

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **DUNSTON RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Dunston, Gateshead

LEA area: Gateshead

Unique reference number: 108367

Headteacher: Mrs Julie Goodfellow

Lead inspector: Susan Walker

Dates of inspection: February 23 – 25 2004

Inspection number: 256006

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:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	196
School address:	Colliery Road Dunston Gateshead Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	NE11 9DX
Telephone number:	0191 4334019
Fax number:	0191 4334020
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Cllr. Albert Brooks
Date of previous inspection:	September 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is an average sized primary school situated in the urban area of Dunston in Gateshead. There is a high level of industry in the surrounding area and the river Tyne borders one side of the school. Most pupils live in the immediate vicinity of the school, where there is a diverse range of housing, including older terraced property, rented accommodation and newly built private homes. The school has a nursery class for thirty children who attend either full or part time. In total there are 196 boys and girls, most of whom are of white British heritage. A minority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly Black and White Caribbean, Asian, or of mixed race. Additionally, eight of the pupils are refugees. There are sixteen pupils for whom English is not the first language, a percentage that is higher than in most schools. Ten of these pupils are in the early stages of learning English and benefit from support from outside agencies. Pupils come from a broad range of backgrounds, although a significant number come from families where there is some economic and social disadvantage. The proportion of pupils who are eligible free school meals is above the national average. There is a broad spread of attainment when the pupils join the school, but it is well below average overall. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average. Most of these pupils experience severe learning or speech and communication difficulties. None of the pupils has a statement of special educational needs. Pupil mobility is a barrier to learning in this school. In the past year 22 pupils have joined at times other than the usual starting times and 26 have left mid term. The school is part of a mini Education Action Zone. It won a School Achievement Award in 2001 and a Healthy School award in 2003. During the past eighteen months there has been a significant change of staffing, including the appointment of a new head and deputy headteacher.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21045	Susan Walker	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage; science; art and design; personal, social and health education and citizenship.
12682	Jim Griffin	Lay inspector	
14851	Graham Laws	Team inspector	Mathematics; geography; history; music; physical education; special educational needs; English as an additional language.
19120	Derek Pattinson	Team inspector	English; information and communication technology; design and technology; religious education.

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a rapidly improving school that is now effective and gives good value for money.**

Standards are slowly rising and pupils are achieving well overall. The pupils have good attitudes to learning and they behave very well. This contributes to the progress pupils are making and the improving standards. The very strong and effective leadership and management underpin the school's improvement.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is well led and managed, with a clear agenda for improvement based on accurate and candid self-evaluation.
- Standards have risen and are now close to the national average in English and mathematics by Year 6, but in reading standards remain below average.
- Attendance has improved significantly.
- Children get off to a good start with their education in the Foundation Stage.
- There is a good climate for learning and pupils behave very well.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress because of the good provision made for them.
- The quality of relationships and mutual respect encompasses all aspects of the work of the school and the school has the confidence of parents.
- Teaching has improved overall but it is inconsistent in quality in Years 3 to 6.
- Whilst achievement is satisfactory in science and in information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 3 to 6, standards are below average.

Since the last inspection in 1998 there has been a sharp improvement in almost every facet of the school's work, especially in the past year. All issues from the previous inspection have been tackled vigorously. The most significant improvement has been the way the new headteacher has masterminded the raft of strategies for improvement, which are taking effect. She is well supported by the senior management team and all staff, who are pulling together towards the common goal of raising standards. There is now a much better use of performance data and there are several newly established whole-school systems to improve teaching and learning, though these are yet to be fully embedded or to have had their impact evaluated. As a result of all these measures standards are slowly rising and the quality of teaching is improving. Although attainment in ICT in Years 3 to 6 remains below average, provision in the subject is now much improved, and standards in Years 1 and 2 are now average.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average*

*E\* means results were in the lowest five per cent nationally.*

*Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

**Achievement is good overall.** The children's attainments when they first start school are well below average, but because of the good start they get in the nursery and reception classes they make good progress. Despite the good provision, by the end of the reception year standards remain

below average overall. Throughout Years 1 and 2 pupils continue to make good progress, reaching average standards in writing and mathematics but below average in reading. By Year 6 pupils achieve satisfactorily but they do not make such rapid progress because the teaching in Years 3 to 6 is more variable. By Year 6 standards are average in English and mathematics. In reading, science and in ICT, however, standards are still below average.

**The pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good.** Their attitudes are good and behaviour is very good. Attendance has improved and is now good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is satisfactory overall and improving rapidly. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall;** teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. It is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6 because there is more variation in standards between classes and more inconsistency that affects the progress pupils make. Common strengths in the teaching lie in the high expectations of the staff and the excellent relationships that promote the very good management of pupils' behaviour. Teachers give a strong emphasis to the development of language throughout the school and this is working well in helping to raise standards. Newly introduced systems for planning and assessment have done much to improve teaching but in some lessons pupils have little opportunity to show independence and tasks are not always well matched to the needs of the pupils. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum, which is enriched by a wide range of additional activities. There is good support for pupils with differing needs. The school takes very good care of the pupils and this, together with the good partnership with parents, contributes positively to the climate for learning.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good overall** The leadership of the headteacher is very good and the school is well managed. The headteacher has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to bring about improvement based on stringent analysis and review. She is supported well by key staff. Governors provide good support and are becoming increasingly effective in their monitoring role and in strategic planning. Financial management is prudent. All statutory requirements are met.

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

The parents and pupils are very satisfied. Pupils are proud of their school and there are increasingly good links with parents that enable them to be involved with their child's learning.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Raise standards in reading throughout the school.
- Raise standards in science and ICT in Years 3 to 6.
- Strengthen the teaching in Years 3 to 6 to make it more consistent and bring it up to the same standard as in the rest of the school.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Standards in the school are slowly rising. Pupils achieve well in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 as a result of the good teaching. In Years 3 to 6 achievement is satisfactory but the rate of progress is less rapid because the teaching is more variable.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children get off to a good start with their education in the Foundation Stage, where the provision and quality of teaching are good.
- Standards in English and mathematics have risen slightly and are now broadly average but reading standards throughout the school are still below average.
- Standards in science and ICT have risen to average in Years 1 and 2 but remain below average in Years 3 to 6.
- Girls are doing much better than boys.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language make good progress and achieve well because of the good provision that is made for them.

#### Commentary

1. Standards in the school have picked up in the past year, following a period when they were below average in national tests most years since the last inspection. The exception to this was in 2001 where the group of pupils included more high attainers and fewer pupils with special educational needs and consequently performed better in the tests. During this period there was significant underachievement in English, mathematics and science throughout the school. Against this background the school has concentrated on arresting the pattern of underachievement in past years. Improved attainment in English is the major focus for the school in the current year and probably in years to come. Although there is still much work to be done, there are clear signs that the school is in recovery.
2. Most children start the nursery with skills that are well below average overall, many having under-developed language and communication and social skills. The majority make good progress in the Foundation Stage as a result of the good teaching and so, by the end of the reception year their attainments are below, rather than well below expectation for their age and they achieve well. Despite this good progress, the majority of children are unlikely to meet the nationally expected goals for their age in communication, language and literacy, in mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world by the end of the reception year. They are on course to meet the goals in personal, social and emotional development as well as creative and physical development.

