

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HOLY FAMILY RC (VOLUNTARY AIDED) PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Darlington

LEA area: Darlington

Unique reference number: 114239

Headteacher: Mr M Hughes

Reporting inspector: Mrs Sonja Øyen  
7167

Dates of inspection: 1 – 4 July 2002

Inspection number: 249928

Full 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: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Prior Street  
Darlington  
Co Durham

Postcode: DL3 9EN

Telephone number: 01325 380821

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr J Wainwright

Date of previous inspection: April 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
7167	Mrs Sonja Øyen	Registered inspector	English Information and communication technology Music English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? School's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13459	Mrs Eva Mills	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?
28046	Mrs Carole Goodchild	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Science Geography History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
31012	Mrs Ann Welch	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Design and technology Physical education Equal opportunities Special educational needs	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Holy Family is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic infant and junior school in Darlington. With 104 boys and 109 girls, it is about the same size as most primaries. There are seven single year group classes varying in size from 29 to 34. The children who started in January brought the reception year class to 30. Although most pupils live close by, a significant number travel from other areas in the parish. The school is very popular and few pupils join or leave during the school year. Pupils are from a wide range of social backgrounds. Two pupils are from ethnic minorities. One child has English as an additional language but is not at an early stage of learning to speak it. Fifteen pupils are eligible for free school meals. At seven per cent, this is well below the national average and lower than at the time of the 1998 inspection. Attainment on entry varies but is generally as expected for pupils' ages. Most pupils have had pre-school education. Thirty-nine pupils (18 per cent, about average) are identified as having special educational needs. Thirteen pupils, including six with a statement of special educational need, receive support from external agencies, predominantly for moderate learning difficulties, autism, emotional and behavioural difficulties and physical needs. The school was awarded Beacon status in 2001. Five of the seven class teachers at the time of the last inspection have since left the school. Three teachers have been promoted to senior positions in other schools.

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

Holy Family is successful in meeting its aim of creating a happy and secure environment in which the children develop lively and enquiring minds. The friendly, supportive atmosphere reflects the good, caring leadership of the headteacher and good teamwork of all the staff. The school's major strength lies in the very good provision for pupils' personal development and the way all pupils are encouraged to play a full part in school life. Much good teaching sustains the pupils' eagerness to learn and their confidence in what they can do. The pupils make good progress in the infant years and standards are very good. Pupils' progress slows in the junior classes. Not enough is expected of the higher attaining pupils. Standards at the end of Year 6 are not as high as they were when the school attained Beacon status. Standards are about average compared with schools nationally but fall below those of most similar schools nationally. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

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

- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are good. Pupils are articulate and express their views fluently. This adds to the quality of their reading and content of their writing.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well above average at the end of Year 2.
- The reception year children get off to a good start because good teaching stimulates their interest in reading, writing and number.
- The pupils are very well mannered, highly sociable, very self-assured and quick to learn.

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

- The quality of teaching for the junior pupils, especially in English, mathematics and science.
- The challenge for the higher attaining pupils.
- Standards in the neatness of presentation, the quality of pupils' handwriting and their accuracy in spelling and punctuation.
- The use of available information to pinpoint exactly where the school needs to improve.
- The quality and consistency of subject leadership and management.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the inspection in 1998. Initial very good improvement and high standards gained the school Beacon status in January 2001, with an accompanying commitment to share best practice with others. Much of this work has fallen on the shoulders of the headteacher because of changes in staffing, especially in the junior classes. In the last two years, the need to develop a new teaching and management team has slowed the process of school improvement. The school is now in a good position to move forward and to raise standards, which have fallen in the junior classes. Despite this, the school has sustained its positive climate for learning and the pastoral strengths identified in the last inspection, particularly the strong support of parents. The school has dealt successfully with the key issue to raise standards in information and communication technology (ICT). Regular periods in the computer suite are giving pupils hands-on experience and standards, now satisfactory, are rising. The school has been less effective in developing systems to help it track and analyse pupils' progress and identify where improvements need to be made.

## 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
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	A	A	C	D
Mathematics	B	A	B	C
Science	A	A*	C	D

**Key**

top 5% schools           A\*

well above average    A

above average         B

average                 C

below average         D

well below average    E

Inspection findings indicate that standards are well above average at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Nearly all pupils reach the level expected for their age. The good achievement of many pupils lifts overall standards, especially in mathematics. The Year 2 pupils' results in the 2002 national tests, as yet unvalidated, sustain the positive trend seen in previous years. In the junior years, the pupils do not do so well. Standards at the end of Year 6 are about average in English, mathematics and science. In mathematics lessons seen, most pupils did as well as expected for their age, but a significant number have fared badly in the national tests. Standards have fallen compared with 2001 and the school has not met its targets. While higher attaining pupils have generally done as well as expected, there is some underachievement. Given pupils' good attainment at the end of Year 2, standards are not high enough in all year groups across the curriculum. Similar schools are achieving far higher standards. Disruption due to changes in staffing partly explains dips in pupils' progress but current teaching is not consistently strong enough in English, mathematics and science to boost the pupils' learning. The teachers often accept too easily what pupils do, especially the often poor quality presentation of their work. The marked improvement since April in the neatness of Year 4 pupils' work shows what pupils can achieve. Good standards in history at the end of Year 6 reflect pupils' ability to remember what they are taught and to apply their reading skills to find and interpret information. In design and technology, geography, ICT, music and physical education, standards are satisfactory at the end of Years 2 and 6. In art and design, Year 2 pupils achieve good standards but the edge is lost by the end of Year 6. Good teaching ensures the reception children make good progress in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development. By the end of the year, many are doing better than expected for their age, particularly in writing and solving simple number problems.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good; the pupils enjoy school and want to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good; most behave sensibly at all times. A few pupils find it hard to control their emotions.
Personal development and relationships	Very good; boys and girls of all ages get on well together and show interest and concern for each other. They show initiative in their learning and carry out jobs and duties responsibly.
Attendance	Good; above average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

As in 1998, the overall quality of teaching is good. Although there is good teaching in all classes, the reception children benefit from the most consistent teaching. The good skills, expertise and flair of the teacher ensure the children achieve well and enjoy their learning. The teaching is more variable in other classes and the good teaching is not always in English, mathematics and science. The pupils are quick to learn and to apply what they know but too often, the work does not pose sufficient challenge for the higher attaining pupils. The teaching in English is good in the infant classes. Here the teachers' good subject knowledge, high expectations and explicit teaching help all the pupils, including those with special educational needs, to learn to read and write. However, pupils are slower to learn what they have to do to improve in writing than in reading. In mathematics, the infant pupils learn how to use and apply their number knowledge because good teaching challenges them. Although satisfactory overall, the teaching in English and mathematics in the junior classes does not markedly help the pupils to lift the quality of their reading, writing and use of number. Good teaching in some mathematics lessons for junior pupils, especially those in Year 6, has boosted pupils' appreciation of number relationships and plugged gaps in strategies to deal with problems. Common strengths lie in the hard work of the teachers, their enthusiasm and their use of interesting ideas to motivate the pupils. When the teachers set a real challenge and show pupils how to achieve it, all the pupils, including those with special educational needs, raise their level of application and often make good leaps in learning.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory; the reception year children experience a good range of interesting topics and activities but there is little use of the outdoors. Unnecessary repetition of content in mathematics slows the progress of the higher attaining pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good; the adults give the pupils much time and support. Pupils with statements of special needs receive their full entitlement.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory; the pupil is supported by the staff and other pupils to acquire new words and phrases.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good; the staff set good role models in developing the children's awareness of how to get on with others and in appreciating what they achieve. The school puts high emphasis on local culture and heritage and also race equality, but places less emphasis on developing pupils' awareness and knowledge of other societies and their values.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good: every pupil is valued and the teachers know their classes well. Information about pupils' progress is not used consistently to plan the next steps in pupils' learning or to make changes in the curriculum.

The parents are strongly supportive of the school and attendance is very good at functions and events. Parents have high expectations and are keen to help their children at home. Informal links are good and the school keeps parents regularly updated on key matters, but is less consistent in informing them about homework and how well their children are doing.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall; the headteacher's good leadership sets a clear direction for the school and fosters good team spirit. He shoulders too much and subject leaders are not as effective as they need to be to drive up standards and bring about improvements.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory; many are new to governance and are settling into their role. Efficient committee work ensures responsibilities are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory but developing; the school compares itself with others but does not do enough to identify specific areas for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory; grants are used as appropriate. The number of support staff hours is low for the reception year children. Effective use is made of ICT equipment as tools in teaching.

Governors have prudently used staffing changes to strengthen curriculum expertise, especially in ICT and mathematics. Learning resources and classroom accommodation are adequate but the library provision is poor and the reception class lacks access to a secure outdoor area. Building work is planned to deal with the inadequate administrative space. The school is well maintained and pupils' work is attractively displayed in public areas. Governors seek best value in goods and services, set realistic targets and informally seek parents' and pupils' views.



## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They feel comfortable approaching the school with problems and questions.</li> <li>• Their children are expected to work hard.</li> <li>• The teaching is good and their children like school and the range of activities.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Their children are helped to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons, especially for the younger pupils.</li> <li>• The consistency of homework – its frequency and amount.</li> </ul> <p>A small percentage of parents also highlighted their wish to be better informed about their children's progress.</p>

The inspectors largely agree with the parents whose positive views reflect what the school does well. Parents' concerns are valid in part. While some classes have well-organised, regular homework, in other classes it is sporadic. The school offers many activities for the older juniors but there is little for others. All pupils make visits to places of interest as part of their studies.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Compared with all schools, standards are well above average for seven-year-old pupils in English and mathematics, and above average in science. Nearly all reach the level expected for their age in reading, writing, mathematics and science, and a significant number do better. In 2001, all the Year 2 pupils achieved Level 2, as expected for their age, and this placed the school in the top five per cent of all schools. Holy Family was also first in its "Family of Schools", namely the six schools in the authority that share similar contexts. Standards were also well above those of most similar schools nationally. Inspection evidence and the school's unvalidated good results in the 2002 national tests indicate that these high standards have largely been sustained.
2. Standards are not so good for the 11 year-olds. They are about average in English, mathematics and science. A fall in standards last year placed the school close to, but just above the national average in all three subjects. However, when compared with similar schools nationally, Holy Family did not do as well as most in English and science. The school's unvalidated results in the 2002 national tests are lower than those of 2001, particularly in mathematics but also in science. The fall in standards can be explained by a number of factors, including inconsistencies in the teaching over the last two years, differences in the profile of the year groups, the lack of clear analysis of where improvements need to be made and the underachievement of higher attaining pupils.
3. Since the inspection in 1998, standards have risen for the seven-year-old pupils mainly because good teaching in the infant years enables many to do better than expected for their age, especially in mathematics. When the pupils start school, their attainment varies but is generally as expected for their age. By the end of the reception year, they have made good progress and most have met, and often exceeded, the expected standard in all six areas of learning. One pupil with English as an additional language has done as well as others. All the reception year pupils do well in personal, social and emotional development. They are willing learners who concentrate on what they have to do. Most have started to read, write and work out simple number problems. They have had a good grounding in the areas of knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development, and often show good level of skill for their age. This good progress continues in Years 1 and 2 so that pupils extend what they know and acquire new skills. This is most apparent in mathematics and their willingness to use and apply number across the curriculum. However, the teachers' expectations are not always high enough of what the pupils can do, especially the higher attaining pupils.
4. Standards have fluctuated for the 11 year-olds since 1998. Very high standards in 2000 placed the school in the top five per cent of all schools nationally. For instance, 76 per cent of the Year 6 pupils did better than expected for their age in science. The high attainment of the girls lifted standards. On average, the girls were at least a year ahead of girls nationally in science and mathematics. The very high standards throughout the school in 2000 and the marked improvement compared with 1999 gained Holy Family a School Achievement Award and also contributed to the school's success in gaining Beacon School status in January 2001.

