

INSPECTION REPORT

BRANDLING PRIMARY SCHOOL

Felling, Gateshead

LEA area: Gateshead

Unique reference number: 108359

Headteacher: M Mitford

Lead inspector: A Giles

Dates of inspection: 19th - 21st January 2004

Inspection number: 262844

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	145
School address:	Mulberry Street Felling Gateshead
Postcode:	NE10 0JB
Telephone number:	0191 4693218
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Miss Moira Quigley
Date of previous inspection:	8 th June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a smaller than average primary school situated in the Felling ward of East Gateshead. This is a depressed urban area with the majority of pupils from families that suffer from the effects of socio-economic stress. These include unemployment, poverty and the effects of violence, vandalism and crime, and drug and alcohol abuse. The catchment area is further characterised by falling rolls and a transient population. The present percentage of free school meals is 62.5 per cent placing the school in the lowest National benchmark group. There are 7 per cent of pupils whose first language is not English, a significant percentage of these are from refugee families. This is higher than in most schools. The percentage of pupils identified as having special education needs, including statements, is above the national average. Traveller children arrive and leave the school throughout the year. Recently the school has received the 'Basic Skills Award', the 'Silver Arts Mark', reflecting the school's international dimension, a Healthy School Award and Investors in People status. In 2002 and 2003 it received the National Achievement Award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
17709	A Giles	Lead inspector	Mathematics
			History
			Physical education
			Special education needs
			English as an additional language
11368	K Lee	Lay inspector	
3277	L Hunter	Team inspector	Science
			Information and communication technology
			Art and design
			Design and technology
			Foundation Stage
12631	M McLean	Team inspector	English
			Religious education
			Geography
			Music

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very effective school that gives very good value for money. Pupils enter the school with low standards and many have learning needs associated with living in a depressed urban area. The school has been very successful in establishing an excellent atmosphere for learning that places a very high priority on the care and personal development of its pupils.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school provides excellently for pupils' personal development, including the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- The curriculum is very well enriched, both inside and outside the school day, with excellent links and partnerships with arts organisations, community organisations and subject specialism support from other schools.
- The quality of education and achievements of children in the reception class is not high enough.
- The very good leadership of the headteacher has ensured good provision for pupils' literacy and numeracy needs.
- The behaviour and attitudes of pupils are very good and their confidence and independence are important features in their desire to learn and take on further responsibilities.
- Teachers' encouragement and engagement of pupils, especially through the use of imaginative and creative resources.
- The work of the school and other agencies to ensure that the highest level of care and support for all pupils is maintained.

The school has made very good improvements since its last inspection. Very good leadership from the headteacher has created whole-school agreement on values and aims and has ensured consistent high levels of achievement. There is clear evidence that assessment procedures in the Foundation Stage showed significant improvements for several years following the last inspection. However, a number of factors have had a negative impact recently and this has left the school facing the same issue again.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	A	C	E	B
mathematics	B	C	C	A
science	A	C	B	A*

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals*

The achievements of all groups of pupils are good overall. They achieve well in the nursery and reception years in their personal, social and emotional development. Present achievement for the small cohort of reception children is unsatisfactory in communication, language and literacy. Standards in speaking and reading match what is expected for pupils in Years 2 and 6. Standards in writing are below what is expected at both stages. Present standards in mathematics are below the national average in Years 2 and 6 but achievement is good. In science they achieve very well and their standards are above average in Year 6. Pupils achieve in line with national expectations in information and communication technology (ICT) and quickly learn to use their skills in support of their learning in other work. Pupils' achieve satisfactorily in religious education. Learning in history and geography contribute very well to pupils' cultural development. Achievement is better in the humanities subjects when pupils use their writing skills well. Standards in music are above those expected nationally because of an enriched curriculum and links with Local Education Authority

peripatetic service. Art and design continues to be a strength in the way that it enriches the curriculum and experiences for pupils in other subjects. Pupils with special education needs, English as an additional language and travelling children who attend the school, achieve well.

Pupils' personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school plans extensive opportunities to improve the self-esteem of pupils. Pupils are confident learners with an enquiring nature. They are very aware of the cultural and religious differences in the world. Pupils have very good attitudes and behave very well. They are proud of their school and their responsibilities. Attendance is well below the national averages but has significantly improved since the last inspection.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching is challenging, except to a small group of reception and Year 1 pupils, and based on the needs of individuals. Teachers are skilful at encouraging and engaging their pupils. In particular they thoughtfully use questions to challenge and involve them in their learning and use imaginative and creative resources that lead to a high level of interest from most pupils. Present planning and assessment procedures for reception class children are not reflecting what children know, understand and can do to feed into the next stage to move their learning forward. The school provides a good range of learning opportunities through the curriculum. It is very well enriched, both inside and outside the school day. The award of the 'Silver Arts Mark' is testimony to the very strong reputation the school has for its work in the 'Arts'. The school provides very good guidance for its pupils by working with other agencies to ensure that the highest level of care and support for all pupils is maintained. The management and effectiveness of the partnerships with other schools and the wider community is excellent. A range of pupils with additional learning needs achieve well and make good progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are good. Very good leadership by the headteacher is enabling the school to fulfil its vision. The school's self-evaluation procedures are sensitive to the needs of pupils in literacy, numeracy and science. Assessment and evaluation of teaching and pupils' learning in ICT, religious education and the Foundation Stage is not yet rigorous enough.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have very positive views of the school. Pupils show an active interest in the life of the school and involve themselves in all the activities on offer. The school welcomes parents and listens carefully to any concerns that they may have.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- Improve teachers' planning and the use of explorative and imaginary play for the reception children to further challenge them in their language work.
- Further monitor and evaluate the impact of teaching and learning provision in ICT, religious education and the foundation subjects.
- Improve the use of literacy across the curriculum by extending the opportunities for writing for different purposes and audiences and by matching these tasks to pupils' differing abilities.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Since the last inspection standards for seven year-olds have varied from below average to above average levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics when compared to all schools nationally. This variation is due to differences in ability on entry to the school and because of fluctuating numbers of pupils with special educational needs. The most recent national tests results for 11 year-olds were below national average in English, average in mathematics and above in science. However, they still continue the trend since the last inspection of high to very high achievement in the core subjects when compared to schools in similar contexts.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good overall achievement in English, mathematics and science by the age of 11.
- Good use of reading, speaking and listening skills to improve standards in the foundation subjects
- Excellent access and use of learning resources in the local community and other schools, which improves knowledge and understanding in science, mathematics and ICT.
- Unsatisfactory achievement in the area of communication, language and literacy in the reception class.
- A strong emphasis on practical and investigative work helps learning across the curriculum.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 - average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.9 (16.3)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	11.7 (14.3)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	14.4 (17.5)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 20 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 - average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.1(27.5)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	27.0 (27.5)	26.8 (26.7)
science	29.8 (28.6)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 17 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Commentary

1 The school's standards in writing and mathematics for seven year-olds were well below the national averages in 2003. They were below the average in reading. These results continue a trend of very high achievement in reading compared to schools where pupils have similar very low starting points. When using the same comparison, achievement for these pupils was satisfactory in mathematics and unsatisfactory in writing, compared to very high achievement in the previous three years. However, the results are from a class with a higher percentage of pupils with special educational needs than in previous years. Overall standards in the core subjects at this age have risen in line with the national trend since the last inspection.