#### *Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003*

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.2 (13.8)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	14.3 (11.6)	14.6 (4.4)
mathematics	16.1 (14.4)	16.3 (6.5)

*There were 25 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	22.9 (23.3)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	25.9 (25.3)	26.8 (26.7)
science	26.3 (25.6)	28.6 (28.3)

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

3. In national tests and assessments in 2003, Year 6 pupils attained standards in English that were very low, as they had been in the previous year. In fact, standards were in the lowest five per cent nationally. In science too, results were well below average, as they had been in 2002. Standards were below average in mathematics but showing a slight improvement, having been well below average in 2002. When considering the school's performance in comparison to similar schools the picture was slightly better in mathematics, where results were above average. Furthermore, the pupils had made very good progress from their below average results at the end of Year 2. Standards in English remained very low, however.
4. Throughout Years 1 and 2 the current pupils continue to build on their good progress in the early years because teaching is good. By the end of Year 2 the majority are now reaching average standards in speaking and listening and in mathematics, which represents good achievement in relation to their limited skills when they first started in the nursery. However, in national tests and assessments too few pupils reach the higher Level 3 for their age, while there is a heavier weighting of pupils reaching the lower levels. Standards in reading are not as high as in mathematics, being below average overall, though pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their abilities.
5. Standards in the current Year 6 are now broadly average in English and mathematics and pupils achieve satisfactorily. This is an improvement on previous years. However, pupils in Years 3 to 6 do not progress at such a steady rate as in Years 1 and 2 because the teaching is more variable, particularly in the early part of the key stage. Throughout the school spelling and handwriting develop at an uneven rate because there is no consistent approach to the teaching of these skills as yet. The quality of presentation in English varies greatly from class to class. Standards in reading are not yet high enough, partly because there has been inconsistency in the teaching in the past, which is now being remedied with new systems. Nevertheless, there is still work to be done to improve the systems for the teaching of reading in the early stages and to develop the skills of older pupils in accessing information from texts. In science standards are below average because there are gaps in the pupils' knowledge and understanding that have accrued over time. Despite this, they achieve satisfactorily in relation to their well below average skills when they started in the nursery.
6. There has been an improvement in the provision for ICT since the last inspection. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 now reach standards that are typical for their age. This is not the case in Years 3 to 6 however, where standards are lower than expected because skills are insufficiently secure. Furthermore, pupils lack opportunities to hone their computer skills in the classroom to support their work in other subjects. Even so, achievement overall is satisfactory. In most other subjects pupils reach the standards expected for their age and achieve at least satisfactorily. In art and design and design and technology the pupils have not benefited from the systematic teaching of skills over time and so the work of the oldest pupils tends to lack the precision and detail typically seen in Year 6.
7. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Almost all reach their target levels in English by the end of Years 2 and 6 because they are supported well through work that is carefully matched to their needs and their individual learning programmes. A small number receive intensive individual support that helps them to grasp basic concepts. Because they

benefit from additional adult support and high quality teaching in small groups they achieve well in relation to their capabilities. Similarly, pupils for whom English is not a first language make good progress. Some ultimately achieve higher than average levels in their national tests. A small number move ahead much more slowly and have difficulty in accessing the broad range of written work undertaken in the school. These pupils are supported by a visiting specialist teacher and their progress is very carefully monitored by senior managers. The school's careful analysis of performance data has shown that girls are doing much better than boys. This variation has been addressed well through a range of effective strategies such as improvements to the curriculum, staff development, a review of resources to select materials with appeal for boys and careful monitoring of the progress of boys. It is too early to assess the impact of these measures.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils show good attitudes to their work. Their behaviour is very good, underpinned by very good relationships among pupils and with adults. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are now good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' attitudes towards school are very good, whilst their attitudes to work in lessons are good.
- The school's measures to promote positive attitudes, behaviour and attendance are very effective.
- Pupils' personal qualities are well developed.

### **Commentary**

- Nearly all pupils are proud of their school and enjoy attending. School plays an important part in pupils' lives. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils justifiably express very positive views about the impact of the new headteacher. They also appreciate the growing range of after school clubs as well as the encouragement provided by class teachers and the challenging work in lessons. They enjoy most of their lessons and the very positive atmosphere during playtimes and lunchtime. In lessons, pupils' attitudes towards their work are good. In most lessons, pupils listen well and show good levels of interest, concentration and determination to complete set tasks. Pupils respond particularly well when expectations are high, lesson tasks are demanding and they are able to engage in a variety of practical activities. Their enthusiasm for practical activities is clearly evident in physical education and ICT lessons.
- Behaviour in classrooms, during lunchtime and playtimes is very good. Staff set high expectations for pupils' behaviour and most pupils are very keen not to let down their teachers or themselves. The very good and reliable behaviour of nearly all pupils is a key element in the positive atmosphere for learning and social development that prevails. A calm, social atmosphere prevails in the dining hall. Parents and pupils confirm that there is no racism and bullying has greatly reduced in recent months. Pupils know that such incidents, once reported, are thoroughly and fairly investigated. The school very effectively places a strong emphasis on prevention of all forms of anti-social behaviour, through discussions in assembly and regular recognition of good behaviour and attitudes. Exclusions are rare.

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

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	196	1	0

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

10. Pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes towards their learning. Most show good levels of concentration. Pupils for whom English is an additional language integrate well and play a full part in most lessons.
11. The provision for pupils' spiritual, social and moral development is good and is at the heart of the school's work. It has a very positive effect on pupils' attitudes and behaviour and the warm and supportive relationships in the school. The daily act of collective worship, often on a Christian theme, makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual development because it is well planned to include a particular focus for learning and time for personal reflection. In assemblies that introduced the theme of Easter for example, pupils were taught the significance of the events that led up to Easter such as Shrove Tuesday, Lent and Ash Wednesday. Because the material was taught sensitively and explained clearly pupils listened well and were able to interpret these events in the context of their own lives by thinking about someone who loves them in the same way that God loves his people.
12. From their very first days in school pupils are encouraged to be independent, to share and to listen to one another so the children in the Foundation Stage meet the goals set nationally for their personal and social development. Lessons higher up the school provide good opportunities for pupils to consider social situations and how their behaviour impacts on others as they discuss matters such as playground rules, eating in the dining hall and differences between people. The sound provision for the pupils' cultural development helps them to gain an understanding of their own cultural heritage, through listening to different types of music, through the appreciation of poetry in their literacy lessons and through work in history and geography. There are, however, fewer opportunities to develop the pupils' awareness of other cultures and faiths apart from topics in religious education lessons, and this area is ripe for further improvement.
13. Personal development is promoted effectively through the personal, social, health and citizenship education curriculum (PSHCE) and reinforced in assemblies. In '*circle time*' – a time set aside for pupils to discuss thoughts and feelings - pupils have good opportunities to share with each other their thoughts and ideas about issues that relate to their own experiences. Not only do these lessons help pupils to develop their own opinions and views, but they also promote speaking and listening. Parents are very happy that the school is helping their children to develop in a mature and responsible manner.
14. Very harmonious relationships among pupils, irrespective of background or gender, are a very positive feature. Teachers value pupils' work and effectively praise effort and good work. This significantly assists their learning.
15. For several years, prior to this school year, attendance was consistently below the national average but it is now good. The table below provides attendance and absence data for the latest complete reporting year, when the attendance was below the national average at 93.6 per cent. Attendance levels in the current year are significantly improved and, at over 95 per cent, are above the national average. The school's measures to monitor absence and promote high attendance are now very good. Close data monitoring, regular recognition of high attendance and sensitive 'first day absent' contact with parents are the keys to the major improvement in attendance. As a result, parents now clearly understand that the school places great emphasis on attendance and nearly all contact the school in the event of absence. As a result, unauthorised absence is also significantly reduced. Nearly all pupils arrive routinely on time for school.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence	
School data	5.9

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.6

National data	5.4
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National data	0.4
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*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is satisfactory overall and improving steadily. The combination of good teaching in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, the satisfactory teaching in Years 3 to 6, the developing curriculum and systems for assessment is helping to raise standards throughout the school. Pupils are cared for and guided very well, and links with parents, the community and other schools are good overall.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, enabling pupils to get off to a good start with their education and to achieve well. In Years 3 to 6 teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and this results in a more variable rate of progress. Assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a suitably strong emphasis on the development of language throughout the school.
- Relationships are very good and help to sustain the very good levels of behaviour.
- Expectations are high.
- There is good support for pupils with differing needs.
- Management systems have helped to improve teaching significantly.
- In some lessons there is too much teacher direction and pupils have little opportunity to show independence.
- Tasks are not always matched appropriately to the needs of the pupils and the quality of marking is variable.