5. The school was not able to sustain these standards. Given pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2, standards are not high enough at the end of Year 6, and also in other junior year groups. Pupils are making two levels progress as expected between Years 3 and 6, but often only just. Changes in teaching staff and subject responsibilities have meant that the teachers' expectations of the pupils are often not high enough. The teachers tend to accept the pupils' work when it is close to or at the level expected for their age. Higher attaining pupils are not being challenged enough. Consequently there is underachievement, not only in Year 6 but also in other junior classes. It is most evident in writing and in mathematics and diminishes the quality of pupils' work across the curriculum.
6. When the current Year 6 pupils took the national tests at the end of Year 2, their performance was generally a term's progress ahead compared with pupils nationally. This is not so marked in their work as Year 6 pupils. In English and mathematics lessons seen, most but not all were working at Level 4, the level expected for their age. However, their oral comments were often of a better quality than their written work.
7. As in other year groups, Year 6 pupils' oral skills are good. Many pupils show a good facility in using language to express their thoughts and views, and to discuss aspects of mathematics. They are less skilled and secure in dealing confidently with mental number problems, applying number knowledge in other subjects, or in writing convincingly and accurately. This also lowered the quality of work in other subjects. Some revised pieces of writing are good, particularly the leaflets to advertise a theme park. Similarly, pupils' work in mathematics lessons was generally correct, but the work in pupils' books indicated that the school's target of 87 per cent Level 4 attainment was challenging in English and mathematics. This has been proved to be the case, particularly in mathematics, where just less than 70 per cent of pupils have attained Level 4. Too many pupils who were on the cusp of Levels 3 and 4 in mathematics, have fared badly and failed to reach Level 4. While one in five pupils has done better to reach Level 5, this is lower than the figure last year, and not sufficient to maintain the standard of 2001.
8. In contrast, just over half of the Year 2 pupils have done better than expected for their age in mathematics. This sustains the high standard also seen in the last two years and sets a good precedent as pupils move through the junior years. However, a scrutiny of pupils' work shows that this good start is being blunted. For example, Year 4 pupils have not all sustained the high performance seen two years ago and higher attaining pupils have not been challenged enough. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in the first two terms also led to a drop in the quality of presentation. Work this term, however, shows an upward turn in quality and progress not only in mathematics but also in English. The pupils have lifted their work to meet the teacher's higher expectations.
9. In English, four out of five Year 6 pupils have done as well as expected for their age and one in four has done better. This is not as good as in previous years. As seen last year, pupils have done better in reading than in writing. Most Year 6 pupils read fluently and accurately, and higher attaining pupils talk confidently about the styles of different authors. Pupils cope well with reading in other subjects and enjoy looking at books, CD ROMs and other sources of information. A concerted focus on planned teacher-led group reading sessions as well as an increase in the number and range of books available has helped to enhance and sustain pupils' interests in reading in the junior years.

10. Good teaching and much parental support in the infant years ensure pupils achieve well in reading. Many pupils have made a good start in reading by the end of the reception year. They continue to make at least satisfactory progress and by the end of Year 2, four out of ten are reading well for their age. Boys and girls have done equally well. A key strength is their good appreciation and understanding of what they read. Their good general knowledge, good language skills and wide range of vocabulary help them to make sense of events and characters.
11. The standard of pupils' writing does not always match that of their oral work. In all years, many pupils have lively ideas and use interesting phrases that often add spice to their stories, reports and accounts. By the end of Year 2, nearly all attain the level expected for their age but few have done better than that in this year's tests. This means the overall standard is lower than in the last two years. A scrutiny of pupils' work over the year shows that not all pupils have met the potential shown in the autumn term. Pupils have not all made the progress needed to express their ideas in correctly punctuated sentences. Few use joined handwriting, although they practise it. Poor presentation and inaccuracy also typifies work in the junior classes. The teaching is not helping pupils to raise the quality of what they write. Year 6 pupils know about different types of writing and their features but do not apply them sufficiently well as they write. This is seen in their work across the curriculum. As a result, standards in literacy are about average but should be better.
12. Pupils with special educational needs do well in the infant years. They frequently achieve the level expected for their age and make good progress in reaching the targets in their individual plans because of good teaching and support at key times. A few pupils show particular personal strengths, such as reading, and this adds to their progress across the curriculum. In the junior years, pupils' progress is satisfactory overall but more variable. Most make satisfactory progress towards their individual targets, especially when guided and supported by an adult. They make the best progress when the work does not over-challenge them and they can manage a high amount on their own.
13. In science, inspection evidence shows the standard is higher this year than last at the end of Year 2 but lower at the end of Year 6. Compared with 1998, standards are not as high in the junior classes. Nevertheless, many pupils are good scientists whose awareness of scientific procedures equals their scientific knowledge. From starting school, pupils achieve well in learning to ask questions, follow up ideas and apply what they know. The emphasis on practical activity means that pupils with special educational needs often benefit from working with others who share the reading and writing elements. However, a common reason why standards are not higher is the lack of extension and challenge for the higher attaining pupils. The teachers too often stop when the purpose of the lesson is achieved.
14. Since the last inspection, satisfactory standards have been sustained in music and physical education. Swimming standards are good, with many pupils able to dive and swim long distances. The school has also sustained satisfactory standards in history at the end of Year 2 and good standards at the end of Year 6. Fieldwork and visits help pupils to gain an awareness of the past. Pupils soak up and remember facts and show sound skills in solving problems. This also typifies design and technology and geography, where standards are satisfactory at the end of Years 2 and 6, but not as strong as judged in 1998. In art and design, standards are still good at the end of Year 2 but now only satisfactory at the end of Year 6. The infant pupils achieve well because they explore a good range of media and techniques and use them to create their own pictures and products. This creative edge is less evident in the junior years.

15. In information and communication technology, standards are now satisfactory at the end of Years 2 and 6. The regular use of computers, together with the systematic teaching of skills and introduction of new programs, has redressed the gap in pupils' skills and knowledge. Nevertheless, a continuing weakness is the pupils' poor keyboard skills. As the pupils learn quickly standards are rising. Higher attaining pupils already show good levels of expertise.

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

16. The school has sustained the strengths judged in the last inspection in pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships, which have a significant and positive impact on their learning. Nearly all the parents who returned the questionnaire agreed that their children like school and many commented on how happy their children were. This reflects the school's strong ethos of care and concern for one another and very good provision for pupils' moral and social development.
17. Pupils' very good attitudes to school begin in the reception year. The children find learning fun, are excited by new experiences and highly appreciative of things they see. For example, they squealed with delight when the teacher blew bubbles from soap mixture and one child, keen to show others what she could see through a magnifying glass, commented, *Look! It's incredible!*. They want to do their best and usually concentrate hard until the task is complete. Having practised forming letters, they were eager to share what they had written on their small whiteboards. All follow the routines, are very well-behaved and show a good level of maturity in their co-operation with and consideration of others.
18. Infant and junior pupils similarly enjoy school, are interested in lessons and relate very well to each other, their teachers and other adults. Pupils are attentive in class and listen carefully to their teachers and to each other. They rarely need to hear things repeated and are quick to appreciate what they have to do. Many also are quick to learn and to share ideas when working together in pairs or in groups. In a physical education lesson, Year 4 pupils showed much good humour and willingness to practise as they worked together to pass balls around the group. Pupils are confident and self-assured. They have lively, enquiring minds, ask sensible questions and are keen to discuss their work. In most of the lessons seen, the pupils concentrated well and were often engrossed in the tasks. However, few took real care with the presentation of their work which was often untidy. Pupils show an awareness of wanting to succeed, but not always willingness to self-correct or to ensure that their work was the best they could do.
19. Relationships are very good throughout the school. Year 6 pupils set a good example in how they get on with each other, and in their interest in what the younger ones do and achieve. They play and socialise with younger pupils sensibly and amicably, and applaud younger pupils' contributions in assemblies. Pupils follow the lead of adults and treat each other with respect and consideration. When one girl found it hard to turn on a tap, a boy swiftly came to her aid with the remark, *"It's OK – I'll can help you with that."* This awareness of others, thoughtfulness and good manners typifies pupils throughout the school. Boys and girls get on happily together. Pupils with special educational needs work well alongside their peers. Some pupils find it hard to control their emotions but the others show a high level of tolerance and understanding and often try to soothe individuals when they get upset.



20. Pupils' behaviour in and around school, even when they are not directly supervised, is very good. Parents praised pupils' behaviour in assemblies, in church services and when out of school. It reflects the values taught at home and by the church. Pupils appreciate the need for rules and conduct themselves sensibly and responsibly. Pupils comment that staff quickly deal with any instances of bullying or inappropriate behaviour, such as instances of sexism and racism. No pupil has been excluded for poor behaviour or any other reason since the last inspection. Pupils' good self-discipline was seen at its best when, on wet days during the inspection the pupils could not go outside and occupied themselves by playing games, reading and chatting to one another. They remained calm, good-humoured and accepting of the situation. As most pupils respond positively and behave well, lessons generally run smoothly, pupils learn effectively and the school is an orderly community.
21. Pupils' personal development is very good. From an early age, they show developing self-confidence in performing before others and in talking to an audience. Although Year 2 pupils were a little shy in explaining why particular objects meant something special to them, Year 5 pupils confidently talked about themselves and their interests. Pupils show willingness to take responsibility for themselves and others. Year 6 pupils all act as monitors with a variety of duties, including responsibility for setting up ICT equipment, the organisation of resources and supporting younger children in the playground. Some pupils are involved in monitoring other pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtimes. They carry out their duties diligently and with marked maturity and confidence. In lessons, however, the pupils often have little opportunity to organise and take responsibility for their own learning or to decide how things are to be done.
22. Attendance is good with rates higher than those seen nationally. There is no unauthorised absence. Pupils are prompt to school and lessons begin on time.

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

23. As in the last inspection, the overall quality of teaching is good. The sustained strength in teaching for children in the reception and infant years explains in large part the pupils' good progress and the very good standards at the end of Year 2. Inconsistencies in the teaching for the junior pupils account for the slower rate of progress and the dip in standards compared with 1998.
24. In the school as a whole, the teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons seen, but the 58 per cent of good teaching, and additional four per cent of very good teaching, was not as high as judged in 1998. In the junior classes, no very good teaching was seen and there was not so much good teaching in English, mathematics and ICT as in the infant classes, where occasionally the teaching was very good.
25. In science and physical education, the quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Systematic teaching in science is helping pupils to acquire scientific knowledge and the skills of carrying out scientific enquiries. However, the teachers do not always extend the level of challenge for those pupils who show a good grasp of the subject matter and scientific processes. In physical education, the teachers are confident and give clear explanations to help the pupils improve their skills. This also typifies the good teaching in art and design for the infants and for some junior years, such as those in Year 5. Pupils are encouraged to explore and rehearse what they do to get the effect they want. In design and technology, geography, music and ICT, the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. In history, good teaching for the junior

pupils builds on pupils' wide general knowledge and fosters well the skills of historical enquiry.

26. In the reception class, consistently good teaching is fostering the children's interest in learning and helping them to achieve well. The teacher has much experience, enthusiasm and good expertise in working with young children. Three key features explain the consistency and positive impact of her teaching. Firstly, the teacher plans and prepares very carefully. She knows exactly what she wants the children to learn and makes effective use of well-resourced class, group and individual activities to achieve it. Secondly, she manages the children firmly but kindly. Her comment, "*I need some helpers. I think I'll need six*", was sufficient to quieten the class and gain everyone's attention as they sat up straight hoping to be chosen. The children are confident to ask questions and to make remarks as the teacher listens to them as equals and uses their ideas. As a result, the children are eager learners who are willing to have a try at new things and to apply what they already know. For example, several children were totally absorbed as they wove paper strips through card to simulate the scales on a fish. Although sticking on sequins was a fiddly manoeuvre, the children knew to put glue on the card first to position the sequins. Thirdly, the classroom is well organised, ordered, and displays and activities stimulate the children's interest. The children know exactly where things are and what they are expected to do as the teacher makes this very clear, although sometimes to the point of directing the children too much. A good initiative is the use of cards to tell the children the purpose of the activities. The children help each other to read them and know that even when working on their own, there is a set purpose and expected outcome to what they are doing.
27. These three features also characterise much of the teaching in other classes but not so consistently, as other aspects sometimes undermine their impact. The pupils are quick learners, especially in seeing what it is they have to do. They remember well what they are told and apply themselves to the task, but because the teachers do not always make explicit the strategies needed or the features that ensure a really good piece of work, the pupils do not necessarily work to the best of their ability or move on enough in their learning. This affects all the pupils, but especially the higher attaining pupils. The teachers' expectations of them are often too low. This accounts for some limited progress in writing. Although group targets are displayed in literacy and mathematics, not all the teachers refer to them either in lessons or in their marking. Too few teachers are using marking as a means to record what pupils have achieved and what they need to do next time to improve. Much of Year 4 pupils' work was unmarked until the summer term. In some classes, pupils' work is merely ticked or given comments such as "*Good work*", and occasionally incorrect work is overlooked. The best marking, and here Year 6 pupils have reaped the benefit, gives pupils clear, positive feedback on how well they have met targets.
28. All the teachers are well prepared for lessons and know what they want pupils to achieve, but the quality of their written planning varies. The best planning is well organised, identifies explicit learning outcomes, gives details of key questions, and lists the points to be made and activities for groups of pupils of differing attainment. Good examples are the plans for guided reading sessions which teachers are also using to record pupils' responses in the sessions. In a couple of sessions, the teachers made good reference to these responses. When the teacher said, "*Yes, you have deduced... remember?*", Year 6 pupils nodded and showed more confidence in offering their ideas about character's personalities.

