy mental calculations or provide enough opportunities for pupils to explain their reasoning. The many pupils with special educational needs benefit from the care and attention they receive. During whole class teaching sessions and group work, teachers and classroom assistants ensure that these pupils understand all parts of the lesson and provide additional support in helping them to master the essential skills of reading, writing and mathematics. Similarly, the more able pupils are also all well catered for and they receive additional challenges, which make considerable demands on their learning.

### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good; A good range of rich and well-planned learning experiences are provide for virtually all subjects and pupils' different learning needs are well provided for.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good; their needs are thoroughly identified and well-structured programmes are provided to enable them to achieve their targets.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good: particularly good provision is made for pupils' moral and social development. Many opportunities are taken to raise pupils' spiritual awareness. Racial harmony is successfully promoted and pupils are well being well prepared for life in a culturally diverse society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good; pupils' learning and their personal development are closely monitored and very well supported. There are good procedures to assess pupils' progress, particularly in English and mathematics and the information is used well to make adjustments to the teaching.

The school works very hard to encourage and keep parents well informed. A number of valuable initiatives have been launched to involve parents but the response is limited.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Very good; the head teacher has a clear vision for the school, good communication skills and a high level of energy and determination to drive up standards. New and existing staff work well as a team with a shared commitment to improving teaching and standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good; governors know the school well through many visits, meetings and by examining the good information provided by the head teacher. This enables them to plan well for the future.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good; assessment results are carefully analysed as a basis for making improvements. Standards, teaching and learning are monitored closely

	in English and mathematics but not to the same degree in other subjects because subject leaders do not all have opportunities to observe lessons.
The strategic use of resources	Good; school results and how these compare to national standards, along with the views of pupils and parents, are all taken into account in an endeavour to seek best value and use resources wisely.

The school benefits from experienced teachers and good levels of well-trained support staff. The new school provides very good accommodation and resources are at a good levels.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school and behave well.</li> <li>• The leadership of the school and teaching are good and pupils make good progress.</li> <li>• Pupils are expected to work hard and are developing responsible attitudes.</li> <li>• Parents are kept well informed and feel happy to approach the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some parents are not entirely happy with the amount of homework provided.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views. Teachers are often disappointed with pupils' responses to homework tasks. For this reason, they rightly set small but regular assignments, often requiring pupils to search for information or carry out practical tasks to reinforce what they have been learning in school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1 Children enter school with very low attainment. Even at this early age, many children are diagnosed as having special educational needs and a quarter of the children entering school qualifies for speech therapy. Very few children speak in sentences, most of them point and use single words to express their wishes. Their knowledge of the world around them is very restricted and they know little about numbers, letters or words. Very good teaching helps them to make a positive start with their learning. They begin to socialise and explore the interesting surroundings. Through much encouragement to talk about what they see and do, they begin to communicate with adults and other children. Despite the good progress that they make, by the end of the reception year their communication skills are still at a very low level and their mathematical development and their knowledge and understanding of the world are well below the levels expected for children of this age. The welcoming and purposeful atmosphere in the nursery and the reception class enable children to gain confidence, acquire some independence and explore the many practical activities on offer. Consequently, in their creative and personal development, children make significant strides and their attainment increases considerably, although still below the levels expected for their age. Children thoroughly enjoy the very good opportunities for physical play and reach the levels expected in this area.

2 Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 1 and 2. Through a mixture of good teaching, encouragement and support when they need it, pupils gain proficiency in reading, writing and handling numbers. National assessment results in 2002 indicated that standards by the age of seven were well below average in reading, writing and mathematics, but were generally higher than in similar schools. The current Year 2 pupils are achieving standards in English and mathematics that are similar to the results of 2002.

3 Pupils also make good progress in junior classes, although this is not evident in the 2002 results, which were in the lowest five per cent, nationally. When the 2002 results for 11-year-olds are examined, an unusual pattern emerges. Although the results were very low overall, the more able pupils reached the higher levels in mathematics and science. In addition, the proportion of pupils who reached the levels expected in English and mathematics was not significantly different from similar schools. However, a quarter of the Year 6 pupils achieved very low results, similar to the levels expected of seven-year-olds. This pulled down the school average to a very low level. 2002 was a very difficult year for the school. Six weeks after the infant and junior schools amalgamated, prior to the head teachers' long-term absence, part of the old school flooded. This created overcrowding problems before pupils could move into the new building. Local houses had been cleared, which offered surplus places in the school. A high number of the pupils who transferred in to fill them, were disaffected with their experiences in other schools and, in many cases, arrived with low attainment and poor behaviour. These adverse factors coincided to produce unusually low results. Pupils' learning in English and mathematics is rigorously assessed. The results are carefully analysed to find out how much value has been added to their learning each year. The records are revealing. By removing pupils from the calculations who had transferred in from other schools, the data shows that the remaining pupils have made good progress. This year, standards in Year 6, although well below average, are higher than they were in 2002. More pupils are reaching the levels expected, and also the higher levels, and far fewer pupils are at the much lower levels of last year. The school sets ambitious but realistic targets. These are converted into personal goals to show individual pupils what they need

to do to improve. Good teaching and extra booster classes, with a generous helping of individual support, are influential factors in achieving the targets and raising standards.

4 Pupils achieve well in English throughout the school. They learn to listen well and, although they are not articulate speakers, they gain confidence in expressing their ideas. Infant pupils respond well to good teaching of reading and writing. Most pupils acquire the skills to use letter sounds to help them to read unfamiliar words. This is built on well in junior classes where pupils learn to find information from various texts and learn to read with understanding. By the age of 11, pupils' reading has improved and is below, rather than well below, the levels expected. However, only a small number of pupils extend their skills further by practising reading regularly at home. Many pupils find writing difficult but, through good teaching, infant pupils learn to express their ideas independently. Much good work is done to stimulate pupils' ideas and to create the desire to write. As a result, older junior pupils produce some imaginative writing and moving poetry. However, pupils' knowledge of spelling is weak and, although they present their work neatly, their handwriting is often incorrectly formed. There is scope to improve these technical skills through more consistent marking and attention to detail.

5 Pupils also achieve well in mathematics. Their understanding of numbers, patterns and operations, such as division, is built up through carefully planned steps. Pupils have good opportunities to consider different methods of calculation and they are shown how to tackle mathematical problems in written form. Pupils learn to look for shortcuts, such as rounding numbers to the nearest 10, to help them calculate larger numbers. Despite the good progress, more could be done to speed up pupils' mental mathematical skills and more opportunities to explain how they have solved a mathematical problem in their own way, would strengthen their understanding further.

6 Standards in science are higher this year than the results of 2002 suggested. Over one quarter of the pupils who took the national test in 2002 had transferred in from other schools. This had disrupted their learning and some pupils had not covered all of the science topics. As a result, there were gaps in their learning, which became very evident under test conditions. Standards this year are well below average for pupils at the ages of seven and 11. Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide many valuable practical experiences through which pupils can develop their thinking skills and improve their skills of observation. Teachers are very careful to explain any new scientific terms clearly, since this proves to be a barrier to pupils' learning. Pupils learn well through investigation and experimentation. By handling equipment and carrying out scientific tests, pupils' knowledge and understanding develops well on secure foundations.

7 Standards in ICT have reached the levels expected at the ages of seven and 11. Very few pupils have computers at home but through good teaching in the well-equipped computer suite and encouragement to use computers in the learning of other subjects, pupils achieve well.

8 Pupils achieve well in religious education to reach the standards prescribed for pupils aged seven and 11 in the Durham area. Teachers ensure that pupils gain a good grounding in Christianity, and other selected religions. As well as learning about religions, pupils are guided well to learn from them as a basis for developing their own set of values and beliefs.

9 Many pupils have limited background knowledge. To counter this teachers work hard to provide a wide range of worthwhile learning experiences across all subjects. This good provision enables pupils to achieve well in art and design and in history and geography to reach the levels expected by the end of the Years 2 and 6. There are also strong features in other subjects, such as infants' good progress in design and technology and pupils' good achievements in singing and in

swimming. That pupils reach the standards expected in all of these foundation subjects is highly creditable, in view of their low starting points.

10 The school caters well for pupils' different learning needs. Almost half of the pupils have special educational needs. Their learning and behaviour difficulties are carefully assessed. They receive specific teaching to help them to overcome these difficulties and good levels of support are provided in all lessons, which helps them to make good progress. There are comparatively few pupils with high ability. However, their skills and talents are nurtured and that they benefit from receiving work of a good level of challenge. These factors enable them to make good progress and fulfil their potential. Although it is mainly boys rather than girls who exhibit emotional and behaviour problems, there is little difference between their performance overall. Pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills receive a significant boost from the many good opportunities they have through other subjects to read for information, write about their experiences, practise their skills of calculation and present their findings using ICT.

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

11 On the whole, pupils have good attitudes to their work and to their life in school. Most pupils try hard in lessons and so make good progress in their learning. They respond well to the good teaching and the encouragement and support given by all adults throughout the school. For example, in an English lesson based on the story of "The Three Billy Goats Gruff, Year 1 pupils listened carefully to their teacher and thought of good sentences to describe themselves as the troll such as "I am an ugly troll because I have spots on my face". They worked hard all the time because of the calm purposeful atmosphere promoted by the class teacher and the constant praise and support given by her and the classroom assistant. These principles are evident throughout the school.

12 Most pupils behave well in lessons and around school but there are a small but significant number of pupils, particularly in middle and upper junior classes, who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many of these pupils have transferred in from other schools. It is due, in particular, to the skilful management of pupils by class teachers and the school's special provision to support these pupils, that only occasionally does this behaviour disrupt a lesson. There is a high level of fixed term exclusions, 88 in the year previous to inspection, although the number is considerably less this year. This is mainly due to a small number of pupils who are accumulating exclusions. One of these pupils has recently arrived in school, following permanent exclusion elsewhere and another has a place in specialist provision for his needs. The school works very hard to include all pupils and avoid the need for permanent exclusion, for example, by appointing support staff who are experienced specifically in behaviour management and who work very well with individual and groups of children.