### Commentary

16. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection when it was judged to be predominantly satisfactory, with 11 per cent of lessons judged as unsatisfactory. Since then, the proportion of good and very good teaching has improved considerably and is bringing about the improvement in standards. Parents are unanimous in their view that the teaching in the school is good. Staff are embracing with enthusiasm the change and innovation currently taking place in the school and there is very good teamwork evolving. Scrutiny of pupils' work reveals a noticeable dip in standards and in expectations in Year 3. At the time of the inspection, however, the Year 3 class was taken by a very capable supply teacher. Examples of very good teaching were seen in most year groups throughout the school.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 32 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	6 (19%)	15 (47%)	11 (34%)	0	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

17. All staff are mindful of the need to extend speaking and listening because of the limited linguistic skills of many pupils when they first start school, so most lessons include appropriate opportunities for discussion and talk. An effective device to promote talking is the use of 'talk partners'. This strategy works well in encouraging pupils to discuss their ideas freely and confidently, as when pupils in Year 6 maturely considered which was the best line in a kenning poem they were studying. Most lessons include some form of discussion and teachers are

skilled at framing questions in such a way that there is plenty of scope for pupils of all levels of ability to join in and to share their thoughts, feelings and ideas with the rest of the class. There is an expectation that pupils will use correct vocabulary, specific to each subject, and teachers and pupils use the right terminology as a matter of course. In all classes the colourful displays reinforce vocabulary and provide helpful reminders about spelling and grammar for pupils to refer to.

18. Relationships throughout the school are very good and as a result pupils behave very well because they are clear about the expectations of the teachers and enjoy their lessons. A common thread that runs through the teaching is the confident and often lively way in which teachers introduce lessons, reflecting their secure subject knowledge. Explanations are usually clear and engaging so that pupils are well motivated. Because the lessons are well planned, teachers have very clear expectations of what they want the pupils to learn. These objectives are shared with the pupils at the start of the lesson through the use of 'WALT' (We are learning to.....) and reinforced in the effective concluding sessions where the pupils are reminded of what they have learned.
19. The teachers generally have high expectations of the pupils. They manage their classes with unobtrusive strategies that maintain very good discipline but keep lessons on track without unnecessary interruptions. Lessons are planned well with a good structure that ensures there is variety and a balance between written activities and direct teaching. A useful strategy to maintain the momentum of lessons is the way in which most teachers place a clear time limit on tasks so pupils work productively. When teaching is very good there is an infectious enthusiasm generated by the teacher that promotes real excitement in learning, as was seen in a very successful lesson in mathematics in Year 3. By making learning into a game that became increasingly more demanding, the knowledge of number facts became embedded in pupils' understanding very well.
20. The main reason why the teaching in Years 3 to 6 is less effective than in Years 1 and 2 is the greater inconsistency between classes and the variation in expectations. In the best lessons teachers ensure that tasks are carefully matched to the needs of all the pupils to make the pupils really think hard. But some lessons do not provide enough challenge and all pupils are required to tackle the same work regardless of their ability. For example, on many occasions pupils are expected to copy a written text even though many of them are capable of writing independently. Occasionally lessons are too teacher-directed, with little scope for pupils to be independent, to make their own discoveries or to set up their own investigations. There is considerable variation in the presentation of pupils' work, some of it unacceptably untidy with little evidence that the teacher has emphasised the need for neatness.
21. The influence of senior management has improved teaching significantly in recent months. There are new systems for marking, assessment and planning, all of which are helping to bring about improvement in standards throughout the school. The judicious deployment of teachers has helped to strengthen the teaching in Years 3 to 6 by capitalising on teaching strengths. Groups of pupils in Year 6 for example, are taken by the literacy co-ordinator, so that they benefit from specialist expertise. The headteacher also takes a group of pupils who need additional support so that her very good teaching provides a model for other staff to follow and all pupils in Year 6 benefit from being taught in smaller groups. The rigorous monitoring of teaching and samples of pupils' work is also helping to improve the teaching overall.
22. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. All systems have been overhauled in the last year and are monitored carefully. Class teachers are now involved at all stages. Individual educational plans contain precise, measurable targets and most rightly focus on literacy. Assessments are monitored carefully by the special needs co-ordinator. Targets are reviewed regularly. There is satisfactory provision for pupils whose first language is not English. The level of specialist support is adequate. However, the varying levels of expertise of each class teacher leads to uneven provision. The school's analysis of pupils' progress has identified that boys are not performing as well as girls. This issue is being tackled systematically.

Teachers regularly plan activities that are specifically intended to motivate boys and their progress is tracked carefully.

23. Pupils with special educational needs are generally taught in normal lessons. During the inspection the level of support was bolstered by the presence of students who are training to be teachers. Their contribution was a significant help to pupils experiencing difficulties. However, the number of classroom assistants had to be reduced significantly at the beginning of the school year due to budgetary constraints. This adversely affects the levels of support normally available. The learning support teacher, who is employed for two days per week, and the full-time classroom assistant are deployed effectively. Some volunteers – including the literacy governor – provide valuable support in lessons. Assessments are monitored carefully by the special needs co-ordinator. Targets are reviewed regularly.
24. Assessment is satisfactory and improving. A range of measures is now in place to help teachers assess learning more accurately, to track the progress of pupils and to set targets. Performance data is now being used to analyse what needs to be done to help pupils attain higher standards in national tests. Marking reflects varying interpretations of the newly introduced policy. The best marking is evaluative, making clear to pupils what they need to do to improve their work, whilst the least effective marking simply confirms that a pupil has or has not achieved a learning objective. The pupils say they have to work very hard but get plenty of help when they need it.

## **The curriculum**

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum, which is enriched by a wide range of additional activities. The accommodation and resources are good overall and facilitate the teaching well.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum has improved since the last inspection.
- Links between subjects are developing well.
- The curriculum provides well for pupils who have special educational needs.
- A good range of additional activities helps to bring the curriculum alive for pupils.
- Children in the nursery and reception classes receive a “flying start” to their school life with a curriculum that is relevant to their needs.
- Curriculum review, evaluation and development are now high profile and effective.
- The accommodation is good, and resources have improved since the last inspection.

## **Commentary**

25. Planning indicates that all subjects are securely represented. This is an improvement on the findings of the last inspection, when ICT did not meet statutory requirements and planning did not ensure that knowledge, skills and understanding developed systematically in some subjects. Teachers give English, mathematics and science good emphasis. As a result, pupils steadily build on their understanding as they grow older with most pupils achieving well in Years 1, 2 and 6. However, work is not always matched carefully to pupils’ needs in other subjects, some of which, such as religious education and design technology, are too low profile in Years 3 to 6 to enable pupils to make the best possible progress. However, developing links between subjects are helping to make learning more relevant for pupils.
26. Pupils steadily develop language and mathematical skills through their use in some other subjects, such as science, but the use of ICT across the curriculum is not as extensive and has been identified as a needed area for improvement. The English curriculum is given increasingly high profile to help drive up standards at the end of Year 6, but inconsistent approaches to the teaching of spelling and handwriting are holding pupils back. Teachers successfully ensure that all pupils have equal access to the subjects of the National

Curriculum. The issue of boys' underachievement is being addressed well through the introduction of different strategies and targeted resources as a result of an analysis of data from national tests. Approaches to homework are currently inconsistent.

27. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, enabling them to achieve well. This is because work is usually carefully matched to their needs and they are well supported, which enables them to make good progress towards the targets set for them. There is satisfactory provision for pupils whose first language is not English. The level of specialist support is adequate. However, the varying levels of expertise of each class teacher leads to uneven provision.
28. A good range of visits, visitors, activities and special events enriches the curriculum. For example, pupils visit Beamish Museum, Thornley Woods, the Baltic Arts Centre and the local church for events such as the annual harvest festival service. They perform to other audiences, such as at dance festivals, and experience visits from Beamish Museum staff to help them extend their learning in history. Clubs for sports, computers, and singing benefit some pupils and enrich their experiences. Pupils have appropriate opportunities to engage in competitive sport, such as in football, cross-country and swimming, and a cheerleaders competition is thoroughly enjoyed by all participants.
29. The quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils in the Foundation Stage is good and takes account of the early learning goals. Pupils in the nursery and reception classes take part in a wide range of planned and carefully structured activities and experiences, which give them a good start to their education.
30. The quality of monitoring of the curriculum has improved since the last inspection. The headteacher now ensures that there is a rigorous approach to the review and implementation of curriculum policies and practices. This helps to ensure that the curriculum contains all that it should. For example, personal social and health education includes sex education, covers issues relating to the use and misuse of drugs, and is now embedded in the school's work.
31. Most aspects of the accommodation are good. The recently re-organised and well-stocked library helps promote in all pupils a love of literature. All pupils use the new computer suite regularly to help them to develop essential skills. The good accommodation helps to ensure that the curriculum is implemented effectively. An improving range of resources helps to support the curriculum. For example, an increase in the use of artefacts in subjects such as religious education is helping to bring learning to life for pupils.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school cares very well for its pupils. Pupils get very good support, advice and guidance. There are very good measures to involve them in the school's work and development, through seeking and acting on their views.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school is a very safe and healthy environment for learning.
- A very high level of trust underpins relationships between pupils and adults.
- The school regards the views of pupils as very important.