29. Ongoing record keeping, and also reference to what individuals had done or needed to do, was less evident in other lessons even when the teachers worked with a group. Amendments in some plans showed the teachers' awareness of pupils having problems. For example, when Year 3 pupils showed difficulty in mastering the four times table, the teacher made good use of multiplication and division problems to develop their awareness of the numbers involved.
30. The teachers plan their lessons conscientiously and take time to collect and prepare resources. In a very good art and design lesson for Year 2 pupils, the pupils' made visible strides in their learning as the teacher provided them with a good range of materials to explore to re-create the textures seen in local buildings. The teacher's suggestions, often framed as questions, helped them to evaluate the effect and try other ideas.
31. In many lessons, the teachers of the junior pupils make effective use of computer-generated presentations and an interactive whiteboard to demonstrate and reinforce points. Year 4 pupils found it fun anticipating the second part of hyphenated words and then watching the answer appear on the whiteboard. Sometimes the potential of this equipment is wasted. A prime example was when Year 6 pupils did not use the whiteboard to demonstrate the effectiveness of their explanations of how to improve and enliven a page of text. Similarly, teachers seldom make use of other ICT equipment, especially as learning tools. For example, pupils listened as a class to tape recorded stories and music, but did not use tape recorders themselves.
32. The teachers have good relationships with their classes and the ready exchange of comments and repartee often adds to the flow of the lesson. Several teachers are skilled in pre-empting problems by setting clear expectations right from the start and by praising and thanking pupils at key times. However, in several lessons seen, the pace and pupils' learning slowed when pupils failed to keep to class codes of behaviour. This was sometimes because the pupils were really keen to answer but sometimes because they were beginning to lose interest or were acting inappropriately.
33. The teachers and support staff try hard to involve all pupils in discussions and class lessons. On occasion, the adults were extremely patient with and tolerant of pupils who lost their self-control or opted out when thwarted, even when this disrupted the learning of others. However, the teachers do not always consider how best to ensure that all pupils make the best progress. Too often, pupils with special educational needs complete the same work as others and rely on the adults to help them. When the adults take individual learning targets into account, and amend the task or provide relevant resources, the pupils often do well. For example, having sequenced pictures of plant growth, lower attaining Year 5 pupils' compiled and performed a movement session that showed their secure understanding of the growth cycle.
34. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good for the infant pupils and satisfactory for the juniors. The teachers follow the recommended format for daily literacy hours and mathematics lessons but the strongest part of most lessons seen was the initial class session. Here there was usually a very clear focus and good references to previous learning. Most mathematics lessons start with a quick moving session of mental mathematics that is often neatly linked to what is to follow. For example, the teacher's focus on counting in fives and tens prepared the Year 2 pupils very effectively for work on time. In a fast-moving literacy hour, Year 1 pupils made very good progress in using what they knew about letter patterns to spell words, write sentences and talk about ways to improve them. The teacher made very effective

use of word cards and letter fans to keep everyone involved. The “show me” technique allowed her to check on the pupils’ understanding and to keep the pace brisk.

35. A good feature of many lessons was the way the teachers asked the pupils to talk to partners about ideas and problems. For example, Year 6 pairs talked through the procedures they would use to work out the cost of furnishing different shaped rooms before explaining their choices to the class and showing how they would put it down on paper. The teacher then made good use of their calculations to reinforce their learning about place value as well as the use of mathematical signs, such as that for square metres.
36. Touches of flair and personal expertise often lift the pupils’ enthusiasm and learning. For example, the teacher gave much thought to preparing mathematical problems related to tie in with the Ancient Greek day for Year 5 pupils. This challenged them to apply their knowledge of mathematical procedures to work out the number of crew members needed for fleets of ships and the number of water vessels required if two sailors shared an amphora each per day. Having discussed adverbs with Year 2 pupils, the teacher used every opportunity throughout the day to refer to them whenever she gave instructions or to praise them, as in, “*You came **quietly** onto the carpet. Well done.*” As a result, the pupils had a secure understanding of the term and its function.
37. A key factor why the quality of teaching in English and mathematics is not stronger is that the teachers do not all make the most productive use of the time at the end of lessons to review with pupils what they have learnt. In a good mathematics lesson, the teacher used Year 4 pupils’ examples to draw their attention to the patterns and number relationships when they multiplied by nine. All the pupils saw the relevance of this because of the teacher’s questions and demonstrated highlighting of key numbers. However, the sharing of Year 5 pupils’ petitions did not reinforce enough how pupils’ “good words” need to be linked to stylistic features in order to exaggerate, argue and present evidence effectively. In a few lessons, the session was too brief. The lack of time meant that the teacher had to curtail useful questioning to Year 1 pupils about which pots to use to fill others, yet it was clear that the pupils needed much more time to realise the links between shape and capacity. Sometimes, teachers talk about ways for pupils to follow up the lesson at home. The informality means that pupils are not always sure whether they are expected to do the homework or not.

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

38. The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory overall and good in the reception class. As in the last inspection, the curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the pupils’ needs. It is effective in ensuring the school meets most of its aims, particularly in helping pupils to “*develop lively, enquiring minds, obtain the ability to argue rationally and to apply themselves to tasks and physical skills.*” One aim that is not achieved is “*to secure the highest achievement attainable for each pupil*” as the curriculum does not consistently challenge or get the best out of the higher attaining pupils.

39. The curriculum for the reception children closely follows national guidance. It is well planned, with the systematic development of the children's skills and knowledge in all six areas of learning. The planning identifies clearly what the children are to learn and how this links with the standards expected at the end of the reception year. Over the year the children experience a good range of activities, especially in creative development where the teacher has personal expertise. Good emphasis is given to the children's personal, social and emotional development as well as learning through play and direct experience. The use of the outdoors is a weak strand. The lack of a secure outdoor area and relevant resources curtails the children's outside experiences. The children are gradually introduced to elements of the daily literacy hour and mathematics lesson so they are well prepared for work in Year 1.
40. In the infant and junior years, the curriculum meets all the requirements of the National Curriculum. In some aspects, however, superficial coverage is reflected in gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge. For example, Year 6 pupils have little expertise in using different ICT equipment in the areas of control and modelling. At present, the focus on raising standards in subjects through ICT is minimising the emphasis needed to develop pupils' ICT skills, especially their keyboard and control and monitoring skills. Similarly in English, there is little acknowledgement of the provision to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. While many good cross curricular links are made in writing, such as writing letters as an evacuee as part of work in history, the teachers make little use of chances to foster pupils' oral skills through role-play, debates and formal presentations. This is because the school has focussed on the National Literacy and Early Literacy Support programmes as the basis for the English curriculum. Although some work is done to develop pupils' skills in drafting and revising their work, little as yet is done using ICT. Similarly, little use is made of the school library to develop pupils' facility in using information texts. In mathematics, unnecessary repetition of some aspects of number limits the curriculum especially for the younger junior pupils.
41. Although there have been numerous changes in curriculum leadership since the last inspection, subject policies and programmes of work have been updated to take account of recent national guidelines. They give the teachers a clear view of which topics and themes are to be taught and when. The teachers' weekly plans are detailed and often make specific reference to key learning targets. Subject co-ordinators regularly monitor other teachers' planning to ensure that National Curriculum requirements are met. However, they have little information from the monitoring of classroom practice to identify where curriculum changes need to be made.
42. All pupils have full access to the curriculum. The one pupil who has English as an additional language is helped in class by the teacher and other pupils, who repeat and rephrase sentences as needed. Those pupils with special educational needs are supported in class and the school ensures that those with statements of special need receive their entitlement of support from a learning assistant. Their comments and guidance often ensure that pupils take an active part in discussions and succeed in completing the task set. However, as teachers' planning does not always refer to individual needs and targets, there are times when the task is too difficult for pupils with special needs to tackle successfully on their own. The teachers do not always provide extra or amended resources to ensure that pupils can work as independently as possible.

43. The school makes good use of tests and assessments to identify those pupils who need additional help. The provision of booster classes for Year 6 pupils on the cusp of Levels 4 and 5, as well as Levels 3 and 4, is a good strategy to help raise overall standards. Likewise, the use of materials in English and mathematics to bridge Years 6 and 7 is an effective way to smooth pupils' transition to secondary school. Holy Family has a well-established liaison with the secondary school and pupils benefit from curriculum days at the school and local centres. The school offers placements to trainee teachers and also those on work experience.
44. In the questionnaire returns, the lowest area of agreement was that the school offers an interesting range of activities outside lessons. Over the year, the school offers a satisfactory number and range of activities but, as parents commented, they tend to be for older junior pupils. There is very little for the younger junior and infant pupils. As well as sessions in football, netball, art and ICT, there are opportunities for some pupils to learn to play the recorder, play chess and attend a prayer group. The school also enters teams in the Darlington Schools Swimming Gala as well as athletics, cross country, hockey and table tennis competitions. Parents welcomed the frequent educational visits for their children to places such as Eden Camp and the local park.
45. As in the last inspection, the overall provision for pupils' personal development is very good. Parents value the way the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. The school gives careful consideration to pupils' personal, social and health education. The structured, whole-school programme of activities and lessons, as part of the religious education and science curriculum, promotes pupils' learning about personal safety, keeping healthy and respect for one another. The school makes effective use of specialist expertise to cover sex education and the dangers of drugs misuse.
46. The school is an inclusive community where each pupil is valued. Christian values of care, respect and cooperation underpin the curriculum and lie at the heart of the strong, very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
47. A strong aspect of the provision for pupils' spiritual development is the way the adults celebrate the pupils' achievements as part of lessons and school gatherings. In assemblies, the headteacher takes the lead in acknowledging the efforts and successes of others. The issuing of certificates and public praise does much to raise pupils' self-esteem. A pupil commented, *"It feels good when everyone else knows you've done well"*. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on aspects important to them and also common values. During one assembly, Year 5 pupils led the school in considering how war evacuees must have felt and the range of emotions experienced by the families who took in other children. In some lessons, the pupils were encouraged to reflect on their own learning but this is not consistent.
48. All the staff promote a strong moral code very effectively in all aspects of school life. The teachers take time to discuss with pupils what is right and wrong and the impact of their actions on others. Pupils are encouraged and expected to do the right thing such as saying sorry when there are upsets or problems. Opportunities are used in religious education, geography, history and English to explore environmental issues such as pollution and moral issues including vivisection and equality of opportunity. Teachers also provide regular opportunities during personal, social and health education lessons for pupils to discuss problems and concerns. Bullying and racism are discussed. One Year 6 pupil remarked *"....they are just the same as us, maybe a different coloured skin or religion but I would treat them as one of us."*

49. The headteacher knows all the pupils and encourages them to care for and help one another. The teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work together and to talk things through as partners. They also allocate responsibilities such as distributing materials in lessons and keeping classrooms tidy. Year 6 pupils share in the running of the school by organising class registers, helping in the dining room and monitoring other pupils as they move around school. Each Year 6 pupil takes care of a particular child at the start of the school year. Parents particularly valued this as their children found it easy to settle at school knowing they had a "special friend". The school also develops the pupils' understanding of citizenship through links with other agencies, including fund-raising for charities and projects with local businesses.
50. The provision is satisfactory for pupils' cultural development. Although the school does much to make pupils aware of their own and local heritage, it does not do enough to develop their understanding of life in a multi-cultural society. Visits to local museums, theatres and places of interest are built into the curriculum and pupils make a study of the history and geography of Cockerton. Close links with the Church ensure pupils develop a good knowledge of Catholic traditions and parish culture. However, pupils gain little awareness of other cultural values or of other faiths. Pupils look at the work of other artists, including Mondrian, Kandinsky and David Hockney, but there is little representation from non-Western societies.