13 Pupils' personal development is good. They have very good relationships with each other and with all adults in school. This is as a result of the school's very caring attitude towards its pupils and the constant promotion of social skills and pupils' self esteem. In class, pupils work well together and support each other, for instance helping with spellings if their friends are stuck and co-operating in pairs on the computer. They take advantage of the encouragement to find information and learn for themselves, and develop a degree of learning independence. They respond well to the very clear reward systems, proudly wearing their star pins on their collars and working together to gain their class awards. Pupils are pleased to celebrate the success of others in the special weekly assembly. There is an orderly and pleasant atmosphere at lunch. Pupils are friendly and very helpful, learning from the very good example set by all adults. They play well together in the playground, backed by the support staff and midday supervisors who encourage them to share and take turns and who join in games such as skipping. Older pupils are very keen to act as "Buddies" and agreed that this opportunity was one of the best things about school.

14 Although the overall level of attendance is still below the national average, it has improved by two per cent since 2001 and continuing to improve. There is a big improvement in punctuality with now very few pupils arriving late. The school's appointment of an inclusion worker has been a major factor as she works hard to persuade parents of the importance of attendance and punctuality and the effects they have on pupils' learning and progress.

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

15 Quality teaching is a strength of the school. Half of the teaching is good and a further quarter is very good. This largely explains why pupils of all abilities achieve well.

16 Teaching in the nursery and the reception class is very good. A rich assortment of very well-planned and interesting activities are provided to compensate for children's very limited experiences at home. For example, an illumination box has been provided to enable children to look closely at different objects and materials, such as feathers and leaves. A good number of skilled teachers and assistants are on hand to make the most of these learning opportunities by encouraging children to talk about their experiences. This helps children to widen their very limited vocabulary and extend their use of language. During one session, for example, children were involved in planting sunflower seeds and labelling pots. The nursery assistant asked a series of questions, such as, "What do the seeds need to grow?" and "What do you think will happen next?" This prompted the children to talk about the importance of water. Despite the children's very low level of knowledge of words and numbers, teachers provide many high quality reading, writing and mathematical activities through which children begin to recognise words, learn to count and begin to understand questions, such as 'how much and how much left?'

17 Pupils are very well managed. Teaching in this school is not easy. Many pupils find learning difficult, some have very limited concentration and two or three pupils, in each of the middle and upper junior classes, have severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is not uncommon for individual pupils to arrive at school in the morning in a state of distress. Lessons are never straightforward or predictable and teachers have to be highly sensitive to the way pupils are treated and the support and encouragement they receive. Occasionally, usually in the afternoon sessions when activities involve a change of setting, such as music and physical education, the behaviour of a minority can affect the learning of others. Teachers and classroom assistants handle these pupils extremely well, but there are occasions when individual pupils have to be removed to give the learning of others a chance. It is remarkable, that so many lessons run smoothly, despite the adverse factors, the credit for which is attributable to the patience, kindness and firmness of teachers.

18 Another important factor in pupils' successful learning is the care and attention given to the work that they are expected to complete. Although in most classes there is a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, there are also a small number of more able pupils. The range of learning needs is very wide. Teachers aim high and plan lessons with a considerable degree of intellectual challenge. By expecting pupils to think hard, try hard and work diligently, teachers set the standards and most pupils strive to reach them. However, teachers are acutely aware that some children are likely to find the pace of the lesson too quick and the ideas too demanding. Consequently, they watch pupils carefully, note their responses and swiftly adjust the lesson to match the pupils' levels of understanding. In a mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher backtracked because it had been sometime since pupils had worked on angular measure but by making the connection with their stage of learning, the lesson was successful. By listening to what pupils say, checking their work and through discussion sessions at the end of the lesson, teachers gauge how successfully pupils are learning. These factors are taken into account when teachers plan the next lesson or unit of work.



Once the main introductory part of the lesson is over, pupils are given group tasks, specifically tailored to their different learning needs. The match of work to pupils' specific needs is very accurate. Pupils are very rarely over-challenged or are given tasks that are too easy. This means that providing pupils make an effort, success is within their reach. Despite the many strong features in teaching, pupils' work in science, history and geography is not marked consistently well and, in these subjects, more could be done to show pupils what they need to do to improve.

19 In most instances, teachers have a good understanding of the subjects they teach and of how pupils' learn. Teachers draw well on their secure subject knowledge when explaining new ideas. For example, they recognise that many pupils are unable to learn simply by being told. Teachers are therefore inventive in their choice of methods and place, with much emphasis on making learning visual. This frequently involves using overhead projectors, computers and illustrations and providing opportunities for pupils to handle everyday objects. In a science lesson, for example, the teacher provided an electronic microscope for pupils to operate through the computer. This projected a large image on the classroom screen which significantly enhanced pupils' understanding of how food decays and decomposes. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn through demonstration and explanation and by investigating and finding out for themselves. In a religious education the lesson, for example, more able pupils used Children's Bibles to go deeper into the story of Easter.

20 Most of the important skills of learning to read, write and handle numbers are taught well. Infant pupils receive a good grounding in learning to recognise parts of words and letter sounds to help them to make sense of what they read. This is extended well in junior classes through specific lessons aimed to improve pupils' reading comprehension. Many rich opportunities are provided to improve the content of pupils writing. Through other subjects, such as music and art and design, pupils are encouraged to express their feelings and thoughts. This leads to the writing of some particularly moving poetry. However, pupils' spelling is very weak and more could be done to help them to learn to spell more systematically. Similarly, pupils' handwriting, although tidy, is not always correctly formed and this is not always brought to their attention when their work is marked. Counting and calculations skills are taught well in mathematics, largely through very carefully planned steps, which ensures that pupils build smoothly on what they have learnt before. They are encouraged to look for patterns and relationships between numbers to help them to understand relationships between multiplication and division, for example. They are also taught how to use their numeracy skills to solve word problems, however this element of mathematics proves very difficult for some pupils. Despite the good teaching of mathematics skills, pupils recall of basic number facts is too slow and more could be done to encourage them to think and answer more quickly. Also, opportunities for pupils to solve mathematical problems in their own way and explain how they arrived at the answer, are not provided as regularly as they should be. This is evident in the faltering way pupils try to explain what they have learnt. Despite these minor weaknesses, teachers assess pupils' learning regularly and extensively. Lessons are frequently punctuated by teachers' questioning to check how well pupils understand and whether it is safe to move on. To help pupils to practise and consolidate their learning, teachers frequently provide homework tasks, which are short and interesting. However, pupils' responses to these tasks are disappointing with only a third of the pupils completing the work.

21 Teachers and classroom assistants provide good levels of support for pupils with special educational needs. When the teacher is speaking to the whole class, classroom assistants often sit with pupils who find difficulty in concentrating and learning. Through discreet and quiet discussions, classroom assistants ensure that pupils with special educational needs are in tune with what is happening in the lesson. Once the group tasks are allocated, classroom assistants work skilfully and patiently with the children in their care. This often amounts to helping them to read instructions, checking that they understand the tasks and, most importantly, maintaining their confidence when they encounter difficulties. Teachers and classroom assistants work very well together to provide learning

programmes designed to help pupils with special educational needs to improve their weaknesses in reading, writing and mathematics. Almost half of the pupils in school have special educational needs and although they cannot always reach the levels expected of pupils of their age, they make good progress.

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

22 The curriculum makes a good contribution to the achievement of pupils of all abilities. It is broad, balanced and relevant and meets all statutory requirements and is particularly good in engaging pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties, often when they have arrived from other schools. There is a strong emphasis on improving skills in literacy and numeracy and time is used sensibly to allow all other subjects to be taught thoroughly. Planning is clear, detailed and linked very well to the assessment of learning. National guidance is used effectively, adapted where appropriate to better meet the needs of these pupils. Work is set to extend the learning of all pupils. They know what is expected of them and are encouraged to try their best. In lessons, pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are enhanced and extended well in other subjects. Teachers attach considerable importance to developing pupils' personal development through all subjects. This is one key to the success of the school and ensures that the significant minority of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties gradually learn to overcome them.

23 Provision for literacy and numeracy is good. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been successfully implemented. Much effort goes into improving pupils' weaknesses in speaking and listening and many good opportunities are provided in school for pupils to use their reading skills to find information for other subjects. Pupils' writing skills are also weak but plenty of attention is given to improving the content of pupils' work, which is evident in some beautifully written poems. However, more could be done to improve their spelling and handwriting. In numeracy, a strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' understanding. This includes problem solving, although pupils are not always expected to recall number facts as quickly as they should be and there is scope to offer more opportunities for pupils to explain how they have arrived at a mathematical solution. Provision for science is also good, a strong emphasis is placed on learning science through practical investigations. Religious education makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development.

24 The school provides very good opportunities to extend pupils' personal, social and health education, including sex education and drugs awareness. There is a very strong commitment to promoting citizenship through activities such as the School Council where pupils learn to make decisions and the Buddy System where older ones take care of the younger ones. The time put aside for pupils to discuss their feelings and anxieties is highly beneficial in enabling them to understand the needs of others and make sense of the rapid changes to the local community. The school is working towards the achievement of 'Investors in Children' status. The influence of this can already be seen in the enrichment to pupils' learning, the development of their future interests and involvement in the community. Measures taken to include all pupils in all activities have a very high profile and are very effective in beginning to combat those things that may hinder progress. Pupils with special educational needs benefit because the curriculum is adapted for them and they receive very good levels of support. Assessments made of pupils' learning are used to group pupils according to ability for many activities. More able pupils, including those with a gift in English or talents in music and sports, are identified to make sure they attain high standards. Pupils who find it difficult to attend or come on time are well supported by the social inclusion assistant. The school has very good facilities for the disabled.

25 The curriculum is enhanced well in a number of ways. Good displays of pupils' work celebrates their achievements and encourages them to take pride in their work. This is reflected in the

good presentation of their books and folders. The good provision made for extra-curricular activities ensures that pupils are introduced to such diverse activities as Asian Dance, choral work, Tai-Chi, ICT, basketball and skills coaching in football and rugby. The school is currently preparing for a musical 'Oratorio' - a community arts project - where the older pupils will perform their renowned 'Firthmoor Rap'. Other provision, for example 'Movers and Shakers' and the 'Fun Factory' use board games and target quieter pupils with 'Buddies' helping. The current house clearance means that many pupils have further to travel to school. This has reduced the number of pupils able to stay after school to attend the many clubs. Regular and effective enrichment provided through visits and visitors, for example, theatre groups and circus skills, brings subjects to life and stimulates pupils' interests.