### **Commentary**

32. The formal policies and practices relating to health and safety and child protection are very well considered and properly carried out. The arrangements for induction to reception as well as the transfer arrangements to secondary school are well established and effective. Staff know the pupils very well and address their needs very effectively. They act quickly if a pupil is unhappy or under pressure and are careful to make sure new arrivals are helped to settle in. As a result,

nearly all pupils feel fairly treated. The extent to which pupils have a good and trusting relationship with one or more adults is excellent, as the outstandingly positive responses to the pupil survey confirm.

33. The support of all pupils' achievement, through monitoring, is frequent, thorough and effectively shared with pupils and parents. Good attitudes, work and achievements beyond school are very effectively recognised at weekly celebration assemblies. Staff know pupils very well and where there are concerns, teachers and other staff work very closely with pupils and their parents to identify how the concerns can be overcome. Year 6 pupils say that teachers expect them to behave in a more grown-up way as they move through school. They do. Pupils know the individual targets relating to their academic progress and personal development. Staff discuss the outcomes of tests with pupils and regular marking provides helpful suggestions on how their work can be improved. This important work is underpinned by regular assessment and tracking of pupils' achievements, particularly in English and mathematics.
34. The very good relationships among pupils and their teachers create a very positive atmosphere in which to seek pupils' views. Year 6 pupils confirm that staff seek their views in assemblies on issues such as the level of interest in possible clubs. They also confirm that they completed a pupil questionnaire and a questionnaire on health and safety aspects of a planned trip. The school council, comprising two pupils from Years 1 to 6, meets regularly with the headteacher. Year 6 pupils say the headteacher regularly asks them the question: 'How can we do better?' Not surprisingly, they find such an open question challenging but it also convinces them that the headteacher values their views on all aspects of school life. The great majority of pupils surveyed strongly agree with the statement that school listens to their ideas.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

There is now a good partnership with parents. Links with the local community make a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Links with other schools and colleges are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school is very effective in involving parents and resolving any concerns.
- Good links with the community widen pupils' experiences.
- There are very good links with other institutions, and the school has benefited from involvement with a local Beacon school.

### **Commentary**

35. Teachers are accessible, approachable, listen and nearly always effectively address parents' concerns. Concerns or complaints are dealt with promptly, sensitively and thoroughly. The school now positively seeks to work constructively and engage with parents. For example, a parental survey identified that parents had some concerns about behaviour and bullying. A working party, including parents, was set up to review the associated school policy. Additional detailed surveys on specific issues, such as homework, have also taken place. The inspection survey reveals an unusually high level of satisfaction about homework levels and its arrangements.
36. Termly information is provided on how pupils are getting on, as parents' evenings are held in autumn and spring terms and written annual reports are issued in the summer term. Parents particularly value the introduction of the spring consultation. It gives parents an update on how pupils are getting on half way through the year, whilst there is still considerable time to address any issues. Curriculum information is now provided at the start of each term. There is room for improvement in the quality of the written annual reports, however. In the tested subjects, reports devote too much time to describing pupils' achievements in specific parts of the curriculum. They do not consistently provide parents with a simple indication of how pupils are getting on by



national standards, the effort they are making or identify key targets. As a result, they are not well matched to the needs of their audience.

37. Parents are also beginning to contribute significantly to the successful partnership. For example, they now send their children to school regularly, leading to the recent above average attendance levels. Through the re-launched parent teacher and friends' association (PTFA), parents organise successful fund-raising events. These events also contribute to pupils' personal development and the very good sense of community that prevails, as staff, parents and pupils are involved in many of these events. A number of adults, including parent governors, now regularly work as adult helpers in classes. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement in parental attendance at termly parents' meetings. The overall success of the partnership is reflected in the positive parental survey.
38. The school plays its part as a resource for the local community, in terms of the use of its premises for weekly sessions by toddlers, senior citizens and an arts and crafts club. There are close links with a number of local churches. Pupils' learning benefits from a good range of visits and visitors. For example, there are art curriculum links with a local museum and the school choir performs at church and a senior citizens' home. There are links with two professional football clubs. Public services such as the police and fire services enrich the curriculum with contributions on personal safety and healthy living. Pupils take part in a range of collections and sponsored events for charity. Pupils' active part in the events organised by the PTFA, including termly discos, contributes significantly to their social development.
39. Links with a local Beacon primary school make a very good contribution to the learning of staff and pupils. Good practice is shared, in relation to the school's key priorities in reading and writing. Links with another adjacent primary school have contributed significantly to how the school has put its teaching and learning policy into effective practice. Links with the toddler group are close and contribute to the good induction arrangements into the nursery class. Helped by Education Action Zone (EAZ) funding, the school benefits from close links with the local secondary school to which the majority of pupils transfer. Recent collaboration included developing resources and a common approach to sex education. Student teachers from Sunderland University take part of their teaching practice at the school.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The school is very well led, and managed effectively, by the headteacher with the strong support of the senior staff and governors.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The decisive leadership of the headteacher promotes high expectations.
- The governors are fundamentally involved in strategic planning.
- Self-critical analysis and review is a predominant feature in the management processes and it is very effective.
- Financial management is very prudent.
- Key staff support the headteacher well.
- The school improvement plan is comprehensive but unwieldy.

### **Commentary**

40. The previous report judged that the school had significant weaknesses in its management structure and lacked clear leadership. This is no longer the case. Since her appointment, the headteacher has addressed all key issues with rigour and purpose. The welcoming ethos of the school reassures parents of pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language that they can approach key staff. Many parents now work closely with the class teacher. This is an important factor in the success rate with pupils who have significant difficulties.

41. Teamwork and accountability are at the heart of the radical restructuring of responsibilities. There is a clear understanding of who does what and why. The clarity of vision is shared by all stakeholders in the school. Governors are fully involved in decision making. They are linked to specific subjects, and many participate actively in activities such as work scrutiny. Co-ordinators completely understand their role. They thrive on the trust placed in them to get on with the job. Robust monitoring ensures that they receive structured support. The deputy headteacher has overhauled the arrangements for special educational needs and has provided enlightened support for the headteacher. Co-ordinators of core subject areas are effective and diligent. Non-teaching staff know that their input is valued highly.
42. As a result, leadership and management help to create a vibrant atmosphere in the school. This is underpinned by continual self-evaluation. There is no hint of complacency. Everyone with management responsibilities recognises that the new structures are still bedding in and that further refinements are needed. There is a clear determination to eliminate the negative and accentuate the positive.

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	504 072	Balance from previous year	72 958
Total expenditure	552 246	Balance carried forward to the next	24 784
Expenditure per pupil	2817		

43. The local educational authority has provided significant support throughout this period of rapid change. This is fully appreciated by the school, particularly in financial matters. The headteacher inherited a substantial budget deficit. Stringent, yet sensitive measures have been taken to address this successfully. Financial arrangements are secure and the management of resources is prudent.
44. Much time has been devoted to the preparation of the school improvement plan. This weighty tome has helped to develop the skills of key staff in strategic thinking. However, it is not user friendly. The headteacher recognises the need for a slimmed-down version using a more accessible layout and format.
45. Performance management is now well established. Staff training – for example in ICT – has been a key feature in raising expectations and widening horizons. Dunston Riverside has a strong commitment to the training of new teachers. Four students from Sunderland University were experiencing life in the classroom during the inspection.
46. Substantial improvement has been achieved since the previous inspection. New procedures are based on best practice. Standards and achievement are at the heart of all policies. The personal and academic development of pupils is a prime focus in every development.