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

51. As in the last inspection, the school "*has a strong atmosphere of caring*" and provides good, effective personal support for pupils. The school successfully meets its aim "*to create a happy and secure environment*" where pupils are valued as individuals. Parents agree that the school upholds family values and reinforces the principles and standards that they themselves hold. A major contributing factor in the quality of the support for pupils is the staff's knowledge of the pupils, their circumstances and individual needs. The headteacher and staff genuinely care about the pupils and have their best interests at heart. Nevertheless, much is informal rather than planned, especially in the use of assessment to guide changes to the curriculum.
52. The health and safety concerns raised in the last inspection have been dealt with and the school has good procedures to ensure the welfare and inclusion of pupils. Safe practices are promoted in and around school and governors and staff make regular checks of the premises to identify potential hazards. The good practice in assessing risks prior to visits has not been applied fully to cover work in subjects and themes. However, good examples of where this was considered were the letters to parents to ask about possible allergies when the reception children used different soap mixtures to blow bubbles and to inform them of the school's procedures when their children access information on the Internet.
53. The school has an adequate number of staff who are trained to administer first aid, and procedures are well established to deal with accidents. The school complies with statutory local education authority child protection procedures and the headteacher, as the named person with responsibility, has good contact with outside agencies.
54. The inclusion of personal, social and health education in the curriculum contributes much to the pupils' personal development and their awareness of personal safety, well-being and sense of community. In two sessions seen, junior pupils discussed how they might cooperate to make the best use of everyone's skills and cope with differing personalities and some pupils' difficulties in controlling their emotions and

behaviour. Although the reception class teacher has good records of the children's progress in personal, social and emotional development, there is no agreed system in other classes. Pupils comment on their own achievements and hopes, but little is done to record this formally or to use samples of work as indicators of personal achievement.

55. The school has effective procedures to monitor and promote pupils' good behaviour and eliminate oppressive behaviour. The merit system works well, is understood by pupils and appreciated by parents, who are proud to see their children receive certificates in school assemblies for good conduct as well as for academic achievement. Older pupils share in the responsibility of monitoring the behaviour of the younger ones and helping them to socialise with others.
56. The teachers and support staff work hard to include all pupils in lessons and classroom life. The school has an agreed policy to promote race equality and in practice, pupils show interest and support for others. Although no real incidents of harassment or bullying were seen during the inspection, the outbursts and challenging behaviour of a small number of pupils occasionally upset others in the class. Support staff provide sensitive guidance for pupils with emotional and behavioural problems and enable them to succeed in their work. Although the school meets the requirements in pupils' statements of special educational need and the content of individual behaviour plans, it has provided little extra to help pupils cope, such as agreeing procedures and providing space for pupils to withdraw to and take time to calm themselves or to work without distractions. Agreed sanctions to deal with incidents are rarely used and there have been no exclusions since the last inspection.
57. The school provides satisfactory support for pupils with special educational needs. The co-ordinator and teacher review pupils' individual educational plans regularly and modify them in response to how far the targets have been met. However, the absence of an organised administrative system makes it difficult to track a pupil's progress over time. The school has effective liaison with local educational authority personnel, including two learning support teachers who work each week with individual to provide for their particular needs.
58. There are no particular systems to support pupils who have English as an additional language other than general support from teachers and other pupils. This support is proving effective in helping one child with English as an additional language to develop skills in speaking English.
59. The school has good measures to ensure that pupils' attendance is carefully monitored and that all absence is explained. The school and parents work hand in hand and as a result, there is hardly any need to follow up absence.
60. The procedures to assess the pupils' attainment and progress meet statutory requirements and are satisfactory overall. Much has been done to improve the procedures to track the pupils' attainment and progress through school, and also to assess regularly the pupils' progress against agreed targets. The school makes effective use of the information from the tests done at the start and end of the reception year to indicate where value has been added. It is not using available information from other year groups to its full potential to indicate where value is added or to identify trends and areas to monitor.



61. The school has followed others in using the information from tests to indicate possible outcomes at the end of Years 2 and 6 and to set targets for classes and groups of pupils of differing attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. This begins in the reception class where the teacher reminds the children of their individual targets, such as using capital letters at the start of a sentence. Reminders and references are not as evident in other classes.
62. The school is making good use of national guidance to set pupils targets in mental mathematics as well as other aspects of numeracy. The co-ordinator is involving Year 6 pupils in this process. In science, the record keeping and assessment systems are less well structured and rely on the teachers to assess pupils' attainment at the end of each unit of work.
63. The teachers do not make the best use of assessment systems to help them pinpoint where changes need to be made. The teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their planning and also track what the pupils have done but have less to show what pupils need to learn next. In English, a good initiative is the structured planning and assessment records for guided reading sessions. Teachers' comments on pupils' responses give useful information on how well the objectives were met for each session. Other reading records give little information apart from pupils' progress through the reading scheme or the books pupils choose. Similarly in writing, samples of pupils' work each term give a good picture of what has been done, and guidance on levels of attainment, but not accumulating information on where the strengths and weaknesses are. As a result, the teachers and co-ordinator have little to help them identify where curriculum changes are justified.
64. The school has been slower than many to analyse pupils' performance in the national and optional tests to identify where pupils have experienced difficulties in English, mathematics and science and to show where changes are needed in the curriculum and teaching and learning. A good start has been made in mathematics. During the inspection, additional work on time with the Year 2 pupils was helping to raise pupils' understanding in aspects they had answered wrongly or omitted in the recent tests.

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

65. The school has sustained the good, positive partnership with parents judged in the last inspection. Parents are supportive of, and loyal to the school. They take a keen interest in the education of their children. The school's well-established partnership with parents also extends into the wider Church community and has a positive impact on pupils' learning and the life of the school.
66. Parents' views of the school are largely positive. In their responses to the questionnaire and in discussion with inspectors, parents were very positive about the quality of teaching, the school's expectations of their children and the leadership and management of the school. They feel that their children are making good progress and that the school is helping them to become mature and responsible. Almost all parents feel that the staff are approachable. Parents agree that their children like school and appreciate the 'family' atmosphere. The parents also feel that their children are well supported. Parents at the meeting commented that their children were well prepared for secondary education.

67. A significant minority of parents raised some concerns in comments written on the questionnaires, in letters and at the meeting with inspectors. Parents at the meeting commented on the fact that changes in staffing had caused disruption to their children's learning even though the school had tried to minimise it. Many parents do not agree that their children are given the right amount of work to do at home and others are unclear about the school's homework policy. A large number of parents are unsatisfied with the range of activities provided outside lessons, especially for their younger children. There is also some dissatisfaction about information on their children's progress and a few parents do not feel that the school works closely enough with them.
68. The inspection team agrees with the positive views of parents, although the higher attaining pupils do not always make best progress. The team also find some merit in the parents' concerns. The homework policy is not consistently applied. Although pupils in some classes take work home regularly, in most classes the arrangements are too informal. The teachers' suggestions are not always seen as work to be done. The older junior pupils have the opportunity to take part in a fair range of additional activities but there is nothing for the younger pupils. However, the school arranges a good number of educational visits for all year groups. Parents praised this development and particularly mentioned the delight of their reception children in looking at trees in the nearby park.
69. The school makes good provision for keeping parents informed about their children's progress and makes every effort to work closely with them. Formal consultation evenings are held each term and parents have opportunities to talk to staff at the beginning and end of each day. The annual reports to parents on their children's progress are satisfactory and meet requirements. Although a little sketchy, they give an overview of what the pupils can do. Those for the reception year children do not indicate how well the children do in relation to the standard expected for their age.
70. Good links between school and parents begin with the school's attractive brochure and very informative website. The inclusion of photographs and pupils' work and comments brings the school alive. There is also a useful programme of meetings and visits for parents of the reception year children. Although the Foundation Stage has not been acknowledged within the school brochure, the teacher gives the parents clear information about it and how they may help their children, especially with reading. During the inspection, parents' willingness to help was evident in the way they supplied photographs of their children as babies, and completed the bear's diary when their child brought Teddy home.
71. The school provides advance information on the curriculum for each year group and class topics. This gives parents a clear picture of what their children are doing in school. A news board in school highlights coming events, such as the magazine compiled by pupils, but is not best placed to ensure all parents see it. Reading records provide a useful means of communication between home and school but their use varies. Some parents and teachers use them to exchange comments and concerns but in others they merely record the titles of books read. The format of the record book limits extensive communication.
72. Almost all parents sign the home-school agreement, and parents largely keep to their commitment by bringing their children to school on time and instilling in them a respect for the teachers and a willingness to learn.

73. Parents and carers are welcome in school, and weekly assemblies attract large numbers of parents, carers and grandparents. During the inspection, 60 family members supported an assembly presented by Year 5 pupils. A few parents and other friends of the school provide useful help in classrooms and at extra-curricular activities, but this is limited. The school does not make enough of the offers of help from parents or the expertise and willingness of parents to support the children at school and at home.
74. The strong, active Parents and Friends Association organises social events and raises substantial funds to purchase resources for the school. Recent acquisitions have included interactive whiteboards, a public address system, library books and a video recorder.

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

75. As in the last inspection, the headteacher's good, caring leadership sets the tone for the school. He is highly committed to the pupils and the community and has sustained the positive, family ethos and the good will of the staff and parents during a period of major change since the last inspection. Five out of the seven class teachers in 1998 have since left, and in the last two years there have been six staffing changes as well as periods of staff absence. These changes have not only disrupted the programme of school improvement but also posed significant problems in strategic planning and management. The work done this year to review policies, as well as the commitment of the staff and their developing expertise in strategic planning, place the school in a good position to move forward.
76. The overall quality of school management is satisfactory. Governors, headteacher and staff work well together to ensure the school meets requirements and meets its mission statement in large part. The school has sustained the strengths recognised in 1998 in its provision for spiritual development and productive links with parents, the Church and parish. Nevertheless, gaps in management expertise, especially in the critical evaluation of the work of the school, lessen the impact and effectiveness of action to improve the quality of what is offered. The school is not meeting its aim to help all pupils develop to their full potential.
77. Although improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall, initial improvement was very good. In the two years after the inspection, the school built on its success. Movements in staffing enhanced the quality of provision, especially in the infant classes. The award of Beacon status in January 2001 was recognition of the school's then high standards and proven expertise in leadership and management. The promotion to other schools of key subject leaders placed three new teachers in the junior classes from September 2000. It is much to the credit of the head and deputy headteacher that "excellent staff relationships" were sustained and acknowledged in the award of Investors in People in November 2001. However, further staffing changes, together with a period of absence of the headteacher, have slowed the pace of change. The wish for teachers to develop work with their own classes has placed the onus on the headteacher to share practice with other schools and to develop the initiatives arising from being a Beacon school.
78. Good improvement has been made in dealing with the one key issue from the last inspection. An increase in the range of resources, the setting up of an ICT suite, and the allocation of set periods for the teaching of ICT, have all led to a widening of the ICT curriculum and to an acceleration in pupils' progress. In turn this has raised standards. The appointment of an experienced ICT co-ordinator from April 2002 has

added impetus to the programme of development. Much has also been done to good effect in the last few years to make the use of ICT an integral part of school life. For example, the school has a website, interactive whiteboards have been installed in the junior classrooms and ICT programs are used to store school information and produce documentation. In the autumn term, as part of the program of work as a Beacon school, Holy Family is to host an ICT day to demonstrate the use of the interactive whiteboards.

79. The headteacher shoulders too much. He holds subject leadership as well as leading Beacon work and deals with many day-to-day tasks, such as answering the main door. The school runs smoothly but the building of a new school office is a useful opportunity to review the delegation of administrative and pastoral duties and the procedures which currently absorb so much of the headteacher's time. It also presents the chance to draw on offers of help from parents and parishioners.
80. The headteacher's detailed statement produced for the inspection gave a comprehensive picture of the school's perspective and an honest appraisal of the factors that account for the current situation. The inspection has confirmed much that the headteacher identified as areas for improvement. However, the governors, headteacher and subject co-ordinators have analysed and evaluated little in depth. All are working on their areas of school improvement but have not questioned their impact enough. The limited programme of monitoring of teaching and learning has provided few pointers to where common and individual strengths and weaknesses lie. Consequently, the governors and senior managers have a more positive view of how well the school is doing than is warranted.
81. Since September 1999 there have been seven changes of teacher and subject leadership. Governors have prudently used the appointment of new teachers to strengthen curriculum expertise and ensure the school has an adequate number of qualified teachers. The work of the mathematics and ICT co-ordinators, both appointed this school year, is already having a positive effect on the quality of the curriculum. Both are looking with "fresh eyes" at standards and identifying where there are gaps in the pupils' learning. This is helping them to draw up more focussed action plans and to advise other staff on needed changes of emphasis. The ICT co-ordinator has given good leadership in setting the direction and developing a more systematic approach to the use of the ICT suite. However, she, like other co-ordinators has had little chance to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning other than through informal monitoring of displayed work and teachers' planning.
82. The overall quality of subject leadership and management is satisfactory. Co-ordinators have dealt with many of the organisational and procedural aspects, such as audits of resources and updating of policies that are informing and guiding teachers' work. This work means the school is now well placed to concentrate on improving the quality of teaching and learning and on raising standards through agreed plans of action. However, few co-ordinators have experience and well-honed skills in monitoring and evaluating critically and constructively the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility in all year groups. The school rightly includes this as a key part of their development programme for the next school year. However, the school development plan does not include details of how this will be achieved nor of any professional development needed. Teachers new to the school receive good personal support and professional guidance from colleagues, and in particular from the deputy headteacher.