26 Good links are being forged with the newly forming local community. The head teacher and governors play an active part in the 'Firthmoor Partnership' concerned with the regeneration of the area. Links with the secondary school, including specific support for more vulnerable pupils who have weekly visits for six weeks, provide continuity as they move from one school to the next.

27 There is very good provision for pupils' moral and social development. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is good. The school rightly places great importance on these aspects of its work and includes them throughout the day to support pupils' personal development.

28 The good provision for pupils' spiritual development is evident in the many opportunities that pupils have in lessons and in assemblies to reflect on the values promoted by the school and in the constant efforts of all staff to encourage pupils to feel good about themselves. For instance, in the "Pupil of the Week" assembly, the head teacher made sure that every pupil knew why they had been chosen with comments such as, "She cheers everyone up with her friendly smile". The school also provides moments for pupils to see the wonder of life around them. For example, in a science lesson Year 6 pupils were amazed when looking at decaying bread through a microscope and the whole school gazed in wonder when the wife of the caretaker brought her new baby into an assembly on the theme of families. Pupils are also encouraged to express their thoughts in writing and poetry. Year 2 pupils in their study of Buddhism have written on the ways that they can show their light to the world and Year 6 pupils have composed moving poems on abstract subjects such as love and peace. One of the poems reads:-

*Peace is as white as snow  
It smells like sweet flowers  
Peace tastes like honey freshly made  
It sounds like calming and relaxing music  
It feels as soft as wolf fur  
Peace lives in the heart of warm-hearted people*

29 The provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good and at the heart of the school's efforts to give pupils every chance to grow up as good citizens. The behaviour system is based on the necessity for pupils to think about their own actions and how they affect others and to encourage them to make the right choice in their decisions. Pupils who need time out in class at the 'isolation table' take responsibility for their actions by writing the reason that they are there and how their behaviour could improve. Moral issues are explored well in lessons. For instance, in a history lesson, Year 3 pupils knew that it was unfair of Henry VIII to divorce Catherine of Aragon because she had not given him a son. The school promotes moral and social development very well through the provision of circle time when pupils have the chance to talk about their feelings and to discover how to take account of the feelings of others. For example, pupils learn about the importance of listening not only as listeners but also the effect that not being listened to has on the speaker. Social development is also promoted very well through the "Buddy" system and the School Council and at lunchtime through the "Golden Lunchtime Rules". Every week pupils who have shown consideration and good manners

have lunch one day at the “Golden table” where they eat and drink from special golden plates and goblets and are waited on by the staff.

30 Pupils’ cultural development is well provided for. Because of the unsettling affects of the demolition and planned regeneration of the estate, the school is taking many opportunities to involve pupils in the changes, helping them to appreciate the new surroundings and to try to look after and improve it. For example, 28 pupils are involved in preparing and performing an Oratorio, to explore their feelings about the regeneration of the area. The school is successful in raising pupils’ awareness of other cultures through subjects such as music and art and design. In addition, there are valuable extra-curricular clubs for Asian dance and Tai Chi and the school visits the local Gudwara to widen pupils’ cultural experience. Visitors are invited into school to explain other cultures, for example, the children in the nursery enjoyed taking part in an Indian wedding.

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

31 The school takes very good care of its pupils. It is meeting its aim to provide a secure, caring and stimulating place to aid their development. A strong aspect of the school’s care is the head teacher’s and staff’s very good knowledge of all pupils and their backgrounds. The warm relationships, promoted by all staff, show that all pupils are valued. The school promotes the welfare of its pupils very well. There are very good procedures for ensuring the health and safety of pupils and for child protection.

32 The school promotes the personal development of pupils very well. All staff take every opportunity to praise pupils and promote their self esteem. Pupils understand the very clear awards systems, both for individuals and for the whole class. They are confident that everyone has a chance to gain the necessary points and that class teachers support them in lessons if they need help. A very good example of promoting self-esteem was a session for Year 5 pupils when everyone wore a picture of a flower or a football on their backs and the others filled in the spaces with something good to say about each pupil. Pupils were delighted to read what had been written about them, especially if they were judged to be ‘cool’. The monitoring of personal development is also very good. Class teachers use the same simple but very effective system for recording their development. As this is built on from year to year, the school has an active account of pupils’ progress, which is recorded in the annual reports to parents. Parents are happy with the assessment, one parent commenting, “I recognised the personality of my child”. Pupils too have the very good opportunity in the annual reports to assess their own progress, writing about their best memories of the year and what they hope to improve.

33 There are very good procedures for the monitoring of behaviour and for combating bullying with simple appropriate rules and sanctions which pupils know very well. All adults have the same high expectations that pupils will try to behave appropriately in and out of the classroom and pupils receive consistent messages on the standards expected of them. The appointment of experienced specialist staff ensures that pupils who have problems with behaviour receive very good support throughout the day and on returning to school after periods of exclusion. The school’s emphasis on the promotion of good behaviour is successful with the result that most pupils behave well.

34 The school monitors attendance very thoroughly and tries very hard to promote good attendance and punctuality. The recently appointed inclusion worker monitors the absences of particular pupils daily and works with parents to improve their awareness of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality. For example, she greets pupils every morning in the playground and warmly praises pupils who arrive on time.

35 The school has good and comprehensive assessment procedures to identify how well pupils are learning and to guide teachers in their planning of future work. The head teacher and senior staff check teachers' weekly planning to ensure that pupils are being taught at the correct levels. All subjects are suitably assessed. Good use is made of the information gathered from written tests, classroom observations and the marking of pupils' work in most areas. However, there is scope to make the marking of pupils' spelling and handwriting more consistent to eliminate fairly basic errors. The results of assessments made of pupils' achievements in English and mathematics are used effectively to set targets for groups of pupils to achieve. For example, Year 5 pupils are expected to use compound sentences confidently. Pupils know what these targets are, and parents are kept fully informed of how they are achieved. The school has detailed lists of all the targets set for each group of pupils in each class. All this information is rigorously monitored by the head teacher to ensure that teachers are using it to identify the starting points for the next lesson. Subject leaders have built up files of samples of pupils' work to enable teachers to agree on the levels achieved. Marking of pupils' work is a current area of development. In some subjects, such as mathematics, marking is good and the comments written on pupils' work helps them to know what they need to do to improve. However, this is not yet consistent practice in all subjects and in some cases marking consists of a tick and a one-word comment, which does not point the way forward.

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

36 The school tries many ways to promote a good partnership with parents. Whilst only 20 parents replied to the inspection questionnaire and only 15 attended the meeting, nearly 50 per cent of parents responded to a similar questionnaire sent recently by the school. Almost all the replies were very supportive of the school's work. Parental support is irregular and difficult to secure. The school constantly seeks ways to increase parental involvement and some of the strategies are proving successful.

37 The very good information for parents, provided by the school, has a positive impact on the school's efforts to include them in the life of the school. Newsletters and the prospectus, for example, are written in a friendly style, giving a welcome to parents. Parents receive regular information on what their children are learning and on their targets for improvement. Booklets too, for instance on how to help their children with reading, are very useful but unfortunately few parents listen to their children read at home and so miss the chance to help their reading improve.

38 The annual reports give parents good information on their children's progress. Class teachers make the effort to make each one personal to each pupil and explain clearly what pupils can do well and how they can improve. For example, one pupil's mathematics ability is described as 'Simply the best'. Parents also receive special letters, praising their children's efforts or, if necessary, informing them if there has been a problem with their behaviour. The school tries its best to work closely with parents whose children need support for behaviour problems or attendance and keeps them well informed of their targets and progress.

39 The school takes many opportunities to invite parents into school and so involve them in their children's learning. There are open days every term for parents to see their children's work. Most parents, especially of the younger pupils, come to these days but few attend meetings to do with the curriculum. Some parents take the informal opportunities to speak to staff at the start and end of the day. A parent of a Year 6 pupil came especially to tell of her amazement and delight at the high quality of her child's poetry writing and to thank the school for its efforts on her behalf. Parents are always invited to the frequent 'Pupil of the week' class assemblies. Good numbers of parents go out of their way to attend. This support boosts their self-esteem. For example, many parents of Year 3 pupils attended their assembly on the theme of 'Mothers' to celebrate Mothering Sunday. They were

all rightly proud of their children who all took part in the excellent presentation and the pupils were thrilled to see them there.

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

40 The leadership and management of the school are very good. The head teacher is a strong leader who is well respected by all staff, governors and pupils. Her vision for the school focuses on providing a supportive learning environment for all pupils and in this she is very successful. The head teacher and deputy head teacher, although a “new team”, are providing very good leadership and have helped all staff and pupils to move to the new school and to cope with the teething problems familiar to all new buildings. The deputy head teacher is a great asset to the senior management team and to the school generally. Senior staff who make up the school’s management team have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, of what needs to be done to continue to improve the quality of education offered and to raise standards. They are committed to the school’s improvement and there is an energy and capacity to see that it does so. Communication throughout the school is very good and everyone feels involved at their particular level.

41 The role of subject leaders is good overall. Subject leaders of English, mathematics and science are experienced teachers who undertake formal observations of teaching and the monitoring of pupils’ learning by a half-termly scrutiny of work. The results of these observations, linked to the analysis of both national test results and regular school-based tests and assessments, highlight areas for development, either within particular year groups, or to be tackled as whole-school issues. This good practice enables the school to identify weaknesses quickly and take strategic action to make improvements. Other subject co-leaders have a structured programme of checking teacher’s planning and they scrutinise pupils’ work half-termly, but they do not monitor the quality of teaching. This is a weakness in their role, as they do not have the opportunity to identify staff training needs or indeed have a secure view of standards in their subjects.

42 The school improvement plan gives the reader a clear indication of what the priorities for the school are, supports the aims of the school and focuses clearly on future initiatives. However, planned developments are not linked to costs in every case and, as a result, it is not clear whether some of the developments for the school are likely to be affordable.