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

47. Children get off to a fine start with their education in the nursery and reception classes (Foundation Stage) and they make good progress in their learning. Although there is a wide range of ability when children start in the nursery class, most are working at levels well below those expected for their age and some children have poor language skills. Most children achieve well during their time in the Foundation Stage, but prior weaknesses mean that only about half are ready to reach the expected goals for their age by the end of the reception year in communication, language and literacy; mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world.
48. The provision in these two classes has improved since the last inspection. It has recently been reviewed and revamped, resulting in an efficiently organised and managed, vibrant learning environment where children learn well. There are new systems for planning and assessment, which are providing a unified approach from both classes and ensure that the learning in the reception class builds on that in the nursery. The systems are not yet fully embedded however, and have yet to be fully evaluated. The curriculum is well planned to incorporate all the areas of learning, whilst in the reception class it makes an effective bridge with the National Curriculum. The nursery nurses and teaching assistants are well briefed and deployed so that they make a considerable contribution to the quality of provision. All adults in the nursery and reception classes regularly observe the children and check what they can do so they know what children need to work on next.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve very well.
- They settle rapidly into school routines and meet the expectations of their teachers.
- Children begin to learn independence by making choices.
- Accommodation is used very well.

#### **Commentary**

49. Most children make very good progress and achieve very well in the Foundation Stage from a low starting point when they first join the nursery. As a result of the well planned curriculum and good teaching most are likely to reach the goals expected for their age by the end of the reception year. The children quickly develop their personal and social skills because the nursery is well ordered and expectations are made clear. Staff provide good models of courtesy and respect for children to follow. Most children in the nursery learn to listen attentively, as the teacher's expectations become clear, though quite a few of them need frequent reminders to listen to others and to refrain from calling out. In both classes teachers establish good patterns of behaviour that set the tone of expectation for further up the school. In the nursery there is plenty of scope for children to choose for themselves which activities they will pursue and they respond to this freedom well, especially when there is adult help to encourage them and to take learning forward. Choices are monitored well to ensure that children pick a variety of tasks over time. In reception activities are, rightly, a little more structured so children settle to tasks set by the teacher and begin to learn basic skills of reading, writing and number.
50. There are good systems for the induction of the children and their parents when they first start in the nursery so they soon settle into the routines with relatively few anxieties. Staff quickly get to know the children through initial assessments they make which help to give a clear picture of each child's needs and achievements and to pinpoint where further help is needed.

51. In both classes the accommodation is used very well to provide many small areas where the children can concentrate on particular aspects of their development. The shared area between the two classes is used to good effect so that staff can work with small groups of children and also use the space for an extra setting for role-play. Adults encourage children to be independent and as a result children return resources to the correct place when they have finished with them and put away their activities with little help from adults. There are high expectations of behaviour in both classes so children soon learn to conform. On a rainy day for instance, children from the nursery sensibly walked round the grounds of the school in an orderly fashion, sharing their gaily coloured umbrellas with a partner. Just occasionally, however, when several children call out simultaneously during discussion learning is hindered when there is a lack of firm control.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum is well planned and stimulating.
- Adults in the nursery take every opportunity to develop language by initiating conversation and joining in with play.
- Relationships are very good and give the children confidence to speak out in discussions.
- The accommodation is used very well to provide a range of areas for role-play.
- Children are introduced to real-life purposes for writing right from the start.

### **Commentary**

52. Few of the children are likely to attain the early learning goals by the end of the reception year because of the poor language skills many of them have when they start school. Nevertheless the children do make good progress and achieve well because the teaching is good and language development is a key part of every day. All staff are mindful to reinforce vocabulary at every opportunity. The well planned provision for role play links nicely with the topics being studied and provides many opportunities for collaborative and imaginative play and the development of speaking and listening. For example, children in the reception class dressed up and re-enacted the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears after hearing the story. Good use is made of '*listening centres*', where children can listen to tape-recorded versions of familiar stories, some of them recorded by the children themselves.
53. Story time is used extensively for language development and teachers in both classes are good at telling stories in an animated way and engaging children in discussion that promotes vocabulary and builds confidence. In a good lesson in the nursery the teacher used a sackful of items to prompt the children to guess who might have owned them. With great excitement they quickly guessed it was the 'Teddy Robber'- a character in their story. By capturing interest in this way the teacher was then able to question their recall of the story and reinforce vocabulary. Although the noise level in this session was high, most children had the confidence to make a contribution to the discussion.
54. There is a good emphasis on encouraging children to develop a love of reading. Both classes are well equipped with reading areas for children to browse and 'read' books at their leisure. Despite the good provision a significant number of the children are reluctant speakers who use only a few words to express themselves and with indistinct diction.
55. Children make a start in expressing themselves on paper through the wide range of mark making opportunities in the nursery. In the reception class this is built upon as the children become used to writing for a range of real life purposes and their control of pencils becomes more secure. Activities are well chosen to match individual levels of ability. There are good

opportunities for higher attaining children to write more independently, as when children in the reception class wrote on the theme of 'Goldilocks', while children who need more help become familiar with letter sounds the correct formation of letters by tracing and copying. Displays show that children write for many relevant purposes such as their own party lists and invitations, or to record the weather. By the time they leave the reception class a few are beginning to write their own simple sentences independently and neatly with well-formed letters, though most need a considerable amount of help to do this.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a good range of activities that successfully develop children's mathematical skills.
- Resources are of good quality and used well to promote the children's mathematical development.
- Mathematical concepts are reinforced well in play activities.
- Children begin to use mathematical language correctly because of the good opportunities that teachers provide.

### **Commentary**

56. The children achieve well and make good progress because of the good teaching though only about half the children are on course to meet the expected goals for their age. The provision in both classes is good and is planned well so that work in the reception class builds on that of the nursery. Many practical activities are provided for children to count and understand the values of numbers. They learn through play in the 'fruit shop' by sorting fruits according to size and colour and by counting out the right number of coins to buy fruit. Experimental play in sand and water helps children to understand mathematical concepts such as capacity, volume and weight from first-hand experience.
57. There are good links with other areas of learning to promote understanding in mathematics. For example, children in the reception class took great pleasure in counting and weighing ingredients as they made porridge as part of the Three Bears theme. When creating pictures of different types of houses children used their knowledge of shape to make roofs of different shapes, such as triangles, and to vary the number of windows and doors. There is a strength in the way both teachers and classroom assistants promote mathematical language by introducing new vocabulary and reinforcing it. As children built snowmen of different sizes, for example, they consolidated words such as 'big', 'bigger', 'biggest'.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Curriculum planning ensures a varied and stimulating range of practical experiences is provided.
- Vocabulary is promoted well.
- Teachers are good at capitalising on unplanned events to promote learning.

## Commentary

58. Teaching is good and in both classes children were observed taking part in worthwhile activities to broaden their understanding. The planning and displays indicate that a good range of stimulating and worthwhile activities and experiences is planned over the course of a year. Activities are well planned to link all areas of learning so that the curriculum is cohesive and builds on the children's own experiences. Nevertheless, few children are likely to reach the goals set for them by the end of the reception year because the school cannot compensate in such a short time for the narrow range of experiences most of them have had when they start school. In both classes there is a good emphasis on first-hand experience. For example, children begin to learn the importance of people who help us through their work on the fire service and police. Topics such as this are effective vehicles for discussion, painting and writing and also sow the beginnings of understanding citizenship. Computers are available in both classes, though during the inspection they were not in regular use to complement teaching.
59. Teachers are good at 'seizing the moment' and using impromptu events to promote learning. For example, following heavy snowfall the children in reception explored the properties of snow, watched ice melt into water, discussed appropriate clothing for cold days and widened their vocabulary by discussing their feelings about snow. Such captivating experiences do much to widen the children's understanding of the world and to make learning relevant and fun.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

60. No teaching in this area was seen during the inspection. However, teachers' plans and children's work samples show that there are plenty of activities that promote physical development both inside and outside the classroom. In both classes children develop their manipulative skills with small apparatus such as brushes, dough, pencils and jigsaws through daily practice. Nursery children have daily opportunities to play on large apparatus such as wheeled toys to develop their muscles and balance, though none was seen during the inspection because of inclement weather. In the reception class there is a real strength in the way the outside environment is used as an extension of the classroom. Children pursue games and activities that are carefully linked to what is being taught in class. A good example of this was seen in the simple map activity, when children followed a route around the garden area searching for a fox, a rabbit and a squirrel, which they then recorded on their maps. Not only did this worthwhile activity introduce the children to the idea of a map, it also reinforced their work with letter sounds and drew upon mathematical language.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