83. The school improvement plan for 2002/3 lacks clear focus in relation to agreed targets and aims. The audit of 2001/2 lists what was done but does not evaluate the impact on standards or the quality of the pupils' experience. As a result, relevant priorities are identified in numeracy, literacy, ICT and science, but are too general to show precisely what is intended. For example, the literacy action plan for this year is very similar to that from last year. It gives little indication of how the school intends to meet the agreed target of 90 per cent Level 4 attainment in the 2003 national tests. There is little to justify the allocation of £5000 and this makes it difficult for governors to assess the effectiveness and value of any action taken. The planned acquisition of interactive whiteboards for the infant classes is not included or costed in the ICT plan. Governors have little information to assess the efficacy of their purchase. The use of the whiteboards in the junior classrooms is not being monitored to determine their impact on the quality of teaching and learning. In a few lessons seen, the whiteboards acted only as projection screens whereas in others, teachers made effective use of the functions and features to enliven learning and make teaching points clear.
84. The governors are very supportive of the school. Many are new to governance but have a good awareness of the school from regular visits, links with subjects and involvement in school life. Personal and professional expertise is being used effectively in the work of committees, especially in monitoring the school's finances and ensuring that statutory requirements are met, particularly in Performance Management, health and safety and special educational needs. The governors use information from the headteacher, the local education authority and national data to compare the school with others. They have not been as questioning or as critical as is needed to pinpoint the factors that account for the dip in standards in the last two years and then to decide the direction for the school and related targets.
85. Financial planning and management are satisfactory. The school receives slightly more per pupil than most primaries but this includes national grants and also funding to cover the costs of support assistants to work with a higher than average number of pupils with statements of special educational need. Grants are used as appropriate, such as funding booster classes for Year 6 pupils, and governors seek best value in goods and services. The governing body has agreed to lower spending this year in some areas, such as staff development, to enable the school to accrue reserves and put it in a stronger position to meet the projected high costs of a replacement heating system. This is a worthwhile course of action as breakdowns in the system last winter resulted in the school being closed for a few days while repairs were carried out.
86. The management of special educational needs is satisfactory. The co-ordinator carries out her duties conscientiously and maintains effective contacts with staff, parents and outside agencies. She is supported well by the nominated governor who is also employed in the school as a learning support assistant. However, the paperwork is rather disorganised and little is done to develop the skills of the support staff in preparing materials and gathering resources to enable pupils to be as independent as possible in lessons.
87. The introduction of the Foundation Stage has been well managed and the school follows national guidance in large part. The reception teacher's clear sense of purpose directs her work with the children and parents. and the need to develop the outdoor curriculum is not an aspect in the school improvement plan. While the governors allocate some hours of support from a learning assistant, the class does not benefit from full time support as seen in many other schools where the reception

class numbers thirty. There is also little in the school development plan to indicate how the use of the outdoors is to be developed.

88. The school buildings are very clean and well maintained. The caretaker takes pride in his work and deals with any concerns, such as damage from occasional vandalism and misuse of the school grounds. Although some classrooms are untidy and resources are poorly stored and organised, the school has an adequate number and range in most subjects to meet pupils' and teachers' needs. There are a few gaps in ICT, including sensing equipment to use in science. The library remains an area for development. The current arrangement does not create an appropriate ambience or space for pupils to carry out research.
89. The school gives satisfactory value for money. Although standards are very good at the end of Year 2, they are not as good as those of similar schools at the end of Year 6. The quality of education is good but there are areas for improvement in the teaching in the junior years.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

90. In order to raise standards and build on improvements to date, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- strengthen the quality of teaching in the junior classes by sharing existing good practice in the teaching of reading, writing, mathematics and science, raising teachers' expectations of what the pupils can achieve, and improving teachers' skills and expertise in developing pupils' subject skills;  
(paragraphs 2, 5, 13, 24, 27, 33, 37, 42, 86, 120, 125, 141)
- raise the challenge for the higher attaining pupils by ensuring that the teachers plan work for them that builds on what they already know and can do and which provides them with opportunities to follow up their own ideas and lines of enquiry;  
(paragraphs 2, 3, 5, 13, 25, 114, 132, 139, 143, 173)
- raise standards in writing by ensuring that all staff implement fully the agreed policies on handwriting, spelling and presentation, and use marking more consistently to help pupils see what they have done well and how they can improve next time;  
(paragraphs 11, 27, 115, 116, 123, 135, 143, 159, 166)
- analyse more rigorously the information from performance data, assessments and evaluations of teaching and learning to identify exactly where improvements need to be made and how they are best achieved;  
(paragraphs 2, 29, 60, 63, 64, 76, 80, 84, 126, 132, 143, 150, 170, 172, 176, 181)
- strengthen the effectiveness of subject co-ordinators in raising standards by clarifying what is expected of them and providing them with the leadership and management skills, resources and time to carry it out. \*  
(paragraphs 41, 76, 81, 82, 126, 136, 155, 160)

In drawing up their action plan, the governors may wish to include the following minor issues:

- the lack of a safe, secure area for the reception year children and resources to develop the use of the outdoors curriculum;  
(paragraphs 39, 87, 93, 107)\*
- the poor location and organisation of the library.  
(paragraphs 40, 88, 121, 136, 158)

\* denotes aspects that are already included in the school's development plan.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

52

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

26

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	2	30	20	0	0	0
Percentage	0	4	58	38	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

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	213
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	15

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR-Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	39

#### English as an additional language

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

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.7

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0



National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	12	16	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	12	12
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	28	28	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100(96)	100(96)	100(96)
	National	84(83)	89(88)	89(88)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	12	12
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	28	28	28
Percentage of pupils	School	100(96)	100(96)	100(96)
	National	85(84)	89(88)	89(88)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	14	14	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	9	12
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	23	23	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82(86)	82(86)	93(90)
	National	75(75)	71(72)	87(85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	7	9	11
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	21	23	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	75(90)	82(86)	89(95)
	National	72(70)	74(72)	82(79)

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	182
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

*This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.93
Average class size	30.43

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	182

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	N/A
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	N/A
Total number of education support staff	N/A
Total aggregate hours worked per week	N/A
Number of pupils per FTE adult	N/A

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	534,825
Total expenditure	525,858
Expenditure per pupil	2,481
Balance brought forward from previous year	18,079
Balance carried forward to next year	27,046

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

**Questionnaire return rate 52.6%**

Number of questionnaires sent out

213

Number of questionnaires returned

112

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	32	3	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	53	37	5	2	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	44	4	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	51	16	3	1
The teaching is good.	64	30	3	2	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	42	11	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73	24	1	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	28	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	41	45	9	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	61	36	2	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	35	5	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	36	27	8	6

## **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**

91. Children join the reception class on a full time basis in September and January. At the time of the inspection there were 30 children in the class. On entry, most show the knowledge, skills and understanding expected for their age. They make good progress overall because of consistently good teaching and the good range of experiences, which the children find fun. By the end of the reception year, their attainment in communication, language and literacy is good. Their speaking and listening skills are very good, along with their personal, social and emotional development. Over the year, they make good progress to achieve, and some to exceed, the standard expected in mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and also physical development. Children with special educational needs make good progress towards their targets, and the child who has English as an additional language is making good progress in understanding and speaking English, because of the support of the adults and the good visual and practical support available.
92. The strong teamwork between the class teacher and other adults who sometimes work with the reception children adds to the quality of the teaching. The adults provide good role models and the children respond well to them. Occasionally however, the adults direct the children too much and curtail their choices in what to do and how to do it. The spacious classroom and good range of resources are used well but the lack of a designated safe outdoor area limits the children's experiences. For example, the children have no access to wheeled toys or to outdoor apparatus to develop their climbing and balancing skills.

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

93. Good teaching, and particularly the supportive and warm encouragement, directly accounts for the children's good achievement. By the end of the reception year, many of the children act in a self-assured way that is more typical of children a year or two older. They are keen to learn and have a good understanding of their own abilities. The teacher has high expectations of the children and reminds them frequently of how well they are doing and what they need to do. The children are often very enthusiastic and exuberant. When the teacher produced a poster of different toys they could not contain themselves in pointing out what they could see. In all the sessions seen, the children concentrated well even when they were sitting on the carpet for long periods.
94. The children are mature in their skills to organise themselves and tidy things away. For instance, having finished what they were making, a few carefully collected up unused sequins "for the next time". Boys and girls share equipment, follow classroom routines and rules, take turns and get on very well together. They are considerate towards each other, making space for others to sit down and politely saying "Please" and "Thank you" when they need and receive help.
95. The children take care of their own personal needs and when getting undressed for physical education sessions, manage zips, buttons, buckles and laces with ease. They lay their clothes down neatly and sensibly line up ready to go to the hall. When getting dressed again, one child could not fasten her laces but another helped and they managed together. Such natural good relationships also extend to their links with

older pupils and adults. The children enjoy playing with the older junior pupils and also talking to adults about what they have done. They are quick to respond to praise and want to do their best when the teacher says, "Show me which group is ready."

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

96. By the end of the reception year, many have achieved the expected standard for their age and a good number have exceeded it and are working towards Level 1, and higher in some cases in reading, of the National Curriculum. Good teaching extends and develops the children's good language skills and the children generally achieve well. The teacher encourages them to talk about themselves and to explain what they have done. They in turn, listen attentively to her and each other, and are quick to respond and make their own suggestions. Although a few are so eager that they talk over others, most are articulate, fluent speakers who confidently ask questions, initiate conversations and use a wide vocabulary, not only when talking with adults but also among themselves. For instance, when remembering their first day at school, the children referred to feeling "nervous", "worried" and "scared".
97. The teacher has gradually introduced the children to the format of the literacy hour, which is planned carefully to meet their needs. The children much enjoy listening to stories and join in with key phrases as well as rhymes and songs. When reading the story "This is the bear and the scary night" the majority were able to predict rhyming words on each page. Most recognise and name letters of the alphabet. The use of games such as sorting objects by their initial sounds showed that many correctly distinguished between "b" and "d". Most are already reading independently and the higher attaining children have a very good sight vocabulary. They read with good expression and talk excitedly about favourite stories. A wide range of books is on offer in the classroom and children take books home regularly. The willingness of parents to read with their children and to help them learn new words helps considerably in furthering the children's progress and particularly their understanding of the story content.
98. All the children, including those with special needs and the child with English as an additional language, are making good progress in writing. They are motivated to write as the teacher surrounds them with print, such as instructions for activities, and grabs their interest with activities including making books, using small whiteboards and completing "Teddy's adventures" when the toy bear goes home with them. The children are taught how to form lower and upper case letters correctly, and regular practice ensures the children learn how to write their full name and the most common words. A few children still reverse some letters or start from the bottom but all are willing writers. Most pupils are writing sentences and using capital letters and full stops correctly. They have a go at spelling and use their knowledge of letter sounds well; for example, "gmb" (game-boy) and "partee" (party).

### **Mathematical development**

99. The children get off to a sound start and by the end of the reception year their achievement is generally as expected for their age. A small number are doing better, especially in number and counting. A feature of the good teaching is the daily focus on counting routines and number rhymes that are often used as means of gaining everyone's attention. The children develop a good sense of number sequence. They count confidently to 20, and count forwards and backwards in tens to 100. The repetition of class chanting of numbers helps the less mature children to acquire an awareness of number order, but the teacher knows the children well and sets

challenges that stretch the higher attaining children too. For example, when most of the class were focussing on number to ten, the teacher told one child, *"I'm holding a number in my head - it is 23, can you give me the number which is one more?"*. The higher attaining children also learn how to record simple calculations using relevant mathematical symbols.

100. All the children enjoy playing number games. They were highly involved when asked to move lily pads on a number line and to find frogs with the corresponding number. Similarly, they concentrated hard when using a counting program on the computer.
101. The children develop a sound understanding of mathematical terms to do with shape, space and measures. The teacher makes effective use of practical activities including baking and play with water and sand to foster the children's awareness of different quantities. The children recognise and name a range of two-dimensional shapes and create simple repeating patterns with them. Having discussed their favourite shape, they made a simple block graph to record their choices.