2 In the 2003 National Tests for 11 year-olds standards were well below the national average in English, average in mathematics and above average in science. These results are also from a class with a higher percentage of pupils with special educational needs than in previous years.

However, they reflect very high overall achievement in the core subjects when compared to similar schools. Standards between the age of seven and 11 have improved above the national trend since the last inspection. This means that during this period many 11 year-olds have either reached or exceeded the levels expected for their age in English, mathematics and science, before they leave the school. The exception to this is in writing where achievement is more varied.

3 Children in the Foundation Stage get a broad range of experiences that match the different areas of learning expected for children of this age. They achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development. By the end of reception, children make satisfactory progress in mathematical development but are not meeting the early learning goals expected for their age. Present achievement in communication, language and literacy is unsatisfactory for a small number of reception and Year 1 children.

4 Present standards in reading, speaking and listening match what is expected for pupils in Years 2 and 6, and these pupils are achieving very well from a very low starting point. They are confident to share their ideas because they know that what they have to say will be valued by their teachers and classmates. Pupils follow a carefully structured reading programme as they move through the school, learning a range of strategies to read unfamiliar words and to retrieve information. Present standards in writing however are below what is expected for pupils in Years 2 and 6. Strategies are in place aimed at improving handwriting, spelling, punctuation and pupils' writing.

5 Pupils are encouraged to explore and experiment for themselves in practical and investigative mathematics and science work. This gives them plenty of opportunities to develop enquiring and inquisitive attitudes towards the subjects. Present mathematics' standards for Year 2 pupils are below those expected nationally but work given is very well matched to their needs and results in good achievement compared to their very low starting point. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils have a good grasp of developing number strategies and they achieve well. At this age they have an above average grasp of a range of scientific concepts and they achieve very well in this subject. Both levels of achievement are reflected in the school's performance in the mathematics and science national tests for 11 year-olds since the last inspection.

6 The school teaches the basic ICT skills but the ICT curriculum also makes good links to themes and topics in other subjects. This means that pupils achieve in line with national expectations and quickly learn to use their ICT skills in support of their learning in other work. The partnerships and shared work with other schools is a very strong feature of the ICT curriculum and positively enriches the provision and achievement of older pupils.

7 Pupils' achieve satisfactorily in religious education. Pupils' self-knowledge in this area, including their spiritual and cultural understanding of the world, is significantly enhanced outside of lessons, in assemblies, school visits to the community church and cross-curricular themes. Visits, visitors, and the use of ICT enhance pupils' understanding in geography and history. These subjects also contribute very well to pupils' cultural development. However, there are inconsistent practices of pupils recording information and further developing their writing skills in these areas.

8 The use of the work of famous artists to support work and the current displays in the school show that art related activities continue to be a strength of the school. This work underpins many of the topics studied in other areas of the curriculum. However, the range and quality of work in pupils' books is limited and does not show how pupils' skills progress in this area of learning. Pupils in Year 2 reach standards in music above those expected for their age. The very good achievement of all pupils is in part due to working with visiting music specialists and because of opportunities to learn to play the recorder, violin and viola. Achievement is further enhanced by attendance at the extra-curricular music club. Throughout the school, pupils' singing in assemblies is good.

9 With the help of specialist external support and the work of the teacher responsible for special educational needs pupils with additional learning needs, English as an additional language and the travelling children, achieve well and make good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have very good attitudes to their learning. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is consistently very good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The most recent complete attendance rates are well below the national average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides an excellent ethos for pupils' personal development, including the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- The behaviour and attitudes of pupils are very good and their confidence and independence are important features in their desire to learn and take on further responsibilities.
- The school successfully promotes very good relationships and racial harmony.
- Attendance is well below the national average, but significantly improved since the last inspection.

Commentary

10 The school has very high expectations for pupils of all abilities to achieve to their potential and this provides very well for their personal, social and emotional development. The school's current arrangement for nurture groups of reception children mixed with Year 1 pupils means they quickly learn how to form positive partnerships and how to work and play together. Pupils quickly become self-motivated and confident and keen learners. They have an understanding of their responsibilities and learn how to respect and treat each other. For example, pupils take great pride in their roles as 'buddies' and genuinely support other pupils when needed. These attitudes are reflected in the absence of bullying or other forms of harassment. The increasing numbers of refugees in the school and the regular travelling children are integrated into school life very well. The school works very effectively to promote and maintain racial harmony

11 Because the pupils recognise their responsibilities in their own school community their behaviour and attitudes to learning are both very good. The excellent learning ethos within the school is greatly influenced by the strong relationships pupils have with adults. As a result they willingly aspire to the very high expectations placed upon them. Pupils' self-esteem and learning skills grow because teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively together to raise their confidence by consistently recognising and praising their efforts.

12 Attendance is well below the national median. However, the school's actions to promote good attendance have significantly improved overall figures since the last inspection. There are now many occurrences of 100 per cent attendance in individual classes and pupils are proud when they receive recognition of their efforts in assemblies. The school and the Education Welfare Officer are very well aware of the problems with specific families, also with families who periodically leave the area but remain on roll. Regular phone calls to the homes has been successful in reiterating the school policy for meeting acceptable targets for attendance.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (93.3%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.2	School data	0.5
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
145	1	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

13 The school provides excellently for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers use language very well in classrooms to develop pupils' spirituality. Pupils write and talk about the meaning of different religious clothing and use words to explain many features of religious ceremony. One pupil wrote, "My favourite part of the church is the chancel in Christ Church because it is so peaceful". They know stories from the Bible and relate the life and work of Jesus to their lives and their community, especially in assemblies. These actions form the basis of a harmonious school community. Pupils' understanding and awareness of living in a culturally diverse society is enriched by their studies of different cultures and festivals. They value the diversity within their school community. In a very good lesson in Year 5, pupils respond excitingly to the contribution of a Chinese boy who explained the celebration centred on the Chinese New Year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good overall. The school provides a good range of learning opportunities through the curriculum. It is very well enriched both inside and outside the school day. The school provides very good guidance for its pupils.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good overall. Pupils' learning is good. The assessment of pupils' work is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Encouragement and engagement of pupils, especially the use of questioning to challenge and involve pupils in their learning.
- The use of imaginative and creative resources from Years 2 to 6 that lead to a high level of interest from pupils.
- Unsatisfactory assessment and planning procedures that restricts achievement in the area of communication, language and literacy for the reception children.
- Very good assessment procedures, from Year 2 onwards, in English, mathematics and science that allow teachers to plan accurately for all levels of ability.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 22 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	7	8	5	1	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Commentary