43 The governing body provides good leadership and support to the work of the school. They are effective in fulfilling their statutory duties. They provided a clear steer to the work of the school during a very difficult period prior to the move to the new school. For example, the long absence of the head teacher due to ill health and severe problems to the old building caused by floods made the day to day running of the school difficult. Some governors visit the school regularly, take an active part in lessons and give written reports on their observations to full governing body meetings. Governors are well informed about the school and have a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They know, for example, that the school makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and know that the school benefits from good quality teaching. They recognise that pupils in this school need much adult support to be successful and are committed to ensuring that the budget is used to provide a fully inclusive curriculum for all pupils.

44 The school’s careful financial planning supports educational priorities well. The head teacher and governors manage the school budget well, capably supported by the school administrative staff. Specific grants are used for their specified purpose. The day to day financial control and administration are efficient and the school office is a welcoming point of contact for visitors to the school. The principles of best value are applied very well. A very high surplus shown in the school’s

end of year figures in 2002 is misleading. The clearance of houses reduced pupil numbers and the education authority reclaimed most of the surplus when the pupils did not arrive.

45 The school's evaluation of its performance is good. The school checks its progress rigorously using the school improvement plan and the outcomes of national and school-based assessment tests. The head teacher and senior management team has very good strategic management skills. For example, analysis of data is used very effectively to highlight any weaknesses in teaching or learning. Action is taken quickly, either by moving staff to different year groups to use their particular teaching strengths, or to employ new staff to support emerging problems. A good example of this is how the school is seeking to tackle the large numbers of exclusions caused by pupils with emotional and behavioural problems. The school has recently appointed two new staff who are skilled in providing behaviour and learning programmes for those pupils experiencing significant difficulties. This is already proving to be effective.

46 The school is well staffed, with a good spread of qualifications. There is a good balance of age and experience and this means that staff are mutually supportive and function as an effective team. There is a good range of skills and staff have been very positive in their continued commitment to professional training and as a result, one of the good features of teaching in this school is the teacher's good subject knowledge. Staff development is driven primarily by the school improvement plan. Performance management systems are good, well structured and support the priorities identified as whole school issues. There are good formal arrangements in place for staff new to the school, but they also benefit from having a very friendly welcome from more experienced staff.

47 Of special value to the school are the qualifications, commitment and enthusiasm of learning support staff. These staff support the aims of the school to provide an inclusive education for all pupils and make a valuable contribution to learning and school life generally. Accommodation is good, as to be expected in a brand new school, and all staff and pupils are settling well into their new building. The caretaker and cleaning staff keep the building very clean and show obvious pride in their work. The outdoor accommodation is still waiting for the second phase of the building work, so currently there is no field for games and athletics activities. Resources are good and many are new. Each classroom benefits from the latest ICT, having computer linked "smart-boards" in place of blackboards. The computer suite is spacious and benefits from good quality computer equipment. Resources in English and mathematics are good, particularly in the provision of support material for teachers. The school library is an attractive and effective learning resource, which pupils of all ages enjoy using.

48 This is an effective school and is well set to improve standards in English, mathematics and science. Attainment on entry to the nursery is very low when compared to the national average. Good progress is made in literacy and numeracy in both key stages and pupils achieve well from when they first enter school. The quality of teaching is good overall and the school's provision for personal development is very good. The leadership and management of the school are also very good. Taking all these factors into consideration, the school gives good value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

49 The head teacher staff and governors should now:

(1) Continue the drive to raise standards in English by:

- Teaching handwriting and spelling more systematically
- Encouraging pupils to check and correct their own spelling mistakes
- Ensuring that pupils' errors in their writing are marked consistently
- Setting targets for pupils to help them to know how to improve their reading (Paragraphs 4, 20, 23, 64, 67 and 68)

(2) Continue the drive to raise standards in mathematics by:

- Teachers concentrating on quick as well as accurate answers in mental arithmetic sessions.
- Providing more opportunities for pupils to solve mathematical problems in their own way and encouraging them to explain how they have arrived at the solution. (Paragraphs 5, 20, 23 and 75)

(3) Reduce the rate of exclusions by:

- Continuing to build positive relationships with the parents of these pupils.
- Ensuring that the individual support provided to help these pupils to cope with their behaviour problems continues. (Paragraph 12)

50 When drawing up their action plan governors will have to take account of two minor issues by:

Eliminating the inconsistencies in the marking of pupils' work, in subjects such as science, history and geography, so that all teachers provide pointers to help pupils to know what they need to improve. (Paragraphs 18, 79 and 90)

Ensuring that subject leaders have opportunities to observe lessons to help them to check standards of teaching and learning across the school. (Paragraphs 41, 86, 95 and 97)



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	62
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	31

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	18	31	13	0	0	0
Percentage	0	29	50	21	0	0	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	23	243
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	125

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	18	87

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	28
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

### *Attendance*

**Authorised absence**

%
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**Unauthorised absence**

%
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School data	8.3
National comparative data	5.4

School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	19	20	39

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	15	15
	Girls	16	16	18
	Total	30	31	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	77% (78%)	79% (67%)	85% (94%)
	National	84% (84%)	86% (86%)	90% (91%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	15	17
	Girls	16	18	17
	Total	29	33	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	74% (78%)	85% (94%)	87% (92%)
	National	85% (85%)	89% (89%)	89% (89%)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	32	19	51

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	13	15
	Girls	13	12	13
	Total	27	25	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	53% (52%)	49% (52%)	55% (65%)
	National	75% (75%)	73% (71%)	86% (87%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
	Boys	11	11	15

Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Girls	13	12	14
	Total	24	23	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	47% (50%)	45% (53%)	57% (61%)
	National	73% (72%)	74% (74%)	82% (82%)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	241	84	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	2	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	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***

### ***Financial information***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.1

Financial year	2001 - 2002
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Average class size	24
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**Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	290

**Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	25
Number of pupils per FTE adult	11.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

***Recruitment of teachers***

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

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

	£
Total income	813,455
Total expenditure	829,811
Expenditure per pupil	2,561
Balance brought forward from previous year	142, 843
Balance carried forward to next year	126,487

## *Results of the survey of parents and carers*

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	243
Number of questionnaires returned	20

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	40	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	80	20	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	35	0	0	15
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	60	25	10	5	0
The teaching is good.	80	20	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	60	35	5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	25	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	80	20	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	65	20	5	0	10
The school is well led and managed.	70	30	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	75	20	5	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	45	30	5	5	15

## **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**

51 Forty-five children attend part time in the nursery and 26 children attend full time in the reception class. When the children start in the nursery their knowledge, skills and understanding are very much lower than expected for their age. Around half the children have learning, social and behavioural difficulties and, for a quarter of them, these are significant. One child has a statement of special educational needs. Eleven children are receiving or awaiting speech therapy, or they have speech difficulties. This means that many children take considerable time to begin to achieve the first of the steps towards reaching the learning goals expected by the end of the reception year.

52 Children achieve well because the teaching is very good. The nursery and reception children often work alongside each other and sometimes together in the large nursery area. There are significant strengths in the creative use of this space and in the excellent teamwork amongst nursery and reception staff. Teachers and support staff have a very clear understanding of what and how young children learn. The activities provided are firmly rooted in a very accurate assessment of their learning needs. Although they make good progress and achieve well from their extremely low levels of attainment on entry, by the end of the Foundation Stage, their attainment is much lower than expected for their age. In the reception class, children's poor communication skills and lack of early experiences means they are very unlikely to attain the Early Learning Goals. Their best achievements are in personal, social and emotional development, and creative development, but these are still below what they should be by the age of five.

53 Strong leadership of the Foundation Stage ensures that very good provision is made for young children. Children of different ages and abilities have equal access to activities and so an equal chance to make progress. The curriculum includes all the six areas of learning and emphasises independence through offering a good range of activities that are always available and made easy for children to select. Teachers provide well-planned and carefully structured activities to ensure that their play is purposeful and they are able to learn from it. For example, good opportunities for children to act out different roles, such as 'Jack and the Beanstalk', encourages them to improve their spoken language. In addition, groups of children are gathered together for specific teaching of essential language and number skills. The two approaches combine well in establishing an atmosphere in which children are learning all the time. Support staff are very effective. No opportunity is missed to help children acquire language and social skills. Very good support is provided for children with special educational needs.

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

54 Much thought and effort is put into developing children's personal and social skills. Daily routines are established which the children quickly settle into. For example, most children remember to put the card with their name on in the basket, so that the staff can quickly check which children are in that day. Interesting activities are provided. Some children remain involved in these activities for some time when an adult is present to support them, but quickly lose interest if the adult moves away. Adults set excellent examples of how children should treat each other. Most children, including some with significant behaviour difficulties, follow the staff's example and behave well. This is a testament to the care shown by the staff. Children know what is expected of them and are supported to achieve this. They join in happily with rhymes and songs they have learned, but many children still need a great deal of adult help and support to maintain their concentration. The provision is further strengthened by staff's high expectations of what the children can achieve and their very good teaching and classroom

organisation. These consistent features make a significant difference to children's personal development. Children are patiently encouraged to take care of their own needs, take turns, listen to each other and share and play happily with one another. However, many children need constant adult support to achieve this. Gradually, they learn to discuss their feelings of happiness and sadness and they begin to understand what is right and wrong in a variety of situations, such as not snatching toys from another child. Reception children gain much from group discussion times. On one such occasion they were enthralled when looking at the object in a box, which the teacher told them was the most special thing in the school – it was a mirror. Their delight grew as they saw themselves. 'It's me'...'I saw me', but it took much careful explaining for them to understand it was not the mirror, but them as individuals, that was special. Despite the very good teaching, children's lack of confidence to initiate ideas and to speak in large and small groups means that their attainment is still below the level expected by the time they leave the reception class.

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

55 Many children have very little spoken language when they begin school. From this very low starting point, children achieve well because of the high quality teaching and extra support. A high priority is given to developing children's spoken language. A rich range of experiences is provided for them and stories are used extensively. 'Story Sacks' and 'Big Books' link to the theme and give the younger children the experience of texts with action, puppets and exciting objects to pull out of the sack. They follow stories by playing with the objects, such as 'the giant's golden coins'. This helps them to see the links between reading and writing and they learn to love stories and rhymes. Writing areas and the post box again give opportunities for children to 'write' with a purpose. The post person, dressed for the occasion, delivers letters proudly! They listen to sounds and practise the corresponding letter in sand and through writing in the air. In the nursery they match their names to their 'Post Boxes' at the end of sessions to collect their work to take home. They watch teachers writing what they say to add to their pictures and models.