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

102. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Over the year, the teacher provides a wide variety of materials to stimulate the children's interest and extend their knowledge of the world around them. A good feature is the prominent display of a world map to show the location of Italy, the home country of one child, and the sharing of some Italian words and aspects of culture. The children make good progress and many have already met the standard expected by the end of the reception year. Photographs and attractive displays in and around the classroom record what the children have learnt such as the properties of the materials used by the *'Three Little Pigs'* to build their homes. However, there is less around the room to prompt the children's skills in exploration and investigation. When looking at shells through magnifying glasses, the children were fascinated to see the swirls and patterns.
103. The teacher shows flair in preparing well-structured, stimulating, practical activities and first-hand experiences that encourage the children to observe, carry out simple experiments and answer questions. The children have looked at the phases in growing beans and seen what happens when they blow into different mixtures of soap and water. In discussing this, the children referred to "fair test" and "investigation" showing a developing awareness of scientific procedures and terms. The children have good general knowledge and are quick to make connections. For example, several commented at length on what they could and could not do when they were younger. Black and white photographs caused lively discussion because some children know that such photographs may indicate "a long time ago". The children have a good sense of time and place. They have drawn simple maps of their journey to school and chatted informatively about what they saw on their coach journey to the Blue Reef Aquarium.
104. The children have many opportunities to use the computer keyboard and mouse and most are confident to use different programs and print their work. When they were learning how to give instructions to a programmable floor toy, and had several false starts, they realised that the tiles had to be completely flat for the robot to work effectively.



105. Over time, the children have learnt how to use different tools and resources to make different objects. Having designed their own sunglasses, they used scissors carefully to trim the frames and used glue to fix sequins and feathers. They take a keen interest in what they do. For example, in choosing cellophane for the lenses, one child held it up and said, "*The world is all purple but I can see you*".

### **Physical Development**

106. The children make good progress in this area of learning as a result of good teaching. They learn to move with increasing confidence, balance and control and show a good awareness of space and how to handle tools safely and competently. The majority are on track to exceed the standard expected. However, one area for development is the lack of daily access to the outdoors other than at school playtimes and lunchtimes. Although the children have access to some play equipment, this does not provide the wide range of outdoor experiences recommended for children of this age.
107. The good size of the classroom allows the children some freedom of movement and sessions in the school hall using the apparatus foster their skills in running, jumping, balancing and climbing. In a movement session, the children kept to their own space, ran forwards and backwards, and showed appropriate control and co-ordination when told to 'Freeze'. They competently manipulated a tennis ball, firstly by taking it for a walk over their bodies, then by rolling it to a partner and then aiming it at a target.
108. The children develop good skills in handling tools, including pencils, scissors, brushes and threading laces. The teacher reminds them of health and safety issues and the children show a good awareness of the need to be careful.

### **Creative development**

109. Over the year, the children take part in a range of activities. They have regular music lessons and sessions when they draw, paint and make models. Many of these activities are linked to ongoing themes and are well planned to introduce particular techniques and new resources. The teaching is good and all the children make good progress. The teacher's good expertise and personal enthusiasm shines through in what the children do and is most evident in the development of their drawings. Several children include many details in their drawings of people and items, and take care when colouring to find colours that match closely.
110. The teacher encourages the children to explore colour and texture and to talk about their observations. They have learnt how to combine different materials and used collage techniques to create various scenes from stories, including "Goldilocks and the three bears" and "Elmer the elephant". The children have learnt how to mix colours and achieve different colour shades, as in their pictures painted in shades of blue.
111. The children develop in confidence as they try out new ideas with adults working alongside them and talking to them about their work. For example, when the children were modelling fish and starfish out of clay, the teacher's comments and questions encouraged them to try different processes and to really explore what the clay offered. Other children independently created their own underwater scenes using a computer program. The encouragement and judicious guidance of a classroom assistant ensured a child with special educational needs succeeded in weaving a paper fish.

112. The children learn to explore sounds and to play different percussion instruments. They were sensible in their ideas of how to represent the sounds in the story "We're going on a bear hunt". They sing a range of songs from memory and many play a steady beat.

## ENGLISH

113. Standards are well above average at the end of Year 2 but average at the end of Year 6. While nearly all Year 2 pupils have reached at least the level expected for their age in both reading and writing, only four out of five Year 6 pupils have done so. As seen in the test results in 2001, standards in reading are higher than in writing. Writing standards have fallen compared with last year's test results in Years 2 and 6, with only a few pupils doing well for their age. A scrutiny of pupils' work indicates a significant number of pupils, especially the higher attainers, have not realised the potential in writing shown in the autumn term. This partly explains why overall standards are not as good at the end of Year 6 as at the time of the last inspection. Another factor is the lack of strong teaching for the junior pupils to build on the good start made by the infant pupils as a result of effective, good and enthusiastic teaching.
114. An area for improvement identified in the 1998 inspection was the inconsistency in pupils' handwriting, particularly in the use of a joined style in Year 6. The standard of presentation of work remains a concern, especially in the junior years, where much work is often untidy and poorly presented. In Year 4 however, there is a marked improvement in presentation this term because the teacher has set out clear expectations. Too many other pupils set out their work inappropriately, such as not starting at the margin, and show vagaries in their handwriting style. The teachers' handwriting does not always provide the best model.
115. Pupils also make errors unexpected for their age. For example, in recent work, Year 6 pupils omitted capital letters and full stops in sentences, and used incorrect spellings as in "*are class*", "*there faces*" and "*poring with rain*". These casual writing habits detract from the otherwise good quality of their use of language. Year 6 pupils often use lively words, phrases and expressions such as "*and so it was settled that ...*" and "*... with a shuddering bang!*". Many write an entertaining story and also show skill in expressing their ideas in poetry. For example, Year 6 pupils suggested "*hope seeping*", "*blood pulsing*" and "*fists clenching*" as lines for a class poem about emotions.
116. Throughout the school, pupils' listening and speaking skills are good. They are fluent, articulate, confident speakers who generally convey and explain their ideas clearly. They listen attentively to others and respond to what they hear. Few pupils need to have instructions repeated. The older junior pupils discuss matters maturely and often develop others' opinions. However, there is very limited inclusion in teachers' planning of strategies and experiences to develop and extend pupils' speaking skills through experiences such as role-play in history, debates in science and formal presentations of pupils' own research. A common strength is the breadth of the pupils' vocabulary. Year 2 pupils had no difficulty in shaking their hands "*vigorously*" nor in appreciating how characters in the story were extravert and introvert. These good language skills stand pupils in good stead in work across the curriculum.

117. Reading standards are very good at the end of Year 2 and reflect good teaching, especially in the basic skills of word recognition. The pupils' quickness in learning to read is helped by the parents' assiduousness in hearing their children read at home. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well. For example, a Year 5 pupil drew on previous reading and lessons to identify different uses of language. All pupils really enjoy reading and talk freely about books and stories. They are confident in reading aloud and most use good expression and phrasing. They interact with the story and occasionally stop to point out details and to say what they think what might happen next. Year 2 pupils are very effective in working out unfamiliar words from their sounds, but do not always understand what they mean. For the very fluent readers, this detracts from their full appreciation of the story. They are also less secure in reading non-fiction books although they know how to use the contents and index pages.
118. The infant teachers are good at developing the children's appreciation of stories. The teacher's enthusiasm and skilled questioning kept the Year 2 pupils highly interested in anticipating the storyline of "Six Dinner Sid". They analysed the title, blurb, clues in the cover illustration, and thought about other stories they knew that might be similar. In so doing, the teacher reviewed many points of grammar, spelling and language use, including alliteration.
119. Such good teaching in reading is not consistent in the junior classes, although a strong feature is the good focus and structure of group reading sessions led by the teacher. Questions from the teachers, such as "*What did you think?*", encourage pupils to discuss and justify their views. The teacher's prompts helped Year 6 pupils to review the first chapters of "Goodnight Mister Tom" and to deduce information about the characters and their relationship.
120. The junior pupils also enjoy hearing stories read to them. The wide range of books in classrooms, including children's classics and favourites, helps to sustain the boys' willingness to read. Boys in Year 5 were very disappointed when a breakdown in the ICT equipment meant they could not hear the next chapters in an Enid Blyton mystery. Most Year 6 pupils read fluently and accurately and the higher attaining pupils confidently identify key themes and aspects of the style of authors such as Tolkien and Jacqueline Wilson. Other pupils are not so secure, especially when interpreting non-fiction. However, all cope well with reading in other subjects. They use dictionaries confidently and know how to find information in reference books and CD ROMs. The lack of a clearly defined library area minimises pupils' opportunities to develop their skills and interests in finding and using different books and applying skills taught in literacy lessons.
121. The overall quality of teaching in writing in the infant and junior classes is satisfactory with some good aspects, particularly in the infant classes. In all classes, pupils' progress is satisfactory although often erratic. Pupils' work seen often showed a dip in the spring term. The pupils usually do well when completing worksheets and exercises related to grammar and punctuation and when taking spelling tests. However, the application of this knowledge is not so good in pupils' independent writing and this partly explains why some have not made the progress they could.
122. A weakness in the teaching throughout the school is the inconsistency of teachers' marking. The Year 6 teacher conscientiously comments on effective points, for example, "*a simile –this works very well*", but this is not common to all, nor do all teachers identify what pupils need to do next time to improve. Teachers' marking sometimes highlights gaps and errors in their own knowledge of English.

123. The infant pupils experience a wide range of writing types and purposes, including stories, instructions, riddles, poems and letters. In a very good lesson, Year 1 pupils talked to their partners about how to improve and extend sentences written the day before. The pupils guided the teacher in spelling words and punctuating sentences and showed a developing awareness of the need to re-read their writing to check it. By the end of Year 2, many pupils write long stories. While the lower attaining pupils make free use of the word "and" to keep their stories going, the higher attaining pupils structure their sentences well. They use speech, adjectives and devices such as capital letters for effect. A good example was the use of the phrase, "t-r-e-m-e-n-d-o-u-s BOOM!" Few use joined handwriting.
124. In the junior years, the pupils develop their skills in writing to entertain, inform and persuade. Work displayed in school gives a good picture of what pupils know about stylistic features. For example, the Year 3 pupils' poems include interesting phrases and Year 6 pupils' brochures for "Sea World" make effective use of bullet points, exaggerated claims and recommendations. The work has also been produced on the computer but there is less evidence of pupils' drafting and revising their writing. In lessons, there is often too little time for pupils to complete the writing task and not enough explicit teaching and reinforcement of key features to ensure that all pupils realise what they need to remember. For example, when Year 5 pupils read out their petitions, examples of witty language were shared, but chances were missed to emphasise the effective persuasive elements.
125. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has raised the profile of reading in the school and the action to improve the teaching in guided reading has set a useful precedent for further improvements in the teaching of writing. However, not enough has been done monitor the quality of teaching and learning or to analyse test results and identify where the weaknesses are.

## **MATHEMATICS**

126. In the infants, standards have risen considerably since the last inspection and are now well above average by the end of Year 2 when compared to the national picture. The boys tend to do better than the girls. Almost twice as many boys as girls have done well for their age. The teachers have used guidance from the National Numeracy Strategy to enhance their expertise and skills in giving pupils in Years 1 and 2 a very good grounding in number and mathematical skills.
127. Progress is slower in the junior years and by the end of Year 6, standards are close to average. Most boys and girls are working at Level 4, as expected for their age, although a significant percentage hovers around the cusp of Levels 3 and 4. The school has not sustained the good standards of 2001 nor met its target for 2002. Standards have fallen since the last inspection. Staffing changes have led to disrupted teaching. The co-ordinator, appointed last September, has highlighted gaps in the curriculum and the need to sharpen junior pupils' skills in using a range of strategies to deal with number problems. The good test results gained by the current Year 2 pupils, and by pupils in Years 3 and 4, indicates good potential for standards to rise in coming years.
128. Good teaching in the infant classes develops pupils' awareness of, and facility with number, through games and practical activities that motivate the pupils and help them understand mathematical ideas. For example, Year 1 pupils were very excited to see whether their prediction of two cupfuls would be enough to fill the teacher's container. They went on to make similar predictions and by the end of the lesson, higher

attaining pupils had worked out the relationship between the different cup sizes to make reasonably accurate estimates.