14 The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are used well to plan for the very diverse needs of the pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language. Very good questioning and encouragement by teachers engages pupils of all ages and abilities. As a result speaking, listening and thinking skills are developed very well from a low start. In mathematics and science there is a strong emphasis placed on practical and investigative work and

encouragement is given to pupils to explore and research for themselves. Tasks given in lessons have an expectation for pupils to express their opinions, focus on mental agility and problem solving or describe important aspects of their learning. This encourages learning, in particular using research skills to find information from the Internet, to use the library, or to use dictionaries or thesauruses in lessons.

15 Except for the present arrangements for language work with reception and Year 1 groups, teachers plan their lessons creatively and adapt materials to the specific needs of individuals and groups. This ensures that lessons are interesting and pupils have very positive attitudes to the tasks given. In a Year 4 mathematics' lesson the teacher used an innovative plenary based on the television quiz 'Who wants to be a millionaire.' Pupils of all abilities are eagerly involved because they can test their learning and understanding in an exhilarating format. Year 6 pupils talk excitedly about the ICT work they do at the local secondary school. Here they have the opportunity to make a recording soundtrack to overlay a cartoon slideshow and also have the chance to use data logging equipment to monitor and measure changes in the environment over a period of time. Standards are high in music because of the opportunities pupils have to play musical instruments with visiting specialists.

16 When the Foundation Stage curriculum is delivered in the Tree House staff help the children to gain confidence quickly, talk and thinking is suitably extended through a range of balanced activities. When reception children are taught with Year 1, the work they are given is often inappropriate and is not matched sufficiently for the needs of both ages. Further explorative and imaginary play tasks are needed for those reception and Year 1 children who have not yet achieved the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy.

17 Except for a small number of four and five year-olds assessment information is used very well to ensure pupils achieve as well as they can in English, mathematics and science. Teaching assistants are deployed very well to support small groups of pupils in lessons. There is very good provision for pupils with special education needs when they are withdrawn for specific support. Records for these pupils are well focussed on previous learning. With the help of specialist external support and the work of the teacher responsible for special educational needs, pupils with additional learning needs, English as an additional language and the travelling children, make good progress.

18 In the reception class assessments made of what children know, understand and can do are not focused well enough and therefore do not feed into planning sufficiently well to move children's learning forward. As a result their achievement is unsatisfactory. There is not a whole-school policy for assessing the outcomes of learning in ICT, religious education and other foundation subjects. Teachers have no way of identifying the outcomes of pupils' achievement because it is not referenced in any way to what they actually did, or to how well they did and what they need to do next to improve. This is also the case with teachers' expectations for extended writing across the curriculum, which is insufficiently balanced with their very high expectations for oral contributions in lessons.

The curriculum

Overall the school provides a good range of learning opportunities that caters for the pupils' needs well. Extra activities and enrichment give very good additional support inside and outside of the school day. The accommodation and resources provide a satisfactory support to pupils' learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is very well enriched, both inside and outside the school day, with strong links and partnerships with arts organisations and practitioners and subject specialism support from other schools.
- The curriculum for the reception class is not planned well enough to promote children's language skills.
- Very good provision for special educational needs, English as an additional language and travelling and refugee pupils.

- Insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to write for different purposes in other subjects apart from English.

Commentary

19 The curriculum for the small cohort of reception children is unsatisfactory overall because they are not getting a sufficiently balanced curriculum to match their needs in communication, language and literacy. When reception children are taught with Year 1, planned work in communication, language and literacy is often inappropriate and is not matched sufficiently to their needs. Their work also suffers because there are no links between their literacy work in the main school with their learning in the nursery in the afternoon.

20 The curriculum provided for pupils in Years 1 and 2 is good. Policies and detailed schemes of work provide good support in most areas. Year 2 pupils, especially, receive tasks that reflect their diverse learning needs. Planning at this stage is built on prior learning preparing them thoroughly for the next stage in their education. Present planning arrangements in literacy are unsatisfactory for the small number of Year 1 pupils who have not yet achieved the early learning goals for communication, language and literacy.

21 The curriculum for pupils in Years 2 to 6 is very good. Planning consistently determines ways for pupils to extend their key literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the whole curriculum. Pupils' language skills are used well to support learning in other subjects. Pupils know how to find and locate information in books and when using ICT. Pupils in Year 5 have developed their word processing and presentation skills by writing about their history topic of 'myths'. When learning about Victorian toys in history, Year 2 pupils have used this knowledge to understand how a branching database works. Pupils learn about spreadsheets by modelling different recipes for bread and they regularly use graphics packages to support their work in art and design. The design and implementation of the curriculum makes significant contributions to pupils' cultural development. Extensive research improves Year 4 pupils' knowledge of industry on the River Tyne, while Year 5 pupils have used ICT to research their geography topic on Africa and have found out about cities in Athens when studying Ancient Greece in history. These are just a few examples of the very well planned international features of the curriculum.

22 All pupils' achievement is enriched by access to a vibrant curriculum. The school places considerable importance on innovatory practices that increases the richness of provision. Displayed work in art and design is varied, exciting and interesting. As in other subject areas this is recognition of the strong links and partnerships with external organisations and practitioners. Another example of innovative practice is the collaboration with the regional science centre that helps promote and celebrate the 'Healthy School Award' and links this with the personal and social education of pupils. Further enrichment and learning occurs through high levels of participation in a very good range of extra curricular activities such as in music, French and sport. Joint working groups in school, as well as visits to The Sage, Hatton Gallery and Estrella institutions, makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning in areas such as music, art and dance.

23 The school's curriculum positively promotes inclusion. The support for pupils with special educational needs is very good, including provision for more able and gifted and talented pupils. Similarly, those pupils who join the school from other countries, or who do not speak English as their first language, also get high levels of support to give them the best possible chance to achieve. Visiting specialists, teaching assistants and support staff play a major role in carefully planning programmes in reading, writing and number. The school has developed an effective record keeping to track the progress of these pupils. This is used very well, for example, to maximise the learning of travelling children who return to the school every year.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes very good provision for pupils' care, guidance and support. The involvement of pupils in the work of the school is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The work of the school and other agencies to ensure that the highest level of care and support for all pupils is maintained.
- The very good procedures for seeking the views of pupils, especially by evaluating the impact of the many responsibilities given to them.
- Good reporting to parents of pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science, although information on other subjects is not yet as good.
- Very good health and safety features.