61. It was not possible to make a judgement about teaching and provision in this important area of learning because no direct teaching was seen. However, teachers' plans and samples of work indicate that good provision is made to introduce children to all strands of the curriculum and to widen their experiences with a range of materials and techniques. Although most of the children start in the nursery with limited experience of handling paint, their work shows an increasing confidence in mixing colours and applying it to make bold, bright pictures from their own imagination. The work shows developing control of paint and brush. In reception this is built upon well as children progress to mixing their own colours with powder paint. There are good examples of a combination of techniques being used to make attractive pictures, for example, paint and wax crayon are used to create vividly coloured fish. In both classes role-play is used well to promote imaginative play. The children benefit most from this when adults are involved to promote key vocabulary and to help to take the play forward, though little of this was observed during the inspection as most of the time children played on their own. Music and singing are an important part of the curriculum in the nursery as children learn to play percussion instruments in time with a taped accompaniment. There are good opportunities for them to experiment at leisure to explore the range of sound the instruments make.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

### ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils make good progress to reach national levels by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress overall, though it is uneven in Years 3 to 6.
- Speaking and listening skills are given due emphasis.
- Though pupils now write for a widening range of purposes, approaches to the teaching of handwriting and spelling are inconsistent.
- There are weaknesses in reading. This now high profile and a school priority, although weaknesses remain.
- The subject is very well led, and there are rigorous plans for its continued development.
- The use of assessment to help raise standards is in its infancy, although the quality of teachers' marking is improving.

#### Commentary

62. In the 2003 Year 2 national tests, the school's results in reading were well below the national average and below the average for similar schools. In writing pupils performed a little better and results were below national requirements and about the same as similar schools. Standards have risen slightly this year and are now below, rather than well below average in reading and average in writing. Most pupils achieve well and make good gains in learning because of the good teaching they receive. Features of this good teaching, also observed in Year 6, include a confident approach, secure subject knowledge, good questioning of pupils to help them improve, a brisk pace, high expectations, and very good relationships, which successfully underpin learning.
63. The school's results in the Year 6 national tests in English were lower, being very low in comparison to national standards (the lowest five per cent in the country) and well below the average for similar schools. However, inspection findings reveal a much better picture with the current pupils. Standards are now broadly in line with national levels and pupils' achievement is satisfactory, except in reading where standards are still below average. This dramatic improvement is largely due to the varying attainment levels of the different year groups and the good, often very good, teaching of this Year 6 group by the subject co-ordinator. However, although the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, it is unacceptably variable with examples of low expectation reflected in poorly presented pupils' work, especially in Year 3.
64. Teaching is good in Years 1 and 2; satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. Teachers place good emphasis on the development of speaking and listening skills through the well-led questioning of pupils, which invariably interests and involves them. This enables the majority to answer confidently. However, sometimes there are missed opportunities for spoken language to be developed. For example, teachers use 'talk partners' successfully to help improve the spoken word, but practices through the school are inconsistent and not all teachers provide enough opportunities for pupils to talk extensively, sometimes because the teacher tends to dominate the discussion. There are not always enough opportunities for discussion, role-play and drama activities to increase the rate at which pupils make progress. Nevertheless, many pupils speak confidently by the time they leave the school, even though many do not have an extensive vocabulary. This represents good achievement over time when account is taken of the limited linguistic skills of many of the children when they first start school.
65. Pupils write for an increasingly wide range of purposes including letters, instructions, poems, stories, diaries and newspaper reports. For example, pupils in Year 2 wrote lively seaside

stories, starting to consider the setting and characters, while pupils in Year 4 wrote clear instructions for using a telephone box. By Year 6, pupils are able to compose magical spells, comparing them with Shakespeare's 'Three Witches', and develop their use of lively and adventurous vocabulary. Classroom displays are used well to extend pupils' language, to motivate them and celebrate their work. However, pupils rarely draft their stories and amend them to help improve their quality and there is little use of ICT for this purpose. In general teachers give too little attention to the development of pupils' handwriting. This results in standards of presentation that are unacceptably varied. Some pupils are taught to join letters together before they are clearly shaped and correctly positioned, and skills practised in handwriting lessons are not always readily transferred to written work in other subjects. Spelling is not taught as part of an agreed, carefully structured approach. For example, teachers rarely give pupils spellings to learn that are carefully matched to their abilities. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to help pupils with their spelling, such as encouraging the use of dictionaries, thesauruses, and pupils' own vocabulary books.

66. The development of pupils' reading skills is now given high profile, with the introduction of many initiatives such as diaries to check progress and to help raise standards. Well-taught guided reading sessions are helping pupils over time to read with increasing fluency, accuracy and understanding. However, teachers do not give enough emphasis to the development of research skills to help pupils find information quickly. For example, few older pupils know how to skim and scan text to locate information. Some pupils were unsure how to use the non-fiction library to help them to find the books they need. The teaching of basic reading skills to younger pupils requires an overhaul to eliminate the mechanical completion of worksheets and their unnecessary colouring. These weaknesses are preventing pupils from making the best possible progress in reading.
67. The subject is very well led. This is because the co-ordinator is proactive in planning and leading the implementation of needed developments, such as the further development of ICT within English, and sets a very good example to others through the high quality of her teaching. She is effective because she regularly observes lessons and scrutinises pupils' work, which enables her to identify what is working well and what still needs improving.
68. Data from national tests is now rigorously analysed to help identify and overcome weaknesses, and the progress of pupils is carefully tracked as they grow older. Marking is improving, with teachers now helping pupils to improve their work as well as celebrating their best efforts. All these new strategies are helping to drive up standards. However, information gained from assessments is not yet being consistently used across the school to provide targets for pupils to aim for.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

69. Teachers provide a satisfactory range of opportunities for pupils to speak, listen, read and write as part of their work in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 2 wrote about Grace Darling, in a link with history, and in Year 3 pupils, in a link with religious education, considered the meaning of 'The Lord is my Shepherd'. The approach to developing literacy skills across the curriculum is not yet systematic enough to ensure that pupils have the best possible opportunities to increase their vocabulary and improve their language skills through the full range of National Curriculum subjects. However, it is a current focus, which has good potential to ensure a consistent approach for the benefit of pupils.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.



## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership is moving the subject forward.
- Good teaching in Years 1 and 2 is leading to good achievement.
- Progress is sustained in Years 3 to 6, but is more variable from class to class.
- Pupils' attitudes are positive in all lessons.

## Commentary

70. When pupils enter the school, mathematical skills are weak. As a result of effective teaching in the Foundation Stage and the first two years, standards in Years 1 and 2 are just in line with national averages. Most pupils achieve well, including those with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English. Pupils begin to recognise patterns and relationships between numbers and to develop a range of strategies for calculation. Mental arithmetic flourishes and there is a heavy concentration on number work. When they practise a particular skill – for example addition or subtraction – in isolation, most pupils do so accurately. This is partly because different work is prepared for pupils of different abilities. However, they are less secure when using these skills to solve problems. Many find it difficult to explain their thinking. These deficiencies partially account for the small number of pupils who reach higher levels in national tests and assessments.
71. By the end of Year 6, standards match national averages, but are variable throughout Years 3-6. To some extent this is due to the uneven distribution of ability levels in each year group. For example, in Year 4 a high proportion of pupils have special educational needs. However, the principal factor that affects progress is the quality of teaching. The written work of pupils in Year 3 indicates much slower progress than in other year groups. However, the vibrant supply teacher engaged to teach these pupils during the inspection brought out their latent ability. A very good lesson consistently required pupils to think carefully and was geared to an understanding of the underlying principles of 'inverse operations'.
72. Problem solving begins to emerge in Year 4 and gathers pace in the last two years. This is a feature that has been introduced more emphatically since the co-ordinator redesigned the curriculum after the arrival of the current headteacher. Many pupils have difficulty with handling data, estimation and negative numbers. This reflects the limited scope in lessons for independent interpretation of data, requiring pupils to draw their own conclusions or explain their reasoning. However, most pupils in Year 6 can, for example, confidently calculate perimeter and area, know the principles of rotation and can check answers for reasonableness.
73. Teaching is good in Years 1 and 2, and satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. Throughout the school, marking is almost always of good quality. Planning is methodical and responds to individual needs. A good lesson in Year 2 was typical of the way that teachers involve a wide range of pupils in whole class discussions by the use of well-directed questions. Occasionally, these sessions over-run and begin to lose momentum. The success of most lessons is enhanced by the very positive attitudes of the pupils, who are keen to answer and to ask questions themselves. In all classes, the judicious use of praise makes pupils feel valued.
74. One of the school's targets is to raise the attainment of more competent pupils. One effective organisational strategy has been to create sets that combine pupils of similar abilities in Years 5 and 6. Planning for this is thorough and there is evidence to indicate that standards are improving at an acceptable rate. Challenge is inherent in both sets. Individual and group needs are assessed regularly.
75. The effective co-ordinator has established procedures for monitoring and assessment that are beginning to have an impact on standards. The new curriculum framework provides more opportunities for investigative work and problem solving. Although the use of ICT is included in planning documentation, implementation is not yet widespread.