129. Year 2 pupils much enjoyed counting multiples of 5 and 10 to 30 and explaining how they knew which number was covered over in a 100 number square. In work on time notation, the teacher skilfully involved the pupils in working round the clock face, to show the sequence of time during one hour and the corresponding analogue and digital times. As a result, higher-attaining pupils understood that a quarter to ten was the same as 9.45 while lower-attaining pupils recognised 9 o'clock as 9.00. The teacher's constant reference to the classroom clock during the lesson enabled pupils to apply their skills in a practical manner and this was later applied when, in physical education, the pupils were asked to turn clockwise or anti-clockwise through quarter, half or three quarter turns.
130. Teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 3 to 6 and the teachers are following well guidance from the National Numeracy Strategy. Much good teaching in Years 4 and 6 is helping to plug gaps in previous learning and to reinforce relevant strategies. Pupils are learning to use and apply their number knowledge and are developing quick recall of number facts. However, not all Year 6 pupils are secure in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division particularly in dealing with numbers mentally. They have reasonably quick recall of multiplication facts. Higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of fractions, decimals and percentages but others are not so certain.
131. A scrutiny of pupils' work since September shows that pupils in Years 1, 2 and 6 have made good progress, but in other years, the progress has only been satisfactory. Two weaknesses in the teaching are firstly, the lack of challenge for the higher attaining pupils, and secondly, the unnecessary repetition of some topics within and also between year groups. For example, the revision of Year 5 pupils' addition skills by partitioning numbers did not extend their attainment and only served to show that pupils had mastered the strategy. The teachers are setting individual and group targets but do not have enough information about each pupil's progress to identify specific weaknesses.
132. A good feature throughout the school is the way the teachers pose questions which encourage pupils to think in different mathematical ways and to discover patterns and relationships in number. In a good lesson for Year 4 pupils, the teacher used pupils' explanations to reinforce the relationship between multiplication and division. As a result, average-attaining pupils, for example, worked out that if 6 times 3 equals 18, and 3 times 6 equals 18, then it must follow that 18 divided by 6 equals 3 and 18 divided by 3 equals 6. Pupils confidently and willingly explain their strategies to the class. In dealing with the costs of furnishing a room, Year 6 pupils indicated they used a range of mental processes as well as jottings and quick additions. Teachers often use such occasions to prompt pupils to use correct mathematical vocabulary. Year 6 pupils spontaneously used "multiplied by", "product of" and "squared" in their multiplication challenge.
133. Pupils with special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress and often achieve well because of the sound provision and support of adults. In Year 3, one pupil remained interested in finding an emerging pattern as the teacher asked him to colour the multiples of four in a number square on the interactive whiteboard as the rest of the class shouted out the numbers. Teachers plan work to help pupils reach the targets in their individual plans, and the guidance of classroom assistants during group activities helps pupils to stay focussed and succeed in the work given.

134. Although the teachers mark pupils' work regularly, it is only in Years 1, 3 and 6 that the teachers' written comments indicate how pupils can improve. Pupils generally set out their work correctly although they are not always encouraged to avoid crossing out incorrect work or to use rulers, particularly in Year 5. Homework is used well in Year 6 to extend the work done in class but in other year groups, mathematics homework is inconsistent.
135. The leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has taken the lead and done much in a short time to gain a initial overview of the provision and where improvements are needed. He rightly sees the raising of standards in the junior classes as a priority. His scrutiny of pupils' books has identified the prime need to strengthen pupils' skills in calculation. He has compiled an action plan to deal with these problems. Recent purchases have increased the number and range of resources to support practical work and the use of ICT but they have yet to make a significant impact on the quality of pupils' learning. A good start in raising the profile of mathematics and its link with other subjects and daily life, was the visit by Year 6 pupils to a local construction site which in turn led to three pupils winning a sponsored competition to design a symmetrical pattern for a tile. Too little is made of the potential of the library classification system for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge.

## SCIENCE

136. As in 2001, standards are above average at the end of Year 2. This sustains the good attainment judged in the last inspection. Standards have fallen since the last inspection for the junior pupils and are now average at the end of Year 6. Not as many pupils have reached the level expected for their age as in 2001 but inspection evidence shows that pupils' awareness of scientific procedures is often as good as their scientific knowledge. Pupils enjoy science and good, systematic teaching throughout the school ensures that by the end of Year 6 most pupils show mature skills in explaining, justifying and describing what they have done. Although many are good scientists, the percentage of pupils who have not achieved the level expected for their age reduces the overall standard.
137. The school has developed a well-balanced science programme that meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Since the last inspection, changes to the policy give a high emphasis to the development of pupils' skills in scientific enquiry. Pupils comment they find the practical work interesting and like working together. In fact, Year 6 pupils said that science was their favourite subject. Teachers and support staff work hard to ensure that boys and girls of all abilities take full part in activities. For example, the teacher made good use of a game to draw all Year 3 pupils into a discussion about the properties of different materials such as glass, wood and metal. She overlooked some inappropriate behaviour in order to sustain the play but reinforced the need for all to abide by the rules.
138. Pupils' good scientific vocabulary and knowledge starts in the infant years. The teachers build on the pupils' natural curiosity to investigate the world around them and to develop their skills in predicting, recording and classifying what they find. For example, Year 1 pupils have written about what they heard on a listening-walk, and used tally charts to collect evidence about the class. Pupils learn quickly, and by the end of Year 1, higher attaining pupils are already working at the level expected of Year 2 pupils. However, as in other year groups, there is rarely a different challenge for them.

139. Year 2 pupils' work shows they have been encouraged to ask questions and to use first-hand experience to find answers. For example, they have kept an exercise diary and recorded what happened when potatoes are treated and heated in different ways. However, the worksheets used to record what pupils have done are poorly organised, unlike those that show clearly Year 1 pupils' progress. Year 2 pupils achieved well when they had to find out how to light up a bulb initially using only a battery and then adding wires. A key strength of the lesson was that the teacher had discussed with the classroom assistants and parents helping the need to prompt the pupils through questions and suggestions. This allowed them to subtly introduce relevant terms including "terminal" and "circuit". As a result, the pupils not only managed the task but also had a good understanding of what they had done. Two children gave a good demonstration and explanation to the whole class of how to make a circuit.
140. In the junior years, pupils achieve a secure level of understanding about life processes, materials and physical processes. Much of the work in books indicates pupils have merely completed worksheets or copied work, but they also learn how to plan and carry out investigative procedures, how to control risks and how to write reports with diagrams, charts and graphs to show statistical information. In some classes, pupils' homework builds on the content of lessons. A good example was the request for Year 5 pupils to observe the insects that visited the plants in their gardens as part of their work on the life-cycle of plants.
141. Pupils' positive attitudes usually mean lessons are enjoyable for all. Year 4 pupils were very motivated to identify food sources using the data collected on their visit to Washington Wildfowl Trust. The teacher's clear explanations enabled them to understand the terms "producer", "consumer", "prey" and "predator" and to appreciate their place in a food chain. By the end of Year 6, pupils readily connect new information with what they already know and use appropriate scientific vocabulary as a matter of course. They have a good general knowledge of scientific matters and processes. Following a 'Science is great' day at the University of Teesside, pupils were highly enthusiastic in their talk about micro-invaders and their enjoyment of *"the scientific and practical side of it"*. They confidently put forward their ideas and conclusions.
142. The teachers are clear about what they want pupils to know and teaching points are usually well made and consistently reinforced. However, one weakness is the lack of extension and challenge for higher attaining pupils which limits their progress. This is partly because the teachers are not using the information from their records of pupils' progress to identify what different groups of pupils need to learn next. Similarly, teachers are not all systematically using their marking to support and reinforce points made in lessons and to indicate how pupils can improve. Too often comments only give "Well done" without identifying what has been done well.
143. The quality of subject leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher has monitored some planning and some lessons and is aware of the need to increase the use of ICT in science. Currently, little use is made of ICT and the school library to develop pupils' enquiry and recording skills. The recent purchase of a microscope and installation of the interactive whiteboards offer potential for improvement.

## ART AND DESIGN

144. Standards are good at the end of Year 2 and although satisfactory at the end of Year 6, are not as good as judged in the last inspection. Staffing changes have led to inconsistencies in teaching which is good for the infant pupils and satisfactory overall for the juniors. Attractive displays of pupils' work in classrooms and around the school set a good model. Boys and girls of all abilities enjoy art and design and are proud of what they do. This adds considerably to their personal development. The after-school club, organised by the Year 5 teacher for pupils in her class, is very popular.
145. A main strength of the teaching for the infants is the time pupils have to explore a variety of materials and techniques. They acquire different skills, such as Year 1 pupils smudging pastels to create the colour shades of fruit. Their finished fruit bowls were of a good standard for their age, with many pupils showing a developing eye for detail and awareness of perspective. In a very good lesson seen, the teacher used her skills well to ensure Year 2 pupils experimented with paint, sand, coffee and clay in order to match the texture of pebbledash and old bricks and create the appearance of walls they had sketched during their study of Cockerton. As the teacher discussed the textures she encouraged the pupils to use relevant terms including *"weathered"* to describe the effect they wanted. The pupils showed a good level of application in mixing colours to get shades of brown. When they evaluated their efforts, one boy's comment, *"I don't really like the effect, it's too grey and I wanted it to be brown."*, was used very effectively by the teacher to talk about mixing paints.
146. Junior pupils also investigate the qualities of different materials and processes. The teachers manage an effective balance between increasing pupils' creativity, technical skills and knowledge of art as well as using art and design to develop their understanding of other subjects. In most classes there are displays of paintings, pictures and collage work that complement work in mathematics, history, geography, science and ICT. For example, Year 3 pupils experimented with stencils to create repeating patterns and Year 4 pupils used an ICT program to copy the technique of pointillism in the style of Seurat. The quality of this work was as expected for their age in art and design, mathematics and ICT. Higher attaining pupils, however, are not always challenged sufficiently to lift the quality of what they do. Chances are missed, for example, for them to carry out research and to extend their knowledge and skills in their own way.
147. A good feature of the curriculum is the teachers' use of the work of famous and local artists to inspire the pupils and to introduce techniques and materials, including work on a large scale. The work on display in the school hall showed this off very effectively. For example, Year 5 pupils reworked their own version of David Hockney's swimming pool scene as they were not satisfied, and then made good use of transparent film to create the effect of water. Pupils in Year 1 had used a variety of textiles to create nature collages clearly inspired by the work of Andy Goldsmith. Similarly, Year 6 pupils had worked well together to create a very attractive woven wall-hanging of the River Nile.
148. A weakness of the teaching is the inconsistent use of sketch books to save and develop the junior pupils' ideas. Work in these books tends to be one-off pieces with no indication of evaluations or improvements, especially in comments from teachers to guide pupils in how to improve, for example, observational drawing. As Year 4 pupils had not done any preliminary sketches, many were disappointed with the proportions of the birds they painted on their first and only attempt. Year 6 pupils,



however, use sketch books as an integral part of modifying and refining their work. One pupil who had tried several abstract designs was helped by his teacher's comment, "*Try less shapes. Scatter them around the page.*"

149. The quality of subject leadership and management is satisfactory. The co-ordinator ensures that all National Curriculum requirements are met through her check on teachers' planning. Procedures to record pupils' progress are informal and do not give a clear picture of standards or areas for development. The co-ordinator's plan to invite artists to bring their expertise into school, thereby injecting new ideas, techniques and materials into teachers' regular practice, offers much potential to raise standards.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

150. Standards are in line with those expected nationally of pupils at the end of Years 2 and 6. While this has sustained the standard for the infant pupils seen in the last inspection, junior pupils' attainment is no longer above the national expectation as judged in the last inspection. The school acknowledges that this is partly because less time is given to the subject than in 1998, and staff changes have meant the level of expertise is not now as strong. There was little evidence of pupils' work since September in Years 3 and 4.
151. Pupils learn different fixing and joining techniques and how to use different tools and materials. They learn to plan ahead and to make changes to their plans based on information from tests and observations. For example, Year 2 pupils realised the need for axles to ensure the wheels would turn on a chassis for a pull-along truck, and Year 5 pupils considered the positioning of the wheels on the axles of their moving toys before adding cams that would operate other mobile parts. They showed a good knowledge of how to strengthen corners and of the need to measure materials accurately for size and fit before cutting them.
152. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, and sometimes good. By adopting a nationally approved programme of work, the school ensures that pupils learn to consider problems, to make and evaluate their products. Younger pupils are not as strong in the design element, as the staff too often direct what they are to do. However, they show good potential in the way they embellish and finish off products. For example, Year 2 pupils were very keen to decorate their pull-along toy with bright patterns.
153. Good features of the teaching include the planning of activities that are relevant to pupils' interests, and the linking of design and technology with other subjects. Year 1 pupils, for instance, used an ICT program to design an adventure playground. Year 6 pupils, designing a desk tidy, showed much interest and commitment. They considered the need for strength and stability and produced detailed, labelled designs showing different elevations and choice of materials. The teacher's good questioning helped them to take stock of their own and others' designs and to suggest improvements. In considering feasibility of production, many decided to decrease the number of compartments and to compromise on design features such as arches. This process helped them to distinguish between what worked well and what could be improved. Higher attaining pupils do not always achieve as well as they might as there is too little scope for them to make their own decisions about what to do and how to do it.