Commentary

24 The school has successfully developed an excellent ethos for support and learning since the last inspection. The excellent relationships between pupils and adults underpin an atmosphere of trust and pupils know that they are valued and cared for. This is perfectly exemplified by the very good climate for behaviour during breaks and lunches. The 'buddies' and supervisors have very good relationships with pupils and this has a positive impact on their behaviour. The work done to promote healthy eating and to carry out risk assessments are indicative of the very good health and safety features of the school.

25 The school offers a very good standard of care for all its pupils. It recognises the essential role of monitoring children's progress beyond the academic to the personal and social. To this extent the parents are consulted and informed of what the school is attempting to do in terms of pupils' personal development. The reports for parents are very clear about what pupils do well and what they need to do to improve. Information on pupils' understanding and progress in religious education, ICT and foundation subjects would further improve the level of reporting to parents. The school is very aware of the significant social deprivation and the many problems of individual families. Its work with outside agencies in dealing with these issues is both extensive and necessary. A significant strength of the school is the development of the concept of 'Family Learning.' Funding has been obtained to improve support for this by developing avenues for children and parents to take part in activities beyond the school day.

26 Pupils feel very well involved in the development of the school. In conversation with the 'buddies' they talk of being convinced their work is making a difference. They say that "playtimes are not as rough and everyone is friendly." Pupils talk of being involved in making a "fair system" for class rules; individual team captains, monitors and office helpers all talk very positively about their roles. The school counsellors recall agendas for meetings and how they take their class suggestions to meetings. They have taken part in appointments to new staff and presently have an agenda to improve steps to the building and to improve the quality of the gardens.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are very good. Links with other schools and the community are excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The management and effectiveness of the excellent partnerships with other schools.
- The school acts as an important resource for the community and has highly developed links with external organisations.
- The very good information for parents to involve them in their children's learning.
- The very positive views parents have of the school.

Commentary

27 Returns from the pre-inspection questionnaire and from questionnaires the school has used, confirm the very positive views parents have of the school. They point-out that the school has a

caring disposition, that it meets individual needs well and how it is an effectively run school. Inspection findings confirm these judgements.

28 The school keeps parents very well informed of their children's achievement and progress. The school regards parents very much as partners in the education process and they receive regular information on the initiatives that the school is taking. Recent communication has sought to involve parents in drugs education, a review of the bullying policy, ICT family learning, a newly started 'family and friends group' and matters involving attendance and lateness. Parents also attend after school culture and French clubs. The school prospectus shares the aim of the school – "raising standards in a warm, caring atmosphere" – with new parents.

29 The excellent links with other schools and the local community has a very positive impact on staff training and enriching the curriculum on offer to the pupils. The school works very closely with others in the community as a 'beacon' of managerial practice. There are many staff visits to other schools to share best practice, for example, in early years and special educational needs provision and ICT. There are very strong links with the local secondary schools, which results in exemplary transition for Year 6 pupils as well as innovative practices to share their expertise in science and ICT. Links with schools further afield in Norway, Africa and China adds an excellent international and cultural dimension to the pupils' work. Pupils' work in the 'arts' is very much enriched by the school's associations with local organisations.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher and key staff are very good. The governance of the school is good. The school deals very effectively with aids or barriers to learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good leadership, which has successfully developed a vision and ethos for the school appropriate to the needs of pupils and the community.
- Good management systems that are based on insightful self-evaluation procedures for literacy, numeracy and science.
- The monitoring of achievement to assess objectives for the delivery of ICT, religious education and foundation subjects is underdeveloped.
- The support of the governing body who are both well informed and influential in the promotion of the school's main aims and values.

Commentary

30 The very good leadership provided by the headteacher has clarified the strategic thinking and the role of self-evaluation in moving the school forward since the last inspection. Whole-school practices have been developed and have resulted in an excellent ethos for learning that is focussed on a commitment to achieving the full potential for every pupil, many of whom bring significant personal problems to school. The results of inspirational leadership, improving the personal development of pupils and developing a curriculum that addresses their needs, is influencing practices beyond the school.

31 Management structures within the school are good. Since the last inspection very good self-evaluation procedures in the main core subjects have provided the school with an effective analysis of pupils' progress in these areas. These have resulted in high achievements for most pupils compared with those of similar schools. There are up-to-date action plans and delegated teams to address the need to improve the target setting and monitoring of achievement in ICT, religious education and the foundation subjects. These areas at present are underdeveloped, next stage learning targets are not referenced to show what pupils need to do to improve.

32 The governance of the school is good. They review performance data and are aware of how the school is performing. They have provided invaluable advice on the appointment of senior staff. Training for key members has made them very aware of quality assurance procedures and is helping them to become critical friends of the school. The next important stage of their development is to evaluate the impact of their visits to school, especially to aid the monitoring work being developed in many curriculum areas.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	353,248
Total expenditure	396,668
Expenditure per pupil	2,620

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	47,922
Balance carried forward to the next	43,420

33 There has been very good progress made in addressing the key issue of inefficient administrative systems outlined in the last inspection. The school secretary has devised systems for the varying daily financial and administrative demands and also deals very efficiently with the day-to-day correspondence and visitors. These systems enable the headteacher and governors to have a good understanding of the school's financial position and the way in which the school identifies financial priorities. Budget figures, including carry-over amounts, are being carefully considered in the light of falling rolls. Money is being used to maintain staffing levels and to minimise the disruption of using supply teachers. These measures have a positive impact on maintaining the successful ethos for learning. The school follows a policy of best value practices, reflected, for example, in the immediate value made out of the major investment in the computer suite and additional hardware. The school provides very good value for money when the educational provision and pupils' levels of achievement are set against the financial circumstances in which the school operates.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

34 Falling numbers have adversely affected the school's organisation for children in the Foundation Stage. The nursery now operates in the afternoons only. There are only nine children in reception and these children work in mixed age nurture groups with Year 1 pupils each morning and then join the nursery children in the early years building (The Tree House) for the afternoon. Provision for children in the nursery part of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory but provision for reception-aged children varies from good to unsatisfactory across the different areas of learning. Overall, reception children are not getting a sufficiently balanced curriculum to meet their needs.