56 Children make good progress in learning to read. In the nursery, some children recognise their own name and find letters that are the same as those in their name or at the start of their friend's name. Older children know the title page and back cover, and that print carries meaning. They use speech bubbles to write very simple sentences, the best example was 'I am climbing up' although there were no spaces between the words. They begin to understand that speech is when the characters in 'Jack and the Beanstalk' talk. Children are encouraged to take simple reading books home to share with their parents. There are many opportunities for children to write on their own, and as a result, children slowly gain confidence. The computer linked teaching board in the classroom is used very effectively to improve children's learning for example, by showing one child's work to the rest of the class. In this way one child was helped to understand that spaces are needed between words. Good attention is paid to correct letter formation. However, although they have improved, children's language skills are still very low by the end of the reception year. Learning to speak and listen, read and write confidently is a very slow process for these children, many of whom have learning difficulties.

### **Mathematical development**

57 Although the children make good progress, they start from a very low level and, by the end of the reception year, their attainment is still well below that of most children of a similar age. In counting, recognising numbers and simple practical addition, however, almost half the children in the reception class are close to achieving the levels expected, but many children do not have enough technical language to explain what they know and understand. They are not able to discuss simple mathematical ideas when playing with large and small construction toys, or when experimenting with sand and water.

58 The teaching of number skills is very good. In the nursery, good and varied opportunities are provided for children to practise counting. For example, they count the number of children present each day, check the day and say the days of the week in order and sing number songs and rhymes. In the reception classes, teachers plan and match work carefully to children's different learning needs. The teaching assistant is very effective in helping groups of children to concentrate on and understand the activities provided. 'It's a symmetrical pattern – it's the same on both sides', was a gleeful comment from one boy showing the pattern on his model butterfly. More able older children count, recognise and order numbers to 10. They work hard choosing which flowers to buy from the 'Flower Shop', checking the price label and counting real pennies from their purse, holding ten coins, to pay and see how much they have left. Many children across the ages recognise and name triangles, squares and circles. Many also offer comparative words accurately, such as, 'big' and 'little' when using card flowers to match butterflies to the flower colour. They use 'full' and 'empty' while filling containers with water and filling plant pots to grow seeds. All thoroughly enjoy number action rhymes and songs and join in with gusto.

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

59 Many children have had very limited experience of the world around them. By the end of the reception year, although attainment in this area is well below the expected level for children of this age, they have made good progress. Teaching is very good. An interesting range of activities is planned to enable children to explore and widen their experience. For example, children are encouraged to use all their senses in everyday activities because of a wonderful array of natural objects, and 'Whiskers' and 'Monty' - the very important guinea pigs. Resources, such as light boxes, mirrors and magnifying lenses, are used imaginatively to prompt children to look at objects closely and improve their observation skills. Quiet music plays in the main area, which has the effect of calming children and helping them to settle and concentrate. Staff are very effective in providing 'real' and lasting experiences. For example, children plant sunflower seeds and they feel the texture of the compost. They watch in wonder as their seeds grow and begin to learn that to grow they need light, food and water. Teachers thoughtfully introduce items and artefacts, such as Indian food and dress, to compensate for children's minimal experience of other cultures. Through frequent practical opportunities, children begin to develop fine control skills when cutting or sticking or when using construction apparatus to make models or collages. For example, reception age children made recognisable tools for 'Percy the Park Keeper' using a variety of materials and fastenings. This age group also confidently use the mouse to operate computer programs, improving their hand-eye co-ordination. Many reception children know how to record their work using the digital camera, although nursery children have less access to computers in choice activities. Adults are skilled in helping children to use the appropriate vocabulary to describe their experiences. Children are beginning to have a firm foundation on which to build the later subjects of science, design and technology, ICT, geography and history.

### **Physical development**

60 Teaching is very good and children make good progress in this area of learning. Most of them achieve the levels expected by the end of the reception year. Children experience the excellent 'Outdoor Classroom' everyday, according to their choice. This area caters well for all areas of the curriculum, but always has activities to develop a range of physical skills. Children show good control as they steer, ride, push and pull wheeled 'vehicles' and avoid obstacles. They move in a variety of ways through tunnels, up ladders and down slides when they negotiate the 'circuit' and enjoy digging, raking and brushing in the sand area. Adults join in the play and move children's learning forward very well. Every day the children have valuable opportunities to use classroom equipment that helps them to



improve their control of the finer movements needed to use scissors, pens, pencils, paintbrushes and glue with increasing dexterity. They know that your body changes during physical activity – ‘it gets warmer and warmer’

## **Creative development**

61 Children start from a low level of skills. Very good teaching and provision ensures that children make good progress in the nursery and reception classes so that, by the age of five, most children are not far short of reaching the levels expected. A vast array of exciting activities is provided to which children respond well. In the nursery, for example, children become engrossed in drawing, painting, making collages, pictures, printing and experimenting with textures and techniques. Reception children painted very thoughtful pictures of elephants following their learning about India. They make shapes in dough by pulling, pinching and rolling shapes. They play imaginatively in the home corner, for instance, in preparing and eating food and looking after the dolls, but rarely extend the play with talk unless an adult is alongside. Very effective support helps children well by showing them not only to use tools and techniques effectively, but also to develop their language and descriptive powers. Children of all ages delight in dressing up and this releases the most imagination and language. One girl climbed to the top of the ‘castle’ and, wearing a large hat and a flouncy dress, began to sing! They join in with songs, make music with tuned and un-tuned percussion instrument by tapping, scraping and shaking and enjoy the music played throughout the day.

## **ENGLISH**

62 By the age of seven, standards are well below national expectations in speaking and listening, reading and writing. However, pupils make good progress and achieve well from when they first enter school with very low language and communication skills. By the age of 11, standards are well below those expected in speaking, but pupil’s listening skills have improved. Standards in reading are below the national average and standards in writing are well below those normally found. Throughout the school, standards in writing are weaker than in reading. Over 40 per cent of pupils in this school have special educational needs and approximately 25 per cent of pupils have not been in the school from Year 1 and therefore have not benefited from what the school has to offer. In the current Year 6, over 50 per cent of the pupils transferred from other schools and 25 per cent of the class are registered as having special educational needs, although the true figure is probably much higher. The school has valid data to indicate that those pupils who have been in the school from entry in the reception class, make good progress and achieve well. Pupils who have received the good teaching in English that this school offers, reach the standards expected. The school has set challenging targets for standards in national tests for Year 6 pupils this year and it looks likely that those targets will be achieved.

63 The quality of teaching is consistently good and examples of very good teaching were seen in both the infants and the juniors during the inspection. The teaching in Year 5 and 6 is consistently very good. A clear strength of teaching is in the way teachers use the school’s very good assessments of what pupils know, understand and can do to plan lessons that are well matched to the learning needs of individuals or small groups. The support for those pupils who have special educational needs in literacy is very good. They are given very good support in class, or in small groups withdrawn for short periods. This has a positive effect on their learning and they make consistently good progress. A significant minority of pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties. All teachers and learning support staff work very hard to support these pupils within the normal classroom setting and ensure acceptable levels of behaviour are maintained. What the school does well is to use literacy skills across all subjects of the curriculum. Good opportunities are planned to enable pupils to write in a

range of styles and to use their reading skills to research topics. This supports learning in history and geography in particular. This good feature of English in the school is better than found in most schools.

64 What teachers could improve is the way handwriting skills are taught to ensure that the size, shape and positioning of letters are correct. Currently, the marking of handwriting is inconsistent and not rigorous enough to correct common errors, so pupils make the same mistakes in their handwriting throughout the school.

65 By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards in speaking and listening are well below those typically found. By Year 2, pupils' listening skills are better than their speaking skills. Most pupils have limited vocabulary and generally have difficulty using words well enough to speak in extended sentences. Most pupils answer questions with one-word answers and are lacking in confidence to speak out in front of others. By the age of eleven, their ability to listen to others and to take turns in conversations has improved. More able pupils in Year 6 use vocabulary well to explain the main features of a poem or to show their skills at analysing how the poem has been constructed. For example, two pupils said: "I like the way the poet uses personification to add interest, I like his use of powerful verbs to add excitement". Most pupils are beginning to use correct terminology to discuss poetry and use words such as "alliteration" and "imagery" in their correct context. This underlines good teaching of speaking and listening skills throughout the school and as a result, pupils make good progress in their use of language. Teachers use the initial part of lessons well to extend the vocabulary of pupils and to give them the opportunity to explain their thoughts. Those pupils who have special educational needs are given good support during the initial part of the lesson. For example, learning support staff do not rush pupils when they attempt to answer questions, but help and guide them to use correct vocabulary and expressions and this gives pupils the confidence speak out in class.

66 By the end of Year 2, standards in reading are well below those typically found and by the end of Year 6, standards have shown some improvement, but are still below the levels expected. The teaching of basic reading skills in literacy lessons is good. In a good lesson in Year 2, the teacher used correct terminology, such as "genre, fiction, non-fiction" during the shared reading of a "Big Book" and ensured, by questioning, that pupils knew and understood these terms. Pupils in Year 2 show good attitudes to reading and can identify, with some adult help, the differences between fiction and non-fiction. More able pupils quickly identify rhyming words in a short piece of writing, such as "paw and sore". Most pupils read together from the shared book correctly, but are slow to read and many do not use punctuation yet to read with expression. Younger pupils are developing a good range of strategies to tackle words that they are not familiar with. By Year 6, pupils are confident when identifying their favourite author and can give reasons why they prefer the style of a particular author, for example, a pupil with average reading skills said: "I like the books written by Jacqueline Wilson. They are really humorous and I like the illustrations that Nick Sharret does". Most pupils enjoy reading books from a good range of styles and many express their enjoyment of poetry.

67 Pupils have reading diaries that they take home, which provides an effective link with parents. Parents are invited to make comments in their child's reading diary, but their comments are infrequent. Pupils are making good progress in their reading skills throughout the school and most are confident in the way they use the school library. Their research skills are good, and older pupils are being taught how to use higher order reading skills to use the Internet to research themes in other subjects. What could be improved is the way teachers let pupils know what they do well and what they need to do to improve. Pupils do not have targets to improve their reading and when asked, most do not know what they need to do to improve their reading skills.