154. The co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership. She is aware that some teachers lack confidence in teaching design and technology and gives practical advice and support when necessary, but has not yet had the opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching and learning to see where strengths and weaknesses lie. Her knowledge of standards and area for improvement is also limited by the absence of formal procedures to record pupils' progress.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

155. Standards are satisfactory at the end of Years 2 and 6. However, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is not longer above national expectations as judged in the last inspection. The majority of pupils reach the level expected for their age and there are no noticeable differences in the attainment of boys and girls. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress over time in acquiring knowledge and skills because of sound teaching and a good range of resources to support the study of different places and themes. The school makes effective use of fieldwork around the school and on visits to places such as Holy Island and Washington Wildfowl Park to develop pupils' awareness of geographical features and processes.
156. The infant pupils learn about the weather and how it differs place to place. Year 1 pupils enjoyed looking at pictures of the weather in different countries and comparing it to that in England. Pupils learn to carry out simple fieldwork in studying the local environment of Cockerton. They identify buildings and their uses and make their own simple maps of their route to school, listing the things they see on the way. By the end of Year 2, pupils are able to contrast their own area with that of the fictional Scottish island of Struay, home of the story character Katie Morag. They interpret and draw simple maps and plans and identify geographical features such as bays, roads and hills.
157. In the junior years the pupils build on their skills and knowledge, and also consider geographical issues, including the impact of change on the environment. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a sound knowledge of processes such as the water cycle and erosion and pollution, and remember key facts about places studied. Systematic teaching, using resources such as the photographs and leaflets about Redcar seen in Year 5, ensures the pupils develop relevant skills in using gazetteers and grid references to locate places and keys to interpret maps. They also make sound progress in compiling their own maps and plans. Pupils learn how to apply their mathematical skills to collect and record information. For example, Year 3 pupils have carried out surveys of where their parents work, compiled and interpreted frequency graphs and plotted the places on a map. They much enjoyed using the Internet to find and print out maps of where they lived. Not enough has been done to include the use of the library as part of geographical enquiries.
158. The quality of teaching in the two lessons seen was satisfactory. Teachers generally have sound subject knowledge and prepare well, although a scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that the higher attaining pupils are not always challenged enough. Not all work is marked, and in many classes, the presentation is poor. In contrast, many well-composed displays in classrooms and public places of maps, photographs, leaflets and questions, prompt the pupils' interest.

159. Subject leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has a sound understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum. She has not monitored the quality of teaching and learning but her curriculum audit and monitoring of teachers' planning have given her a good overview of where improvements are needed in assessment procedures, and opportunities for pupils' to develop their own lines of enquiry.

## **HISTORY**

160. As in the last inspection, standards are satisfactory at the end of Year 2 and good at the end of Year 6. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress in the infant years and good progress in the junior years. However, a scrutiny of pupils' work since September shows that the higher attaining pupils are not always being stretched. Generally, boys and girls do equally well, as they like history, particularly the visits to places of historical interest and the theme days that make history come alive. Year 5 pupils' Greek day drew on their knowledge about Ancient Greek society in writing, mathematics and physical education.
161. The infant children learn to look for and recognise signs of change over time. They carry out their own research such as interviewing grandparents about their childhood, and learn to use different historical sources, including looking at artefacts, books and photographs. Year 1 pupils have compared old and new toys and household objects to build up their own picture of "then and now". Year 2 pupils were well aware that part of the reason why the Great Fire of London spread was because the people did not have fire engines and hoses similar to those they had operated when the fire service visited the school. Pupils referred to the diaries of Samuel Pepys as both a source of facts and opinions.
162. In the junior years, pupils' understanding of chronology and skills in finding out about history are developed further. The teachers make good use of practical situations to develop their interest and awareness, especially in work in English lessons. A good example was the way Year 3 pupils used their experience of visiting Eden Camp and their knowledge about World War II to pretend to be evacuees writing letters to their parents. Many showed good empathy and understanding of wartime conditions. Year 4 pupils similarly used their understanding of the Viking period to write imaginative and descriptive accounts.
163. Pupils learn how to follow up "What I want to know" using ICT, books, newspapers and other source material and how to interpret data in a meaningful way. As a result, they acquire a good understanding of different periods of history and of the main changes and events in each. For instance, Year 6 pupils used their knowledge of the Aztecs to look at the similarities and differences between the societies of Tenochtitlan and Darlington. The pupils have good factual knowledge and a mature understanding of events and consequences.
164. The quality of teaching in the lessons seen was good overall. A common feature is the teachers' good preparation and familiarity with the subject content. The teachers' enthusiasm has a particularly good impact on the rate of pupils' progress. Teachers' planning shows that pupils experience a wide range of interesting activities, including visits to places of historical interest and links with other subjects. Year 5 pupils, for example, have designed their own Greek vases in art and design lessons.

165. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. The co-ordinator has recently used national guidelines to re-structure the subject and ensure it meets fully National Curriculum requirements. The collection of samples of pupils' work illustrates well the range of work but the lack of information on the standard achieved minimises its use in guiding other teachers on assessing pupils' level of attainment. Also teachers' marking does not always indicate how pupils could have improved their work.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

166. Standards have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory at the end of Years 2 and 6. Higher attaining pupils are not always challenged enough and there is some under-achievement in all year groups. The level of knowledge and skill of the pupils indicates that standards are set to rise as gaps are plugged in pupils' previous learning. One major gap is in pupils' poor keyboard skills. Not only do they use a one-finger typing approach, but also have to hunt for the letters and functions they need. This considerably slows any word-processing. Year 6, and other junior pupils have also had limited experience of using equipment to develop their skills in the area of control and modelling.
167. The infant pupils learn the basic skills of logging on, opening up and saving files and folders. They acquire knowledge and skills in using different programs as part of work linked to other subjects. For example, Year 1 pupils have used the computer mouse to click on icons and paint pictures on screen and showed good use of the draw, paint and spray fill functions. Year 2 pupils have developed their use of the keyboard through word processing stories and instructions on how to use particular programs. They have also learnt how to search CD ROMs for information on topics in geography and history. In the junior classes, the pupils build on these skills, although the current curriculum does not always take into account the gaps in pupils' previous learning. For example, the co-ordinator found that the Year 4 pupils had little experience of copying and pasting text or pictures.
168. Many pupils have access to computers at home and the wariness to experiment and lack of confidence, commented on in the last inspection, no longer typifies the pupils' learning. The younger pupils are quite blasé about using the computer suite. The noise level is often high as pupils tell each other what to do. The older juniors show very positive attitudes. They explore ideas, use initiative and show a willingness to have a second try when things go wrong. Year 6 pupils showed much enthusiasm and determination when working to compile their multi-media presentations. Consulting their partners, they competently searched the Internet for suitable logos and pictures, copied and inserted their choices, and re-formed their pages expertly. They experimented with various backgrounds and font sizes, colours and types to meet their needs and showed growing aesthetic awareness in animating pictures and adding sound so that text "drifted" into view.
169. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In several lessons seen, the teaching was good. The teachers are applying the knowledge and skills gained in recent training in their teaching. However, they are not all fully confident in identifying what pupils need to do to improve and learn next. The teachers are making effective use of ICT to produce documents, worksheets, labels and captions for the classroom. This is setting pupils a good model of practice, especially in the preparation of lesson materials for use on the interactive whiteboard and in the use of CD-ROMs. The junior pupils are very familiar with the functions of the boards but have relatively few chances to use them.

170. Pupils are gaining experience in using other ICT equipment including the digital camera, video recorder and programmable toys, but this has yet to be identified as a strand in the curriculum. Year 4 pupils benefit from attending an after-school club, led by their teacher who is the co-ordinator, when they rehearse and extend what they have done in lessons. During the inspection, pupils tried out new software that engaged them in problem-solving and the beginnings of programming.
171. The leadership of ICT is good. The co-ordinator has made much progress in a short time in dealing with teething problems in the computer suite and directing the way forward. She is leading by example in her own teaching and in encouraging the other staff to use their expertise. The management is satisfactory. While the co-ordinator has a viable development plan to raise the profile of ICT, upgrade equipment and widen the curriculum, the absence of an agreed assessment system and information from the monitoring of teaching and learning means there is little to indicate where the weaknesses in standards and provision lie. At present too much focus is given to using ICT to raise standards in literacy and numeracy rather than raising standards in ICT.

## **MUSIC**

172. Standards are satisfactory at the end of Years 2 and 6. Throughout the school, pupils of all abilities generally do as well as expected for their age, as judged in the last inspection. However, the quality of teaching is not as strong, although satisfactory for all pupils and occasionally good. Teachers new to the school are not all equally confident in teaching music but make good use of a commercial scheme to structure their teaching. Two members of staff play the guitar and the school also makes effective use of pupils' expertise in playing the piano and other instruments to accompany pupils' singing in assemblies, lessons and school productions. At other times however, higher attaining pupils are not always challenged enough.
173. The children enjoy music. In the lessons seen, they listened attentively and appreciatively to music and willingly sang and offered their own ideas. Year 4 pupils particularly enjoyed learning to sing the Geordie version of "The Lambton Worm", a ballad read earlier in the day. They found the dialect words intriguing and the whole experience fun because their teacher used her guitar and singing skills well to involve them in the chorus. This was a good example of music being used to develop pupils' awareness of local cultural traditions.
174. Teachers' planning shows that the infant and junior pupils listen to, create and perform their own musical ideas. They are introduced to the music of famous composers, and to music from different cultures, such as sea shanties, American rap and pan-pipes from the Andes. As part of this, the pupils learn musical terms and are encouraged to explore their own ideas and feelings. Year 1 pupils found it hard to picture the battle represented in the piece by Wagner, but Year 2 pupils were able to contrast it with a piece by Bach which made some "feel sad". They also identified a crescendo and recognised changes in tempo. The pupils are quick to learn and use musical terms. By the end of their lesson, a few Year 6 pupils gave a lucid definition of thin and thick musical textures. Chances were missed in this session to extend the pupils' skills in identifying the differences through closer reference to the musical pieces heard.

175. Subject leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator is not a music specialist but is enthusiastic and sets a good model of music being “cheerfully done” (co-ordinator’s words) by teaching older juniors to play the recorder, and producing the school’s Christmas musical nativity. She has rewritten the policy and ensured the curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements. She is aware that the ICT requirements are an area for development, with a gap in the use of electronic keyboards, but the purchase of compact disks has increased the range of music used and the introduction of ICT software has enabled pupils in Years 3 and 6 to rearrange known tunes and compose their own using musical notation. The lack of a structured system to assess and record the pupils’ attainment and progress limits the co-ordinator’s ability to identify where there are strengths and weaknesses and where changes in the curriculum may be needed.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

176. As in the last inspection, standards in gymnastics for the infant pupils, and in athletics and games for the junior pupils match those expected nationally at the end of Years 2 and 6. Standards in swimming are good. Almost all Year 6 pupils swim a minimum of 25 metres with most going on to gain awards for distance and personal survival skills. Over the year, pupils take part in a range of activities that meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Good use is made of the school field for athletics and games. An improvement in the provision since the last inspection is the involvement of school teams in local leagues, competitions and tournaments. They are beginning to have some success, particularly in netball.
177. In lessons seen for infant and junior pupils, the quality of teaching was good. Most teachers wear suitable footwear and clothing. Strong features are the teaching of techniques and movements and the frequent evaluation of how well pupils are doing so that they know how to improve their performance. In a good games lesson, a significant number of netball passes were going astray because Year 4 pupils were not aiming, throwing and catching the ball accurately. Having seen the teacher’s effective demonstration, the pupils became much more confident in moving forward and bouncing the ball. As a consequence, they increased the pace of the round of passes in their group. Higher attaining pupils and also those with special educational needs achieved well because the structure of the session and the teachers’ good use of praise to acknowledgement improvements gave all scope to do their best.
178. Teachers are also skilled in using pupils to demonstrate and discuss their own performance although they make little use of ICT to help them, such as using the digital camera to record aspects of pupils’ work. Having watched individual Year 2 pupils perform, others commented on how several had used their arms and knees to stop them wobbling when they turned and landed. The teacher highlighted key points and pupils of all abilities were so keen to improve that they put every effort into controlling their own balances and sustaining them for increasingly longer periods.
179. Pupils enjoy lessons. They take the warm-up activities very seriously and are clearly aware of what they are doing and why. Teachers expect boys and girls of all abilities to take part in all activities and they encourage positive attitudes to sport. Entering into the spirit of their Greek day, Year 5 pupils took part in mini-Olympic Games. Although very keen to win a laurel leaf, pupils were kind to less agile members of their team, praising their efforts, accepting defeat without apportioning blame and celebrating the winning team by breaking into spontaneous applause. When the winners were asked what was the secret of their success, they promptly replied, “Co-operation!”

180. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator gives a lot of time and effort to organising after-school sports sessions for the junior pupils, including cross-country. Her expertise in teaching gymnastics and plans to improve her skills in teaching dance place her in a good position to develop others' expertise and to begin to monitor formally the effectiveness of teaching and learning. The lack of agreed procedures to record pupils' skills and progress means teachers and the co-ordinator have little to indicate what pupils do well and where they need to improve.