76. Standards are very similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection. Unsatisfactory teaching has been eliminated, and pupils no longer need “strict supervision”. This has been replaced by an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. Arrangements for the curriculum and assessment are now secure.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

77. Pupils use their skills in numeracy in a satisfactory range of ways in other subjects. Teachers often incorporate elements of numeracy to consolidate skills. For example, as part of their work in science pupils in Year 6 recorded in a graph their heart rate at the beginning and end of a lesson in physical education. Geography provides another example of the increasingly structured approach as pupils interpret graphs and construct simple charts.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards have risen slightly in the past year.
- There is a developing emphasis on investigation.
- Work is not always matched well enough to the needs of the pupils and too much work is copied.
- New systems for assessment are beginning to take effect.

#### **Commentary**

78. Since the last inspection when standards were average, there has been a sharp decline in performance. Standards by the end of Year 6 have been well below average, both nationally and in comparison with similar schools, every year except one. Pupils have been underachieving in relation to their prior attainment in this subject. The older pupils have too many gaps in their knowledge and their scientific skills are under developed because of the lack of investigative work in the past. Too few pupils have been attaining the higher levels in national tests and there has been an unacceptably high proportion of pupils reaching only the lower levels. There has been noticeable mismatch between the teachers’ assessments in Year 6 and the standards pupils actually reached in national tests, which indicates that assessment has been insecure as a means of measuring pupils’ progress in the past.
79. As a result of more consistent teaching, rigorous monitoring and improved assessment standards have risen slightly in the past year and the performance of pupils in the current Year 6 in national tests is on course to be better than in previous years. Despite this encouraging upturn, standards throughout Years 3 to 6 remain below average, though achievement is now satisfactory. In Years 1 and 2 standards are average and pupils achieve well. Throughout the school girls are doing better than boys. The school has taken this issue seriously and there are now positive steps to try to motivate boys and monitor their progress.
80. Throughout the school the teaching is satisfactory overall, though there are pockets of good teaching in both key stages. Common features of good lessons are secure subject knowledge, which gives rise to clear explanations, good questioning that probes pupils’ understanding and good class management that brings about good levels of concentration so pupils learn well. In all classes there is a good emphasis on the use of correct scientific vocabulary. These features often come together well in good lessons such as in Year 6 when pupils made good progress in their understanding of the importance of a healthy diet as a result of the teacher’s emphasis on the use of correct vocabulary and skilful questioning that made pupils think hard.

81. By contrast, there are sometimes occasions when the pupils' lack of prior knowledge impedes their learning. This was seen in a lesson about materials in Year 3 taken by a temporary teacher. The teacher skilfully guided the pupils into organising an investigation, considering how tests can be carried out fairly and accurately. But their learning was hindered because their understanding of the principle of investigation from previous lessons was too sketchy and their concept of a fair test was insufficiently well embedded in their understanding. This illustrates how throughout the school there has been insufficient emphasis on investigation in the past and helps to explain why there are gaps in the pupils' knowledge and skills.
82. The main weakness in the teaching, particularly in Years 3 to 6 is the lack of provision for the varying needs of the pupils. In most lessons all pupils are expected to undertake similar tasks, irrespective of their abilities. This practice limits the progress of higher attainers because they are not challenged enough and often expected to practise skills they have already mastered. This helps to explain why so few pupils are reaching the higher levels in national tests. Although pupils with special educational needs are invariably supported well by adults, rarely are tasks specially modified for them. Furthermore, the practice of copying text into pupils' workbooks noted throughout the school does little to develop pupils' scientific understanding and also limits opportunities to develop skills in literacy.
83. Teaching is becoming more consistent through the school as newly introduced systems begin to take effect. There is now a much greater emphasis on investigation, although in many lessons there is over-direction by teachers with few opportunities for pupils to devise and conduct their own investigations. In all classes teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to use their skills in numeracy, as when pupils in Year 5 tested inside and outside temperatures at different times of the day and recorded their findings. Teaching occasionally incorporates the use of ICT, as when pupils in Year 5 researched information on solids, liquids and gases from a database, but in general there is little use of ICT to support the subject. There has been improvement in the consistency with which pupils' work is presented throughout the school.
84. The subject is well managed by a co-ordinator who has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and what needs to be done to bring about further improvement. A positive start has been made in monitoring the subject through an analysis of pupils' workbooks. This exercise has emphasised the need to eliminate copying and to continue with the development of data handling and practical investigation. The introduction of a common system for assessing the progress pupils make in each topic has yet to become fully embedded but is already contributing positively to the way in which the progress of pupils is tracked and monitored. In general there is a need for further staff training to develop expertise in order to build on the improvements so far.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are average at the end of Year 2, but are below average by the end of Year 6.
- Resources have improved, and the subject is increasingly high profile.
- Not all areas of the ICT curriculum are equally represented.
- The subject is well led.
- Links with other subjects are under-developed.

### **Commentary**

85. Pupils reach average standards and achieve well by the end of Year 2 because teaching is satisfactory overall and often good. Furthermore, pupils have regular access to computers to help them practise and develop important skills. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6 with pupils steadily developing knowledge, skills and understanding as they grow older. This is

because teachers are now more confident in teaching the requirements of the curriculum than at the time of the last inspection, when unsatisfactory teaching was seen. As a result, pupils now have consistently positive attitudes to learning. However, ICT had too low a profile until the appointment of the new headteacher. As a result, standards are below national levels for Year 6 pupils because they have gaps in their knowledge and have had too little opportunity to improve essential skills. Standards are now rising as the higher levels of teacher expertise and commitment, combined with the subject's increasing emphasis, begin to have a positive impact on the rate at which pupils achieve.

86. Teaching is good in Years 1 and 2; satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. All classes now have regular access to the computer suite, which enables them to practise and develop key skills. Teachers use the large whiteboard effectively as an essential teaching tool for demonstration purposes. They carefully consider organisational implications to prevent too many pupils from occupying the suite at a given time to give them the best possible chances to achieve well. However, there are still occasions when pupils spend time waiting for help when they could be developing their skills. Most teachers give pupils the same work, whatever their ability, which prevents some pupils from making the best possible progress.
87. Teachers use national guidelines to help them teach what is required. However, not all areas are given good emphasis. For example, data handling, and the development of ideas using text and pictures, are quite well represented. Control technology, such as through the use of a programmable robot, is better represented than at the time of the last inspection. However, pupils do not yet share ideas and information using e-mail. They do not use ICT enough to draft and re-draft their writing to help improve its quality or use a digital camera to extend, support and record their work. Teachers do not pay enough attention to encouraging pupils to compare the effectiveness of ICT with other methods of communication.
88. The co-ordinator is effective, and there are clear plans for the subject's continued development to help raise standards further. For example, the regular monitoring of teaching has helped to identify what works well and what still needs improving. The co-ordinator is aware that there are no agreed approaches to assessing pupils' progress as they move through the school and this is an area for future development.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

89. The use of ICT across the curriculum is evident, but requires further development. For example, pupils are beginning to use the Internet for research purposes, as when pupils in Year 3 found out about the Ancient Greeks in history and pupils in Year 5 researched the location of Dunston in geography. Older pupils used sensing equipment and a laptop computer to record the temperature in their classroom over a 24-hour period for a science investigation. However, computers in classrooms are not used enough to help pupils develop important skills through the full range of subjects, although this is currently receiving attention.