68 Standards in writing are well below those typically found in most schools by the end of Years 2 and 6. Throughout the school, standards in spelling are very weak. Pupils make many common

errors and these errors continue with older pupils. What pupils do not do is check their work carefully enough and as a result, they do not see that they frequently misspell words that they have copied down. The presentation of work is generally good throughout the school and this indicates the high expectations of teachers. However, handwriting is a weakness. The handwriting of most pupils is legible and older pupils write with pens and often write in a joined style, but the size, shape and positioning of their letters is often incorrect. This is evident in Year 2 and the same errors are being made in Year 6, so the marking of pupil's work is not rigorous enough to bring about improvements and needs to be tackled by the adoption of a whole school approach.

69 What is done well is the way teachers give pupils many opportunities to write in a range of styles and for different purposes. This is a good feature of writing in the school, with many examples of pupils writing from different viewpoints. Younger pupils write simple character profiles to add interest to a story and write instruction in the correct sequence to make a cup of tea, or to brush their teeth. Older pupils in Year 4 are beginning to make good use of story settings; for example, "It was a beautiful Monday morning so we decided to go to the sea-side". By Year 6, more able pupils make effective use of words and phrases to add interest to a short story, for example, "I kept hoping to feel granny's soft, wrinkly hands touch mine one more time, but I knew that in my situation it was quite impossible". The writing of poetry throughout the school is good and this is well taught by enthusiastic teachers.

70 There are good examples of written work in other subjects and this reflects the school's focus on improving standards in writing by extending literacy skills across all subjects of the curriculum. The use of ICT skills to support learning in English is well developed, indicating that teachers are confident in their ability to use new technology.

71 The leadership and management of the subject are good. Literacy skills and improving standards in English is a main focus for development in the school. The curriculum for English is good and is well supported by visits from authors and theatre groups to extend skills in reading and writing and to develop a love of literature. Very good use is made of the analysis of pupils' assessments to highlight weaknesses in learning and where common issues are found, this is addressed by training for all staff. The school has a large proportion of pupils with special educational needs and these pupils are carefully monitored to ensure that they make good progress. The school has good resources in terms of books and support materials for teachers. Pupils reading resources in classrooms are well organised. The library is an effective and well-used learning resource.

## **MATHEMATICS**

72 Children enter school with very low levels of mathematical understanding. Although standards reached by the age of seven are well below the national average, they are higher than in similar schools. Infant pupils achieve well, enjoy learning mathematics and are gaining confidence in mental calculation. Junior pupils also all achieve well, although this is not apparent in the 2002 results for 11-year-olds, which were in the lowest five per cent nationally and well below those of similar schools. This year, the Year 6 pupils are reaching higher standards, although still well below the national average. However, in view of pupils' very low starting points and the high number with special educational needs, the standards reached are at least as high as can be expected. In fact, pupils' learning is very carefully assessed and the results are analysed to gauge how well they are learning. These assessments show that when those pupils who transferred into the school are removed from the calculations, the progress made by the remaining pupils has been good.

73 Pupils' confidence and self-esteem are key factors in their learning of mathematics. This is well understood by teachers and is a particularly strong feature of the teaching in Years 1 and 2 where

pupils' efforts are enthusiastically received and making mistakes is regarded as a natural part of the learning process. For example, the teachers' very reassuring approach helps Year 1 pupils to understand difficult ideas, such as, if  $4 + 3 = 7$ , then  $7 - 3 = 4$ . As pupils' confidence grows, teachers increase the level of challenge by asking them to make use of the skills they have learned to solve mathematical problems, such as 'If the answer is 20, what is the question?' In infant and in junior classes, teachers recognise that learning mathematics is difficult for many pupils and that it is essential for them to fully understand the processes. To this end, infant teachers provide frequent practical activities through which pupils can handle counters, coins and plastic shapes. In junior classes, teachers often illustrate mathematical ideas using diagrams projected onto large screens. For example, Year 5 pupils were able to understand the difference between perimeter and area by observing projected shapes and counting squares around the edge and later in rows and columns. These methods are very successful in helping pupils to hold a picture in their minds, which they can then refer back to when asked to work out problems mentally. Pupils' learning is also enhanced by creative use of ICT, which significantly improves their understanding of handling information and using databases and spreadsheets.

74 The quality of teaching is good in almost all classes. Despite pupils' difficulties with the subject, teachers expect a lot of them, through the amount of work they do and in the way they present it. Pupils' mathematics books are a credit to them. Most of the work is carefully set out and neatly organised. Conscientious and helpful marking is the driving factor, through which pupils' efforts are rewarded and any misunderstanding is always explained. The level of challenge in lessons is high and pupils have to make considerable leaps in learning to achieve the goals. For example, in Year 6, pupils are expected to convert fractions to decimals and percentages and measure angles accurately, which they do. Although the teaching makes considerable demands on their thinking skills, teachers are very sensitive to their individual responses and are particularly good judges of what pupils are likely to find difficult. Consequently, the work provided is skilfully tailored and very accurately matched to pupils' different learning needs. Assessments of their learning takes place continuously, through probing questioning, marking their work and setting regular tests. The information gathered is used very effectively to determine the next learning steps. These factors enable pupils of all abilities to make good progress. There are many other strengths in the teaching of mathematics. In particular, pupils are always made acutely aware of what they are expected to learn and this is always reviewed at the end of the lesson. In addition, teachers realise that a significant barrier to pupils' learning arises from their very limited understanding of what words mean. This is why pupils who appear to learn well in lessons often score less well on written tests. In all lessons, teachers are pedantic about pupils learning to use mathematical terms correctly. For example in a Year 3 lesson, the teacher asked pupils to look at a collection of numbers and explain any patterns they could see. One pupil commented, "They all go in threes." Through careful prompting, the teacher steered pupils skilfully into using the correct terminology and elicited from another pupil, "They are all divisible by 3," and from another, "They are all multiples 3."

75 A small minority of boys, usually in the junior classes, have considerable emotional and behavioural difficulties. However, through careful handling, their difficulties rarely surface in mathematics lessons. This is largely because the well-structured nature of the subject keeps them busy and because their achievements, however limited, are recognised and celebrated. Pupils with special educational needs, in particular benefit from caring, sensitive handling. They are always given very good support, which helps them to understand the meaning behind questions and the vocabulary used. Although they are encouraged to be independent and think hard, an adult is always on hand to ensure that they experience success. In the same way, the few pupils with higher ability are provided with stiff challenges and targets are set to help them to know what they need to do to improve further. Consequently, these pupils often reach higher levels by the age of 11. Developments in the subject are well led. The subject leader provides a good example of effective teaching, works very hard to

introduce and implement new ideas. Staff work together as an effective team in moving the subject on. Unfortunately, the fruits of their endeavours are sometimes eroded by the regular stream of pupils arriving at and leaving the school during the period of local area regeneration. There are only two weaknesses in pupils' learning and these are by no means present in every lesson. However, although lessons begin with sessions designed to improve pupils' mental skills, more could be done to encourage them to think and answer more quickly. Many answer accurately but their recall is very hesitant. Secondly, although many good opportunities are provided for pupils to solve problems, teachers are sometimes so eager to build up their understanding in small steps, they unwittingly miss opportunities to ask pupils to solve problems in their own way and then explain the method used to the whole class. Such opportunities have the capacity to improve their understanding of alternative strategies in problem solving and strengthen some of the weaknesses in their speaking and listening.

## SCIENCE

76 Current standards of work in Year 2 and Year 6 are well below the national average. However, in view of pupils' very low starting points when they enter school, they achieve well to reach these standards. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in lessons and make good progress over time. This is due to the strong emphasis placed on an investigative approach to learning, where pupils learn from first hand experiences in a practical and scientific way. Teaching is good and pupils' learning is carefully assessed. These factors enable pupils to learn to apply their skills of enquiry well to gain knowledge about life processes and living things, about materials and their properties, and about physical forces. The leadership and management of the subject are soundly developed. The subject leader checks teachers' planning and pupils' work in their books, each term, to ensure that their learning is smooth and continuous. She is aware that pupils need to be given every opportunity to develop their scientific vocabulary to improve their performance in statutory tests. In all classes there are a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, particularly in Year 6, which is having a detrimental affect on the efforts of the school to improve its standards in the subject. There are also some further contributory reasons for the well below average attainment. Pupils' reading and writing skills are well below the required standard to cope with the demands of attaining the nationally expected level of attainment and the necessary language associated with it. In addition there is some additional adverse impact on standards caused by the high level of pupil mobility which the school experiences. There were no differences noted between the performance of girls and boys during the inspection.

77 Infant pupils achieve well in acquiring knowledge and understanding of living things, materials and forces, which is developed through an investigative approach of observing, predicting and recording their findings. This was demonstrated in Year 2 lesson, in which the pupils were experimenting with plasticine to see how different forces could change its shape. Most of the pupils know that twisting won't work, as the plasticine will break. In Years 3 to 6, pupils deepen their understanding of predicting, observing and recording well. In a Year 5 lesson, for example, pupils discovered through observing a microscope image that the gaps in a sponge opened and closed when the sponge was squeezed and released. More able pupils' in Year 6 know that they have to make predictions and plan an investigation to ensure that the test is fair, for example, when finding out which is the most efficient material to use as a 'spinner'. Lower attaining pupils, however, need adult support when planning their investigation, and reminding of 'what they are changing?'

78 All the pupils in the school have positive attitudes toward their work in science, particularly when they are practically engaged in investigative work. In all lessons the majority of pupils were well behaved and keen to participate in activities offered to them. In a Year 4 lesson, for example, pupils co-operated well when working in groups to compile food chains. Teachers are careful to ensure that pupils understand the scientific terms used, such as 'producer' and 'consumer'. This, in turn, improves

their speaking and listening skills. Pupils also enhance their understanding of mathematics to support their learning in science, for example, by using graphs to measure the pulse rate when it rises through exercise. ICT is used well to support pupils' learning both in classrooms and in the computer suite. All teachers make effective use of the 'smart boards' with which to deliver the subject, for example in Year 5/6 lesson, when projecting images of decaying food using an electronic microscope.