35 Children start in the nursery with skills that are well below what is typical for three and four year-olds. They get a broad range of experiences that match the different areas of learning expected for children of this age, with plenty of opportunities to mix and play with other children and to interact with adults. From a personal development point of view, the children in reception benefit from the fact that they work alongside older Year 1 pupils for part of their time and younger nursery children for the rest. As a result they achieve well in this area and develop good personal and social skills. However, the downside of this arrangement is that, when they are mixed with Year 1 pupils in the morning sessions, the curriculum and the teaching do not match their needs in communication, language and literacy. Consequently, their achievement in this area of learning is unsatisfactory. By the end of reception, children are not meeting the early learning goals expected for their age in mathematical development (although their achievement here is satisfactory) or in communication, language and literacy.

36 It was not possible to make a firm judgement on provision or standards in three of the six areas of learning: knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development. There was no direct teaching seen in these areas and displays showed little evidence of children's work.

37 The school's planning and use of assessment in the Foundation Stage was criticised in the last inspection. A lot of work was done and there is clear evidence that this did show significant improvements for several years following the inspection. However, a number of factors have had a negative impact recently and this has left the school facing the same issue again. The effect of falling numbers on the way that classes are organised and some unsettling staffing issues have all contributed to this. At the moment, planning is not precise enough and, although staff make regular observations of what children are doing and try to link this to what they expect them to achieve, this is not finding its way back into planning to make sure that work is matched sufficiently well to children's different needs.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Reception children benefit from working alongside older and younger pupils each day.
- The afternoon sessions provide nursery and reception children with good opportunities to play together, which promote their personal development.
- The Tree House is an attractive and stimulating place for children - this gives them the chance to start taking some responsibility and showing some independence in a comfortable environment.

Commentary

38 The school's current arrangement of mixing reception children with Year 1 pupils each morning, then putting them alongside nursery children each afternoon, has the positive effect that it gives them a chance to mix and work with children that are older and younger than themselves every

day. When they join the Year 1 pupils in the main school building, the reception children feel part of the whole school and join in with their routines, such as registering their choice of lunch each day by picking the correct plastic card and sticking it against their name on a board. When reception children move back into The Tree House each afternoon, their maturity shows as they work and play alongside the younger nursery children. For example, they regularly help the nursery children to put on coats and aprons, get equipment out and put it away, and to organise themselves during snack time.

39 The Tree House is a self-contained building that is laid out well to provide all the areas of learning required in the Foundation Stage. It is bright, colourful and has a good range of high quality resources and equipment. These are readily available to children, who know that they are expected to tidy up and put things away where they found them. There are plenty of quiet areas available where children can go, for example, to sit and look at books, or to crawl into the 'writing tent' to do some writing. Practical areas for creative work, such as painting, building models or playing musical instruments, are well organised and clearly labelled so that children know what they can and cannot do in the different areas. The outdoor facilities are very good and offer plenty of space for children to move and play. They have access to large toys and equipment, and a well laid out adventure area including wooden climbing frames, swings and balancing logs. All these facilities provide children with a comfortable and stimulating environment in which to work together and develop their personal and social skills.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **unsatisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- When reception children are taught with Year 1, the work they are given is often inappropriate and is not matched sufficiently to their needs.
- When reception children work alongside nursery children, there is no link between their other literacy work and what they are doing here.
- Assessments of what children know, understand and can do are not focused well enough and therefore do not feed into planning sufficiently well to move children's learning forward - their achievement is unsatisfactory.
- There is insufficient opportunity for reception children to use explorative and imaginary play to promote their language skills.

Commentary

40 Reception children are not getting an appropriate curriculum or entitlement in this area of learning. As a result, they are not achieving sufficiently. In the mornings they are taught in classes mixed with Year 1 pupils and the planning for these lessons is geared too much towards the older pupils. It does not take sufficient account of the needs of the reception-aged children and pays insufficient attention to the early learning goals that these children should be working towards. In addition, the teaching in these lessons is sometimes pitched inappropriately. For example, in one lesson where the children were trying to identify the sounds made by the initial letter of different objects, they were presented with pictures of peppers, pineapple and Swiss cheese – this simply confused them since they could not even recognise the objects. The formal approach to teaching literacy, which again is geared more towards the Year 1 pupils, does not give the reception children enough opportunity to use imaginative play to explore and develop their communication and language skills. However, when they move back into an appropriate early years environment each afternoon to work alongside the nursery children, this aspect of their learning is picked up well. For instance, they are given a range of imaginative role-play and structured play activities. Despite this improvement in provision in the afternoons, there is no clear or coherent link between what the children do in their formal lessons each morning and the activities that they undertake each afternoon. Consequently, their skills are not developing well enough.

41 The last inspection criticised the school's arrangements for assessment in this area of learning. Staff are now more aware of the need to identify what children can do and are beginning to make observations and notes as they go along. This is working well at an informal level in both the morning and afternoon teaching sessions. However, this information is not then being used to feed back into the planning of future work. Consequently, assessment is still a weakness and, when put alongside the shortfalls in planning for communication, language and literacy, explain why children's achievement is unsatisfactory and their standards are lower than they could be.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are given plenty of practical experiences that help to promote their mathematical understanding but they struggle to write things down.
- The planning for children's mathematical development has improved rapidly over the past few weeks and now shows an appropriate curriculum for both nursery and reception-aged children.
- Assessments of what children know, understand and can do are not used sufficiently to inform the next stage of their learning and move them on at a faster rate.

Commentary

42 The reception children are organised in the same way for mathematical development as they are for their communication, language and literacy lessons. However, provision and teaching is better in this area of learning. This is because both the planning and the teaching approach for mathematical development are much more suited to the needs and ages of the children. For example, morning lessons always involve an element of practical work, which encourages the children to explore and investigate for themselves. Because children have weak writing skills, they struggle to record their work and often need the help of an adult to scribe for them, even when simply writing down simple addition sums that they have built up from working with plastic cubes. Their work shows that few of the reception children can form recognisable numbers yet.

43 Planning for mathematical development has improved recently. The last few weeks show a much greater attention to the different needs of the reception and Year 1 children each morning, and to the nursery and reception children each afternoon. This is because the afternoon Foundation Stage activities are planned by the same person who also plans the mathematical sessions each morning. As a result, while the nursery children are given an appropriate range of activities to help them begin to recognise shapes, colours and numbers, the reception children are encouraged to build on their previous work. For instance, by counting how many children are present in the afternoon and by counting out the snacks.

44 Although the planning for mathematical development is improving, assessment is still not being used well enough to support this. Staff have introduced the same method of recording notes on post-its as they observe children working. However, this information is not yet underpinning the planning of future work to make sure that the next steps are geared specifically to the needs of each individual child. This is why achievement is just satisfactory, even with small numbers of children, where it could be better.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in this subject is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and pupils achieve well.
- Standards in writing are not high enough.
- Writing in other subjects is not good enough.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Assessment is used very well.
- In Year 1 resources are not supporting pupils' learning well enough, and work is not matched well to their differing abilities.