### **HUMANITIES**

*History, geography and religious education were sampled.*

90. Curricular requirements are met in **history**. Samples of pupils' work indicate a developing awareness of chronology. In their first two years, pupils learn about the impact of famous people like George Stephenson and Grace Darling. There is particularly good work on local history, enhanced by visits to Beamish Open Air Museum. Older pupils produce sound work about life in Tudor England. Work in history often produces good support for pupils' literacy development. For example, pupils in Year 6 imagined themselves to be evacuees during World War 2 and wrote sensitive letters home. In the one lesson seen, good teaching and learning resulted in pupils preparing essential information about the Ancient Greeks. There was good support for pupils with English as an additional language and for those with special educational needs and so these pupils achieved well.

91. Samples of work in **geography** show that pupils cover a good deal of work over time. Pupils are encouraged to write pieces of extended length and to express opinions. There is an appropriate emphasis on both physical and human geographical features. As the pupils get older there are some good opportunities for investigation and research. However, the interpretation of evidence is not a significant feature in written work. There is sound recording of factual information. The observed lesson was well planned and helped pupils in Year 5 to interrogate maps effectively.
92. In **religious education**, pupils in Year 2 reach the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, as at the time of the last inspection, and make mostly good progress as they move through Years 1 and 2. For example, Year 2 pupils learn how and why Jews celebrate the Passover by hearing the story of the Plagues of Egypt. There is not enough evidence to make judgements about progress or standards by the end of Year 6 because too little written work was seen and no teaching could be seen.
93. Pupils are encouraged to learn from religious stories, to reflect on their meaning and make personal responses to knowledge gained. For example, pupils in Year 2 considered and discussed the moral of the story of the Prodigal Son, learning about forgiveness, while in Year 4, pupils considered why Easter is important to Christians. Pupils in Year 3 pupils wrote their own ideas about the meaning of 'The Lord is My Shepherd', one pupil observing that "it means that God looks after us like the shepherd looks after his sheep". Visits to the church, such as for Harvest Festival services, help to bring the subject alive for pupils. By Year 6, pupils learn about the beliefs of Muslims, and make comparisons between Hinduism and Christianity.
94. The subject has not yet been a priority for development. As a result, religious education is too low profile in some years. The co-ordinator is not yet empowered to be effective to gain knowledge of where the strengths and weaknesses lie in the subject. Because of the low profile of the subject, there are no consistent approaches to assessing pupils' progress.
95. Good quality assemblies enable pupils to learn about and from religion. For example, pupils learned about the importance to Christians of Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday and Holy Week. They considered how the Indian music played at the start made them feel and reflected on the impact of people who love them. The local vicar is a regular visitor, leading assemblies to help give pupils greater insight into the liturgies and symbols of the Christian faith, but there are few visits or visitors to support and extend work in religions other than Christianity. Pupils learn through religious education about the importance of courtesy, care and consideration for others. As a result, the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

*Art and design, design and technology, music and physical education were sampled.*

96. No lesson were seen in **art and design** during the inspection. Evidence from pupils' work samples indicates that the subject has been under-emphasised although pupils experience an adequate range of activities over time. However, curriculum planning in the past has not ensured that skills build in an appropriate sequence. This was a criticism in the previous report that has yet to be addressed. Pupils in Year 1 begin to draw from close direct observation, of leaves for example. But this skill is not built on as pupils grow older so that by Year 6 observational paintings of trees lack precision and refinement and are more reminiscent of the work of younger pupils.
97. The subject has not been a main priority in recent years but it is beginning to play a more prominent part in the curriculum. Good use is made of the local facilities to stimulate art work, as when as when pupils in Year 3 researched in public art galleries before embarking on their project to design a compass in mosaic style, based on the design for the school badge. The resultant end product provides a lasting and symbolic piece of sculpture.

98. There is some evidence that staff would benefit from further training in the subject to enable them to help pupils to refine their work. Some activities, for example, are undertaken with an inappropriate medium such as the work in the vibrant style of Paul Klee replicated in coloured pencils. Overall, the range of artwork is narrow and the subject has not moved on enough since the last inspection.
99. The standards of work in **design and technology** are better in Years 1 and 2 than in Years 3 to 6. This is mainly because not enough design and technology is taught in Years 3, 4 and 5 to build on the skills pupils acquire in Years 1 and 2, as evidenced by the paucity of work on display and in pupils' books. For example, Year 2 pupils design and made a pull-along toy. They used pictures and words to explain their designs, and the finished models are to a good standard. By contrast, designs of Anderson shelters are immature, suggesting that skills, knowledge and understanding do not develop systematically as pupils grow older.
100. The school makes good arrangements for all pupils to take part in **musical** activity. Provision is very well supported by the local education authority, whose music specialists regularly provide workshops for pupils so that pupils benefit from being taught by specialists with enthusiasm and expertise. One teaches singing to all pupils once a week. In a very good lesson, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were shown how to sing correctly, with good attention to pitch, pulse and diction. The emphasis on the recognition of 'beat' was followed up successfully in the one class music lesson seen during the inspection. Another specialist leads the school choir, who perform regularly in the community and in the local church. The leader of the Dunston Silver Band comes into school every week to teach brass instruments. This supplements the instrumental tuition provided by the local education authority. A music portfolio is being developed to show the range of skills covered in the school, from rhythmic patterns in Years 1 and 2 to pentatonic scales in Years 3 to 6.
101. The school makes satisfactory arrangements to promote **physical education** and lessons are supplemented well by a range of extra-curricular activities. Standards in dance are in line with expectations at the end of Year 2 and are improving. Lessons seen in Years 1 and 2 were well taught. Teachers had developed imaginative approaches and used a range of stimuli to generate thoughtful, controlled movement. Pupils showed real enthusiasm and were keen to demonstrate their skills to the rest of the class. In the Year 1 class, for example, a pupil effectively showed how to move through long grass, parting the blades with a flat hand. In the lesson seen in Year 5 pupils showed that they could deliver a 'spin pass' with a rugby ball. In the current Year 6 class, virtually every pupil can swim at least the nationally expected 25 metres. There are detailed records of progress in all swimming strokes.
102. During the inspection, 26 pupils (mainly girls) attended the gymnastics club showing poise and eagerness to demonstrate good body shape. Many were inspired by the visit of Hayley Price, an Olympic gymnast, to take up the sport. Two employees of the local education authority also conducted a successful soccer session for 20 younger pupils. Fifty pupils benefited from a six-week soccer course provided by Newcastle United – culminating in what one pupil described as a 'memorable' visit to St. James' Park. The annual dance festival and swimming gala are indicative of the high priority placed on sporting activity in the school. The government's target of two hours per week of physical activity is already met. Healthy approaches to living are actively promoted.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

103. It is not possible to make a firm judgement about standards or provision in the subject as no lessons were seen. However, discussion with staff and pupils and scrutiny of planning and pupils' work indicates that the subject is secure in the curriculum and that its impact can be seen in the ethos of the school and the responsible behaviour of the pupils. All classes benefit from regular lessons in the subject, where there are plenty of opportunities for pupils to express their own thoughts and ideas and to consider the feelings of other people. Such sessions also

provide a useful vehicle to promote speaking and listening and there are good links with literacy when pupils record their observations in written or pictorial form. The subject also provides a focus for school and class assemblies. The school takes good advantage of visits to reinforce what has been learned in the subject. For example, pupils visited the Stadium of Light to learn about the importance of keeping fit. The curriculum is based on a published scheme that is relevant to the needs of the pupils because much of the material builds on their own experiences. Pupils consider responsibility, getting along with others, healthy eating and the dangers of drugs. The school council enables pupils to have say in how their school is run and introduces them to an aspect of citizenship. Although this is a recent innovation the council has already discussed matters of common interest such as the behaviour policy and use of rewards to promote good behaviour.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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