79 The quality of teaching is good. Teachers' secure subject knowledge helps them to provide interesting tasks and ask probing questions. This engages pupils successfully in discussions and draws out their ideas. Lessons are planned in detail which ensures that they proceed at a good pace and that the time available is used effectively. The emphasis placed on practical investigations is a crucial factor in helping pupils to understand scientific ideas, such as how materials change when a force is applied. All teachers use questioning effectively to gauge the extent of pupils' understanding and knowledge. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, the teacher asked, "Give me another name for a meat eater and plant eater" to find out if they understood that animals could be classified by the foods they eat. Resources are used well to take pupils' learning forward, such as petri dishes with samples to show the decomposition stages of decaying food. In all lessons there is good teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants, which helps pupils with educational needs to understand the ideas being taught. This teamwork is also effective in ensuring that any traces of unwanted behaviour amongst a small minority of pupils, is usually prevented from disturbing others. The marking of pupils' work is variable with the better examples giving pupils' clear indications of how to progress, whilst others just consist of a tick or one word comment.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

80 Pupils' attainment in Years 2 and 6 matches the levels expected and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. In addition to managing the subject well, the subject leader runs an art club in the summer term, and artists such as Korby Paul have visited school to work with the pupils. Such activities help maintain pupils' interest in the subject.

81 By the age of seven pupils have worked with a wide range of media. They are also given valuable opportunities to study the work of various artists. For example, Year 2 pupils have replicated the work of William Morris and produced interesting leaf patterns using pastels and felt tips in his style. Observational drawing features well in all classes and pupils are encouraged to look closely at the world around them. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils used clay to create three-dimensional facial forms, with an emphasis of creating features such as eyes, nose and mouth. Most pupils manipulated the clay and used the tools confidently to create expressions, whilst pupils with special educational needs needed adult guidance to complete their facial expressions. By the age of 11, pupils have developed their skills in art and design well, and use a variety of media to accurately represent what they see. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 have produced interesting pieces of work in the style of David Hockney, after cutting photographs up. Pupils throughout the school use ICT to good effect to help develop their understanding of the subject. For example, Year 5 pupils have made good use of ICT to capture the style of Monet.

82 Teaching is good. This is reflected in the quality of learning observed in lessons and pupils' completed work in their sketchbooks. Teachers' secure subject knowledge enables them to plan lessons which interests and challenges pupils. They also use questioning well and intervene whilst pupils are working to prompt their thinking and question their reasoning. For instance, in a Year 5/6 lesson, the teacher asked, "Is your structure strong enough" to encourage pupils to concentrate on making the frames of their hats stable enough to be worn. This type of dialogue ensures that pupils are encouraged to try their best and produce work of good quality. Time and resources are used well in lessons, and learning support assistants are well briefed and make a valuable contribution to the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Work in art and design benefits from links to other

subjects. For example the study of the Ancient Egyptians inspired the imaginative designs of death masks in a Year 3 class. Teaching in art makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Pupils clearly enjoy their work in art and design. The levels of concentration and perseverance of most pupils has a positive effect on their learning in lessons.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

83 Pupils have limited background knowledge and experience when they enter Year 1 but they achieve well to reach the levels expected by the age of seven. Junior pupils achieve steadily to reach the levels expected by the aged 11. Subject leadership is satisfactory but only temporary. However, enough is being done to ensure that pupils cover a wide range of learning experiences and are able to build on what they have learnt in previous years.

84 Infant pupils make good progress in producing simple labelled drawings to show what their intended model will look like. By Year 2, their designs have progressed to include simple movements, for example to simulate a swinging pendulum. Most noticeably, pupils learn to reflect on their work to make improvements. This also helps to develop their writing skills. For example, when Year 1 pupils evaluated their model swings and slides, one pupil wrote, "The wool needed to be longer because the seat did not swing very well." By asking pupils to comment on their work in this way, they become more critical in their designing and making and the quality of their work improves. Pupils' design skills improve significantly in Years 3 and 4 to show a good level of detail. This is reflected in the way they explore different mechanisms, such as flaps, levers and rotating wheels to add originality and creativity to their making of 'pop up cards and books'. However, pupils do not have books or folders in which to record their work, which has two drawbacks. Their ability to write critical evaluations of their work does not improve along with their designing and making skills. In addition, it is harder for the subject leader, and the pupils themselves, to reflect on the progress they make. That said, in Years 5 and 6, pupils are encouraged to think critically about the materials they use, the effects they achieve and in the quality of the finished work. For example, one Year 5 pupil wrote, "I am delighted with my slipper. It is comfortable and looks fancy. If I made it again, I would move the strap back to give tighter fitting"

85 Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in the infant classes and in Year 5. Pupils are well managed and the lessons are well organised. This ensures that pupils work safely and at a good pace. Pupils often become totally absorbed in their work and respond particularly well to the practical activities. New skills, such as cutting, assembling and fastening, are carefully and systematically taught. This ensures that when pupils begin their projects, they already know how to attach materials together. As a result, their finished work is creditable. In Year 2 for example, good teaching accompanied by opportunities to practise stapling and gluing materials together, resulted in neatly made glove puppets. Teachers value originality and encourage pupils to look for ways to make their designs different from others. This was evident in the wide variety of Mother's Day cards made by Year 4 pupils. Such approaches offer scope for more able pupils to develop their creative talents. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from effective support, which helps them to make good progress. In a Year 2 lesson, for example, a teacher with expertise in this field provided a calming influence, reinforced the skills that the children had learnt earlier and extended their use of language well. By the end of the lesson, the work produced was as good as any in the class.

## **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

86 Standards are at the levels expected at the ages of seven and 11 in both subjects. Throughout the school all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in developing the key skills and main ideas. Both subjects are soundly led and managed. Subject leaders check teachers' planning and pupils' written work carefully to ensure that pupils are building on what they have learnt earlier. However, subject leaders do not observe lessons, which makes it harder for them to gauge standards across the school.

87 Pupils in Years 1 and 2 develop a secure understanding of the passage of time, and can distinguish between the past and present events. For instance, Year 2 pupils appreciate the importance of eye witness accounts of diarists such as Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn, and how these records help them to understand the events surrounding the Fire of London. Pupils' geographical skills are developed well by studying the immediate locality. For example, Year 1 pupils have good knowledge of the features around the school and can locate them accurately on a large-scale map. From traffic surveys they have a clear understanding of the location of roads and footpaths, and the signals and signs, which help them use the roads safely. Pupils' secure understanding of their own surroundings provides a firm base on which to compare places further afield. For example, Year 2 pupils know that the climate in the United Kingdom is different from that of Norway and Spain, and that people living in these countries require different types of clothing. Pupils in Year 2 also know and can identify that boats play an important part in transporting people who live on the Isle of Struay, and that this is different from the transport used in Darlington.

88 Pupils continue to achieve well from Year 3 to Year 6 in both subjects. They draw well on the skills they have learned to explain changes. For example, Year 3 pupils know that Henry VIII divorced his first wife Catherine of Aragon because she was too old to have more children. By Year 6, pupils have a sound understanding of the order of key historical events. They acquire this by constructing timelines, for example, from when Queen Victoria was born and when she died, listing the important dates and events of her reign. Pupils' geography skills continue to develop at a good rate. This is achieved by contrasting and comparing different locations and developing the correct use of geographical vocabulary. For instance, Year 4 pupils contrast the lifestyles of Chembakoli in India, with that of life in the United Kingdom and can identify accurately where they are on a map of the world. More able pupils in Years 5 and 6 extend their learning well by using weather symbols to place on their maps of Australia when identifying the different weather found in different regions.

89 Pupils have positive attitudes to their work in history and geography. They are keen to share what they know, and other pupils listen well to what they have to say. They use their literacy skills well in both subjects, for example, 'map' and 'symbol' in geography, and 'letter' and 'diary' in history. This, and the encouragement to use their speaking and listening skills, makes a positive contribution to the development of literacy in school. The learning of history and geography makes a positive contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development. For example, visits to Preston Hall in Yarm, and the Discovery Museum in Newcastle, widens their cultural experience.

90 Teaching is good. Lessons are characterised by thorough planning and challenging activities to take pupils' learning forward. All teachers have good subject knowledge and hold pupils' attention well. This was clearly demonstrated in a Year 2 history lesson where the teacher provided different sources of evidence to show pupils how the Fire of London started in 'Pudding Lane'. All teachers use questioning well to make pupils think and probe their understanding. All adults manage the pupils well. This helps to minimise occasional distractions caused by a small number of pupils with behaviour difficulties. ICT is used well in lessons to support learning in both subjects. All teachers use 'smart boards' linked to a computer in a classroom effectively and show how the Internet can be use to



access information for both subjects. For instance in a Year 4 history lesson the teacher asked pupils to interrogate a web site to find out why Henry VIII beheaded Ann Boleyn. The marking of work is variable, with the better examples taking pupils' learning forward with a positive comment for the pupil to follow.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

91 From a low starting point, pupils achieve well to reach the standards expected by the ages of seven and 11. The new computer suite provides good opportunities for pupils to learn essential skills and to use them in the learning of other subjects. The after-school computer club offers Year 4 pupils (and some parents) good opportunities to extend their learning. However, the new classroom computers are still causing technical problems, which is frustrating teachers and pupils who are keen to use them. The subject is well led. The subject leader has ensured that teachers have received effective training to enable them to make the best use of the good facilities. Support for teachers is forthcoming when they need help and advice. The subject leader knows exactly what needs to be done to make further improvements, for example, to ensure that the recently introduced methods of assessing and recording pupils' progress, as they move from class to class, are used well by teachers.

92 Pupils use different equipment and explore computer programs confidently. By the age of seven, they have gained a good range of ICT skills. For example, they log on to the computer network unaided and open a program by finding and clicking onto an icon displayed on the screen. They have good control of the mouse when, for instance, using a paint program to create a pattern. Having already set up their own data base about eye colour, for example, they move on and understand that a database can only answer questions if that information has been entered and stored in an appropriate way. They enter data confidently and quickly and produce simple graphical representations of it in the form of 'pictogram', a 'block graph' or a 'pie-chart'. Pupils understand the importance of closing down correctly, having saved their work. They enjoy using computers and most behave well in the computer suite. Younger pupils also confidently use listening centres to listen to taped stories.