Commentary

45 Pupils achieve well because the school identifies, and supports well, the very diverse needs of the pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language. Analysis of assessments is very good. This information is used very well to ensure pupils achieve as well as they can. Teaching assistants are deployed very well to support small groups of pupils in lessons and when withdrawn for specific support.

46 Teachers place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. Standards in listening are good throughout the school because teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and they use skilful questions to encourage pupils to talk. Standards in speaking match what is expected for pupils in Years 2 and 6, and many pupils achieve well from a very low starting point. They are confident to share their ideas because they know that what they have to say will be valued by their teachers and classmates.

47 The school's clear focus on developing reading allocates additional time daily for pupils to read for enjoyment. Pupils follow a carefully structured reading programme as they move through the school. This impacts well on their good achievement, and standards match what is expected for pupils in Years 2 and 6. Pupils learn a range of strategies to read unfamiliar words and to retrieve information. Older pupils use these skills well to find information from the Internet, to use the library, or to use dictionaries or thesaurus' in lessons. Pupils confidently talk about their favourite authors. The quality and range of books has improved since the last inspection, particularly the range of books with a multicultural focus.

48 Standards in writing are below what is expected for pupils in Years 2 and 6. Strategies are in place aimed at improving handwriting, spelling, punctuation and pupils' writing. Although spellings are regularly learnt as homework, only in one class do pupils of differing abilities have different words to learn. In an excellent lesson in Year 2, pupils were challenged extremely well. They sat in a circle and orally suggested sentences to build up a paragraph about "The Troll". Every pupil made a contribution, even a pupil with severe speech impairment who was supported very well by the classroom assistant. Pupils worked extremely hard, using good adjectives and they all wanted to suggest better sentences than their classmates, often improving the adjectives they had used.

Strengths and weaknesses overall in teaching include:

- Questioning is used well to challenge pupils and promote their learning.
- Assessment is used well to group pupils by ability and provide individual writing targets.
- Marking is good. It informs pupils how they can improve and the progress they are making towards their targets.
- Resources, including classroom displays, are used well to support writing.

- In Year 1 resources are not supporting pupils' learning well enough, and work is not matched well to their differing abilities.

49 English is led and managed very well by the subject leader who has only very recently taken on the role. She has a very clear view of what needs to be improved, and this has been shared with the staff. Her teaching is a shining example of how writing can be improved. In one term she has already amended the action planning for English, monitored teachers' planning and looked at pupils' work. Assessment procedures have been improved and the results used to provide pupils with their own writing targets.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

50 Pupils' language skills are used well to support learning in other subjects because teachers use their good questioning skills across the whole curriculum. Pupils know how to find and locate information in books and when using ICT. Pupils practise some literacy skills very well when they have access to computers in the computer suite drafting and editing their work. This is an improvement since the last inspection. However, literacy is insufficiently used across the curriculum because pupils do not write enough for different purposes and audiences in subjects such as religious education, history and geography.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in this subject is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A strong emphasis on practical and investigative problem solving in number work.
- There is very good leadership of the subject, monitoring and action planning has a direct impact on raising standards.
- Consistently good levels of achievement because of accurate assessments of work informing the next stages of learning.
- ICT is not yet used consistently enough to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding, especially in graphical interpretation.

Commentary

51 Pupils enjoy mathematics, particularly their involvement in practical and investigative work. Lessons observed where pupils work in groups to estimate measuring and to solve puzzles gives a clear indication of the very high levels of collaborative work. Assessments of learning are recorded in detail and teachers are adept at setting accurate targets for all levels of ability. Because of this achievement is consistently high in mathematics although standards in national tests fluctuate due to the different abilities of different year groups, especially the different levels of special educational needs pupils and of ability on entry to the school.

52 Teachers are using the National Numeracy Strategy well to plan and organise their lessons and to challenge all levels of ability. Questioning skills are used very effectively to challenge pupils to discuss their work and especially to focus on mental agility to solve problems. Teachers share the learning outcomes with their pupils and plenaries effectively check what learning has taken place. Classroom assistants are also clear in their roles. For example in a Year 4 lesson, very good assistance was given to a refugee pupil newly arrived at the school because the adult support was very clear about both literacy and numeracy objectives. The school has focussed on patterns within numerical understanding. Year 6 groups made very good progress in spotting the correct formulae when substituting numbers for shapes. Their thinking was extended by homework tasks that required them to extend the difficulty of the pattern with their own examples.

53 The subject is very well co-ordinated because the knowledgeable leader is very aware of the achievements of pupils throughout the school. Analysis of work, test results and scrutinised work is

accurately assimilated to produce very relevant action plans for the subject. For example, the concept of problem solving is presently being successfully disseminated and practised across the school. A very good example of this was observed in the work of Year 2 pupils. Many of these pupils are presently working at levels well below those expected of their age but work given is very well matched to their needs and also accurately assessed using National Curriculum criteria. Practical work for these pupils is well integrated into class activities using relevant numerical and linguistic support. Pupils are making very good progress in using language to aid counting and place value understanding. The teaching of mathematics in all classrooms is presently under-using the potential of ICT, especially within the areas of more sophisticated measuring and graphical representation and interpretation.

Mathematics across the curriculum

54 Pupils make good use of their numeracy skills in their science studies. They have an extensive experience of experimenting as they move through the school so measuring and recording skills are extensively used. More extensive and sophisticated number work was used when the same pupils visited a local college and benefited from the chance to see three-dimensional representations of the different planets in their auditorium. As ICT is being developed in other subjects this further develops the use of numeracy skills.

SCIENCE

Provision in this subject is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A strong emphasis on practical and investigative work in junior classes leads to very good achievement and above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- There are extensive links with the local community and other schools, which enrich the science curriculum very well.
- There is effective leadership and direction from a confident and experienced co-ordinator - this is promoting good teaching in science.
- ICT is not yet making a significant contribution to pupils' science experiences in lessons.

Commentary

55 The school has a broad and balanced science curriculum that places a strong emphasis on practical and investigative work. Pupils are encouraged to explore and experiment for themselves and this gives them plenty of opportunities to develop enquiring and inquisitive attitudes towards science. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils have a good grasp of a range of scientific concepts. They achieve very well and their standards are good, which reflect the school's performance in science in the national tests for 11 year-olds.

56 The emphasis on practical investigation can be seen in Year 3, where pupils have tested different materials to see how far they stretch. They have examined a range of soil samples and tested different rocks for hardness, and have investigated how sound travels. Pupils in Year 5 have continued the emphasis on practical investigation when looking at the properties of liquids and testing materials to see what happens to them when they are heated. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils undertook an investigation to see whether changing the distance between an object and a light source affects the height of the shadow it casts. This was a good lesson where pupils were engrossed in their work and co-operated very well to carry out the experiment and record their results.

57 The school enriches its science curriculum very well through links with the local community and other schools. For example, when studying about the earth and space, pupils visit a local college and benefit from the chance to see three-dimensional representations of the different planets in their auditorium. Links with local secondary schools give pupils opportunities to work with specialist teachers and use computers to monitor, sense and control devices, such as controlling the operation

of a set of traffic lights, making a model clown's nose flash and his bow-tie rotate, and setting up electrical circuits to control the operation of lights and other electronic equipment in their 'ideal bedroom'. Visits to places of interest, such as the park, a local wood and the Hancock Museum all contribute to the range of experiences that pupils get in science.

58 Science is led and managed effectively. The co-ordinator has a clear love for the subject and enthuses colleagues - this is one of the reasons why teaching is good. The effective leadership by the co-ordinator is instrumental in maintaining the school's high standards and in developing the breadth of experiences for the pupils. For example, work with local Beacon schools, attendance at workshops and science challenges at a regional science centre, and the achievement of a Healthy School Award, are all testament to the co-ordinator's drive and enthusiasm for this subject.

59 ICT makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' work in science. When they are working on topics and projects through their links with other schools, pupils often make much greater use of their ICT skills because these schools have good resources that allow them to do this. The school has recently purchased some laptops that could make a big contribution to learning in science but this potential has not yet been recognised or realised fully.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in this subject is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ICT is used well to support topic work in other subjects and is used very effectively to support the development of pupils' literacy skills.
- Very strong links with other schools overcome shortfalls in the school's resources and enhance the experiences offered to pupils.
- There is no formal system for assessing pupils' standards or achievement in ICT.
- Resources are not yet organised as well as they could be - computers in classrooms are not being used effectively.

Commentary

60 The school teaches the basic ICT skills but the curriculum also makes good links to themes and topics in other subjects. This means that pupils quickly learn to use their ICT skills in support of their other work and begin to see ICT as a tool to support their learning. For instance, when learning about Victorian toys in history, Year 2 pupils have used this knowledge to understand how a branching database works. Similarly, pupils in Year 5 have developed their word processing and presentation skills by writing about their history topic of 'myths'. Pupils learn about spreadsheets by modelling different recipes for bread (which brings in work in mathematics and design and technology) and they regularly use graphics packages to support their work in art and design. Many subjects make use of the Internet for research. For example, pupils in Year 4 have used it in geography to find information about the River Tyne, while Year 5 pupils have researched their geography topic on Africa and have found out about cities in Athens when studying Ancient Greece in history.

61 The school has improved its provision since the last inspection but shortages in hardware and suitable software have been a barrier to pupils' learning previously. The school has overcome many of these shortfalls by making very effective links with local secondary schools, which have given pupils a range of practical experiences that they would otherwise have missed. For example, pupils in Year 6 thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to make a recording soundtrack to overlay a cartoon slideshow and have also had the chance to use data logging equipment to monitor and measure changes in the environment over a period of time. This partnership with other schools is a strong feature of the ICT curriculum and positively enriches the provision for older pupils.

62 The school does not yet have a formal method for evaluating and assessing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in ICT. Hence, although their achievement is satisfactory, and

standards match what is expected for their age, the school is not actually assessing this. Pupils' previous work is stored on the network in the computer suite but this is simply the end product. Teachers have no way of identifying what this means in terms of pupils' achievement because it is not referenced in any way to what the pupils actually did, or to how well they did and what they need to do next to improve. This has been recognised as an issue and the ICT co-ordinator is planning to work with other local primary schools to develop a standard system that will feed into the secondary school in the future.

63 The school's development in ICT has been hampered by a lack of physical resources in recent years. This has not been helped by a delayed order for laptops that only arrived several weeks before the inspection. As a result, there is a mixed range of equipment at present and it is not yet organised sufficiently well for pupils to get the maximum benefit. For example, the new laptops have the capacity for wireless communication but the layout of the school building restricts where they can be used at the moment and hinders their portability. The computer suite has only recently been equipped with an interactive whiteboard and the position of this is not suitable. Many of the computers in the individual classrooms are old and unable to work on the school's network - this limits their potential and restricts pupils' incidental access to ICT. Despite this, the school is making good use of the resources it does have available and there are clear plans to continue improving the range and quality of equipment to support pupils' ICT experiences.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

64 Pupils made good use of their ICT skills to support work in many other areas of the curriculum. Literacy is an area where ICT makes a particularly strong contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils benefit from several specific software packages that help them develop their literacy skills at their own rate. For example, in one lesson seen, groups of Year 5 pupils worked with a classroom assistant in the computer suite and practised identifying 'suffixes'. This was a good lesson where pupils clearly learnt a lot about applying correct literacy rules by systematically working through examples that were presented to them.

HUMANITIES

65 Work was sampled from **geography and history** and only one lesson was seen in each subject, so it was not possible to make a firm judgement about provision in these subjects. Visits, visitors and the use of ICT support geography and history well, and contribute very well to pupils' cultural development. The school makes effective use of staff visits to places such as China, Africa and Norway. Pupils in Year 5 took notes during the head teacher's talk about her visit to Africa, and then wrote detailed accounts.

66 Pupils in Year 2 have a good understanding of what life is like in Brazil through regular visits from a voluntary organisation worker. In Year 6, pupils practised geography skills well as part of a visit in the local area. They recorded features of a stretch of the river Derwent, the flow rate of the river, temperature and clearness of the water. On returning to school, pupils then wrote letters of thanks. In Year 4, pupils have used a website to research information about the River Tyne.

67 However, there are few examples of pupils using their writing skills in both subjects. In one class, in geography, there is too heavy a reliance on the use of worksheets. In an otherwise very good history lesson, the recording of facts and personal written interpretations would have further enhanced some pupils' understanding of the role of the River Nile in Egypt's development.

Religious Education

Provision in this subject is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Visits, and visitors, enrich the subject well.

- Good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Writing skills not practised enough in some classes in the juniors.
- Assessment guidance is not used consistently.

Commentary

68 Pupils' achieve satisfactorily overall. They achieve better in Years 2 and 5 because assessments and tasks are matched more clearly to what is expected for pupils in Gateshead's Agreed Syllabus. Further opportunities for increased understanding are missed, for example, in Year 6, when the tasks given, insufficiently took account of the differences in ability of pupils and also in variation in expectations for the quality and quantity of written work to be undertaken.