93 By Year 6, pupils use a range of ICT applications confidently, for example, in selecting various presentation options to publish their own 'Magic Box' poems. They use colour, different writing styles and print size and finally select a border. This competence comes from the successful build up of skills and understanding through clearly planned steps of learning in previous years. For instance, in Year 3, they control the movement of a 'Roamer' by writing a program with repeated commands. By Year 4, pupils research and download information from the Internet to help their learning about the weather. In Year 5, pupils use sensors to monitor changing light conditions and make line graphs of their findings. They use a three-step procedure to control inputs and outputs to move a Lego model using 'Robolab'.

94 Teaching is good. The short, focused tasks match pupils' learning needs well. An overhead projector linked to one of the computers enables teachers in the suite and in all classrooms to project a large version of the screen on to the wall. They make good use of this facility to demonstrate or check techniques. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and explain new learning clearly. As a result, pupils are clear about their tasks and confident to ask for help if they are unsure. A very skilled support teacher makes a significant difference to pupils' learning. As a result, pupils eagerly anticipate their ICT lessons. The level of challenge presented to pupils is good. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from very good levels of support. Teaching assistants watch these pupils carefully, help when necessary, but never do the work for them. Specific lessons for pupils in Years 2 to 5 who have significant learning needs in literacy are very effective in improving their rate of progress and in raising their self-esteem. More able pupils are encouraged to widen their investigations. All these factors enable all pupils to make good progress. Pupils enhance their understanding of ICT by extending their skills well in the learning of other subjects, such as, history and geography, where they use the Internet to research information. For example, in a Year 5 and 6 science lesson, the teachers' use of an electronic microscope to magnify food, filters and sponges was very effective in channelling pupils' observations. Their motivation was very high when taking digital photographs. Links with literacy and

numeracy are good. There is good reinforcement for reading and writing. In mathematics, pupils interrogate data bases, show information in graphs and use a spreadsheet.

## **MUSIC**

95 Pupils achieve steadily in music to reach the levels expected at the ages of seven and 11. Music plays an important part in the life of the school. In assemblies, for example, pupils listen to different types of music and sing everyday, which makes a valuable contribution to their spiritual and cultural development. Through regular practice, skilled instruction and opportunities to perform for an audience of children and parents, their singing improves. As a result, the quality of singing is good and pupils' love of music shines through, particularly when they perform their very own 'Firthmoor School Rap'. Frequent opportunities to listen to and discuss different tracks, significantly enhances pupils' ability to capture the mood of the music. This is another aspect of music in which pupils achieve well. For example, after hearing African music, a Year 2 pupil conjured up an image of a tribal dancer. These strong features are attributable to sound and enthusiastic leadership. The subject leader encourages pupils to sing and listen and is ever present when these communal activities take place. Although the subject leader does not observe pupils' learning in other lessons, she is aware of the need to increase teacher's confidence in the composing aspects of music. To this end, she has recently provided useful guidance to help teachers to work on pupils' composing skills, including developing the use of notation to enable them to record their ideas. ICT is used suitably in infant classes to help pupils to compose and is just being introduced into junior classes.

96 Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the music studio, where acoustics are good and resources are plentiful, pupils have good opportunities to learn how to play instruments. Good organisation and preparation enables lessons to start promptly. Pupils are often arranged in a circle, which is effective because they can see and hear each other's playing and singing. This helps Year 1 pupils, for example, to keep together when providing a steady beat to accompany their singing. Playing instruments gives them great pleasure. As one Year 1 pupil commented, "When I grow I want to play in a brass band." Teachers use questioning well to check that pupils understand the purpose of the lesson. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to ask pupils to comment on how well they are singing or playing, with a view to making improvements. Teaching is good in Year 3 because of the subject leader's expertise. A good start with composing is being made by using poetry around which pupils compose an accompaniment. Offering a good selection of instruments to represent different parts of the poem, stimulates this further. This work is continued satisfactorily in Year 4, although symbols for recording ideas have not yet been introduced and composing does not progress strongly beyond this point. In all lessons, teachers are mindful to ensure that pupils understand musical terms, such as tempo, dynamics and melody. Consequently, Year 3 pupils can explain that Ostinato means a repeated musical pattern. Pupils are managed well but in most classes, two or three pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties. They are not able to concentrate on passive activities, such as listening, for more than 15 minutes without distracting others. When this happens, the pace of learning slows as teachers endeavour to keep them involved. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for and this ensures that they make good progress. In one lesson, for example, a classroom assistant took hold of a pupil's hands to improve his co-ordination and help him to clap in time with the music. More able pupils, and the few talented ones, are encouraged to learn to play brass or stringed instruments and to join the school choir. These pupils respond well and are currently participating in a Children's Oratorio to celebrate the regeneration of the local community.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

97 By the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils reach the standards expected for their age and make satisfactory progress in lessons. Pupils' achieve well in swimming and almost 100 per cent of pupils achieve their 25-metre certificate. Many pupils achieve much more than this, particularly in life saving skills, reflecting the school's good provision. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The subject leader is new to the role but has already identified the main strengths and

weaknesses. For example, her scrutiny of teacher's planning highlighted the fact that the school has no whole-school subject guidelines. This requires urgent attention to ensure that pupils' skills are built up smoothly from year to year. The subject leader does not observe lessons, which reduces her awareness of staff training requirements. Currently, the school makes no provision for outdoors and adventurous activities. The provision for outdoors competitive sports and athletics is hampered by the on-going building work, which means that the school does not yet have a field, but staff do well with what they have and all pupils have access to a broad curriculum.

98 Teaching is satisfactory overall and sometimes good. A strong feature of the teaching is the careful preparation of activities. Resources are used well to keep pupils involved and interested and in the way teachers tackle the disruptive behaviour and attitudes of a small minority of pupils. This was particularly evident in a Year 6 class, when the behaviour of a small group meant that fifteen minutes of lesson time was lost to the rest of the class. However, the considerable skills of the teacher in dealing with this situation, her very good subject knowledge and her enthusiasm, ensured that by the end of the lesson, all pupils were involved and made sound progress in their skills in tag rugby. In a good lesson in Year 2, the teacher's good planning and her effective use of a learning support assistant enabled pupils of all abilities to take part in a demonstration of curled and stretched shapes. Those pupils who have special educational needs are very well supported in lessons and this means that where possible, they are fully included in all activities. A good feature in some lessons is the way literacy and ICT skills are introduced. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, the teacher introduced new vocabulary as the pupils moved like mice and rats on a merchant ship. She asked, "Do you know what a merchant is? What can you tell me about a merchant?" The response to this was good as pupils recalled what they had learnt in a history lesson. She then used a video of "Cats" to show how dancers represent the feline movement of cats and this encouraged the pupils to improve their movements in the lesson. All teachers could improve the initial warm-up part of lessons. Their use of stretching movements is effective, but pupils do not do enough aerobic exercise to make them "puffed" and to fully warm their bodies.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

99 By the ages of seven and 11 pupils reach the standards outlined for schools in the Durham area. The subject is very well led and managed. The subject leader has effectively planned what pupils should learn in each year group, taking account of their different learning needs. Pupils' learning is thoroughly assessed and their progress is recorded against what is expected of them. Teachers' lesson planning is checked each term and pupils' work is reviewed each half term. This enables the subject leader to know what is happening in other classes and what standards are like throughout the school. Resources, such as pictures and artefacts, are used to support teaching and learning very well. The only weakness is not having specific ICT programs to extend pupils' learning in this subject.

100 Pupils achieve well in religious education. They learn about different religions and they learn from them in forming their own values and beliefs. They receive a very good grounding in different world religions and faiths, such as Christianity, Sikhism, Hinduism and Judaism. From this, they learn to understand the significance and preciousness of sacred books, such as The Torah and The Bible. Pupils reflect on important human values, such as truthfulness and equality, and they are encouraged to put them into practice in their own lives, in school and at home. The emphasis on sharing, caring, valuing and celebrating based on pupil's own experiences, stories and the local community is very appropriate for the nature and needs of pupils in this school. In this way the subject makes a very effective contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

101 Pupils of all abilities make good progress. By the end of Year 6, pupils have deepened their understanding of Christianity and some of the major religions of the world. They know that people

have different beliefs and values that affect the way they live. For example, pupils know that Hindus worship God in many forms. They offer impressive suggestions in trying to grasp a difficult idea. For instance, one child reflecting on the Hindu religion said, “Well there is one supreme God but each of the other Gods have their own special things – like Ganesh is the start of new things”... It’s like they all have different powers, so they appreciate each God for it’s own particular thing”...” Is it a bit like the Head teacher can’t be everywhere all the time and we do some things as ‘Buddies’ to make sure everyone knows the rules and is looked after?” Similarly, Year 5 pupils understand the importance of the ten Gurus in Sikhism, that ‘Guru’ means teacher and the overarching principles of how to live in a truthful way, and that all people are equal. In Year 3, pupils show good knowledge of the Passover, it’s origins, how this is important to Judaism and can relate this to the Last Supper and compare it with Sikh feasts. In Year 2, pupils were engrossed watching the ‘Sedder’ (Passover) meal unfold in front of them and most understand the notion of symbolism, for example, that the salt water is for the tears of the Jewish people.

102 Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. Lessons are well prepared and resources are used effectively. The introductory part of lessons is often particularly effective because teachers’ capture pupils’ interests immediately and hold them throughout the remainder of the lesson. Very clear explanations, the use of real artefacts and very good questioning effectively deepen pupils’ understanding. Teachers are very interested in what pupils say and encourage them to ask question and make their own observations. This is a very strong feature of the work. Teachers and assistants help pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, to speak confidently and to justify their opinions. For example, in Year 3, the classroom assistant helped these pupils to understand the new words and encouraged them to use their white boards to try with their own spelling. This helped them to make good progress. Pupils enjoy discussions and have good attitudes to learning. Group activities are successful because the variety and range of tasks provided are well matched to pupils’ different learning needs and interests. For example, in Year 6, pupils were asked to share with a partner their special talents and characteristics and record their ideas in a diagram. They went on to design a poster with them as a Hindu God or Goddess, and to discuss and explain their drawings. They were absorbed and produced very thoughtful work. Pupils respond very well to the teachers’ very high expectations of their effort, pace, and behaviour. They understand the reasons for prayer and respond very well during collective worship to the request to ‘build a picture in your head’, reflect for a few moments and listen to short, meaningful prayers.