69 In Year 2, photographs of pupils enacting a Christian wedding ceremony in the local Church are accompanied by their own writing showing they understand the important aspects of this ceremony. Following on from sequencing the main facts of the Christian creation story, these pupils wrote about their own ideas for caring for the world. In Year 6, pupils know stories from the Bible and have an appropriate understanding of the life and work of Jesus. They use words such as 'joyful' 'faithful' and 'worshipping' to describe the meaning, or feelings evoked, by the Christian cross. Pupils' learning is enhanced by the effective use of visits, and visitors, to support learning. It is further enhanced by teaching that considers their spiritual development and with discussions and tasks that centre on the respect of different values and beliefs. However, in discussion, their recall of the important beliefs, leaders, and ceremonies in Islam and Hinduism is patchy.

70 There is clear assessment guidance from the Local Education Authority, which is not being used consistently in the school. Consequently pupils of differing abilities often do the same work and this was highlighted in the last inspection report. There are several examples of all the pupils in some classes writing the same words in sentences. This does not provide enough challenge for many pupils, particularly the more able pupils, and is one reason why standards are not higher in Year 6.

71 Visits, and visitors, particularly the local Vicar, enrich the subject well. In Year 5, pupils visited several local Christian churches and also Newcastle Cathedral. Their work went beyond completing worksheets during the visit, and pupils were challenged well to evaluate these visits.

72 The subject co-ordinator checks teachers' planning to make sure it matches the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. She also looks at pupils' work and displays. However, this monitoring is not yet rigorous enough to pick up the differences in the quality and quantity of work produced by different groups of pupils.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL SUBJECTS

73 No lessons in art and design or design and technology were seen during the inspection, so it was not possible to make firm judgements about the provision or standards in either of these subjects. However, pupils' work and displays in the school were examined. No physical education lessons were observed.

74 **Art and design** was a strength in the last inspection and this was due mainly to the way that art enriched the curriculum and experiences for pupils in other subjects. The current displays in the school show that art and design related activities continue to underpin many of the topics studied in other areas of the curriculum, such as history and geography. Pupils' work is displayed very well in classrooms and around the school and the quality of display is high. However, the range and quality of work in pupils' books is limited and does not show how pupils' skills progress in either of these subjects. The one area where it is clear that the school does well is in using the work of famous artists to support its work.

75 In art and design, Year 2 pupils have created a collage of animals using torn paper in the style of Matisse. Year 3 pupils have mixed different colours with white to create their own 'shade charts' and have produced their own versions of paintings of 'The Lily Pond' by Monet, using rollers,

sponges and brushes to create a textured effect. This particular piece of work is of good quality. Pupils in Year 4 have been learning about Ancient Egypt in history and are starting to appreciate the choice of colours used by Egyptian artists. Year 5 pupils have visited an art gallery and have looked at a range of work, producing their own pastel examples in the style of Cézanne. They have also made Batik pictures linked to their work on Africa. Pupils in Year 6 have used Lowry's work as the stimulus for their chalk and pastel drawings of local features.

76 In **design and technology**, pupils in Year 1 have made simple drawings of what they plan to build using materials such as play dough or Lego. Year 2 pupils have made puppets and have looked at different ways to join pieces of card together, such as by glue or staples. They have also learnt to sew a simple running stitch. Very little work was seen from older pupils. A display in Year 3 shows that pupils have looked at packaging materials and have then designed and made boxes to store different three-dimensional shapes. Older pupils have designed a menu for a local hotel, others have made textured Christmas cards and Year 6 pupils have started to create simple weaving patterns.

77 In **physical education** the school follows national guidelines to ensure a good breadth and balance of physical activities are undertaken. It is well enriched with extra-curricular activities in areas such as dance, where external expertise is used to compliment the strengths of the teachers. Year 5 pupils explain enthusiastically how much they enjoy planning, rehearsing and performing country dances and African dances.

MUSIC

Provision in this subject is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All Year 2 pupils learn to play the recorder.
- Very good teaching by the Local Education Authority peripatetic service.
- Links with the community are strong.
- Music contributes well to pupils' social and cultural development.
- No strategies are yet in place to help teachers know clearly what standards pupils have reached and what learning objectives will be developed at the next stages in learning.

Commentary

78 Throughout the school, pupils' singing in assemblies is good. In Year 2, all the pupils learn to play the recorder, and a few pupils in Years 4 and 5 regularly attend an extra-curricular music club. Pupils in the juniors have the opportunity to learn to play the violin and viola.

79 There was insufficient evidence to judge standards in Year 6. Pupils in Year 2 reach standards above those expected for their age. Every pupil in Year 2 learns to play the recorder. A visiting music specialist teaches both Year 1 and Year 2 classes.

80 Teaching was very good in a lesson in Year 2. Pupils were managed very well and they achieved very well. They worked hard practising playing notes correctly on the recorder, and were very proud of their music making. Pupils recognise sufficient notation to play a scale and sight-read music confidently, playing in time to a taped recording in the extra-curricular recorder group.

81 There are very strong links with the community. For a long time the school has had close links with the Sage centre for music. Teachers have received training in teaching 'folk' music and dance skills. Pupils, parents and even grandparents took part in a music workshop in the Sage centre. Frequent visitors to the school enrich the subject very well. As a result, pupils learn about local Northumbrian folk songs and dances, and songs and music from other cultures, such as Africa. Pupils and staff at the school used many cross-curricular themes to produce a musical play called

'Monster in the Mine, based on the Felling colliery disaster. These opportunities contribute very well to their social and cultural development.

82 The subject co-ordinator regularly checks teachers' planning to make sure that the National Curriculum requirements are met. However, there are no strategies yet in place to help teachers know clearly what standards pupils have reached and what learning objectives will be developed at the next stages in learning. Resources are good with a selection of musical instruments displayed in all classes.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision for personal, social and health education, including citizenship (PSHCE) is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's achievements in Healthy School's awards.
- Contribution to citizenship through links with the community.

Commentary

83 The school has a very well established PSHCE planned programme evidenced by the school's very good accreditation for Healthy School's status. It has introduced healthy snacks at the start of the school day, to encourage pupils to think about their diet.

84 The School Council is well established, and citizenship is promoted well through these pupils' involvement in policymaking and suggestions for improvements to the school. There are effective links with a local comprehensive school supporting the development of citizenship. In the summer term, Year 6 pupils visit the school for a day working on the citizenship theme of 'Change'. Pupils work with tutors during the day developing drama activities on this theme.

85 In one lesson observed, very good group work collaboration resulted in a comprehensive list of health and safety factors as part of the formal PSHCE curriculum.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	6
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).