

INSPECTION REPORT

FOREST HALL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Newcastle-upon-Tyne

LEA area: North Tyneside

Unique reference number: 108605

Headteacher: Miss Mary Nicholls

Lead inspector: Mrs Lesley Clark

Dates of inspection: 15-17th March 2004

Inspection number: 256148

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:	264
School address:	Delaval Road Forest Hall Newcastle-upon-Tyne Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	NE12 9BA
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Sneddon
Date of previous inspection:	27/04/98

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Forest Hall Primary School is average in size with 264 pupils on roll. It serves the local as well as neighbouring housing estates which are a mix of council, ex council - owner occupied, and some housing association dwellings. About 65 per cent of pupils come from outside the immediate area. Overall, the school's socio-economic context is below average and the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The pupils are almost all from white British backgrounds with a very small number from mixed Asian, African and other backgrounds. A very small proportion is learning English as an additional language. When children first start school, their attainment overall is below average; their communication and language skills are well below average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs (19 per cent) is a little above average and the proportion of pupils who have statements of special educational needs is also higher than the average. The range of needs includes moderate and specific learning difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and a large proportion of speech and communication problems mainly affecting younger pupils. An above average proportion of pupils enters or leaves the school at times other than the usual. The school takes in pupils who have been excluded elsewhere or who have had extended periods of time outside education. In 2003 the school was awarded Investors in People status for the third time and Achievement Award for good results. The school attained Beacon status twice and in this role gives support to local primary schools. Recently, the school was selected for Pathfinder status and is involved in local and national initiatives to develop teaching and learning with particular reference to using information and communication technology (ICT).

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
25431	Lesley Clark	Lead inspector	Foundation stage Science Art and design Design and technology Music
9327	Stuart Vincent	Lay inspector	
21024	Robert Robinson	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education
22291	Keith Saltfleet	Team inspector	English Geography History Religious education Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very effective school with some exceptional features and innovative practice. All groups of pupils achieve very well because they are very well taught. The excellent leadership of the headteacher and deputy results in a school where high levels of energy and challenge produce high standards. The school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Excellent leadership by the leadership team has produced innovative reforms to reduce the workload on teachers thus making teaching and learning more effective.
- Standards are well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education (PE).
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning because teaching is very good, lessons are often fun and the curriculum offers a very good range of interesting and relevant activities.
- The school has a strong commitment to the inclusion of all pupils and consequently they achieve very well. Pupils with special educational needs and those with particular gifts or talents make very good progress.
- The school takes very good care of its pupils and has excellent systems to involve them fully in making the school a happy, friendly and hard-working community.
- Although they are doing a good job overall, subject managers are not fully involved in monitoring standards and the systems used to track pupils' progress need to be streamlined.
- The school provides limited opportunities to raise pupils' awareness of the multicultural diversity of Britain.

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection in all the minor issues identified at that time. Standards are higher and the leadership is much sharper and more effective.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Data on pupils eligible for free school meals is used instead of prior attainment grades because 46 per cent of the pupils in Year 6 did not attend the school in 1999 as Year 2 pupils.

Achievement is very good overall for all groups of pupils, including boys and girls, those with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils. Children in the nursery and reception classes achieve well and are on course to meet the goals children are expected to reach in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, and creative development by the time they move into Year 1. They make particularly good progress in communication, language and literacy because of the very good provision to help those who have difficulties with speech and communication when they first start in the nursery. In Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve well and standards continue to follow a well-established pattern, with consistently high standards in writing and average or above average standards in mathematics. Standards are well above average in both reading and writing, average in mathematics and above average in science, ICT and PE in the current Year 2. Pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 is also good. Standards of the current group of pupils in Year 6 are well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics, ICT and PE. The Year 6 results in 2003 reflect a year

group whose attainment on entry was much lower, and are not typical. The school is well placed to meet its challenging targets for the forthcoming year.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good overall. Adults and pupils enjoy each other's company and there is a real sense of a shared community. Pupils are very keen to learn and take on very responsible and influential roles such as school councillors and playground buddies. They behave well and those from ethnic minority groups are happily integrated. Pupils' awareness of other cultures, however, is limited. Attendance is above average and punctuality is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The consistently good quality of teaching in every class is one of the main reasons why pupils do so well during their time in this school. Teachers have a good understanding of the subjects they teach, plan lessons thoroughly and use learning resources effectively so that pupils acquire skills, knowledge and understanding well at each stage of their education. Teachers get on very well with pupils and expect them to work hard but they also have the knack of making lessons enjoyable. This results in pupils learning well. Up-to-date technology is used very effectively to help pupils to learn and enables teachers to prepare demonstrations to maximum effect. Teaching assistants are used very well, particularly to help pupils with special educational needs, and this helps these pupils to make very good progress. Similarly, the teaching of more able or gifted and talented pupils helps them to work to high standards. The monitoring of pupils' progress is good in the nursery and reception classes; however, the consistency of recording of pupils' progress in the different subjects in Years 1 to 6 is an area for development.

The curriculum is very good and provides pupils with many opportunities to develop their talents. Pupils from reception to Year 6 have access to many different extra-curricular activities that enrich their learning. Accommodation is satisfactory overall; good use is made of every available space. Learning resources are of good quality. The school cares for its pupils very well and values them as individuals. It supports and helps pupils of all abilities to achieve their best as they progress through the school. Partnership with parents is good. Links with the community are satisfactory but the school has developed its contacts with other schools very effectively and these benefit the pupils by giving them access to specialist resources.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. Excellent leadership, and an innovative and team approach to management, result in very effective teaching and learning and an imaginative curriculum that inspires and motivates both staff and pupils. The governing body understands the strengths and workings of the school, is both caring and supportive and plays a satisfactory role in helping to manage the school. Governors ensure that statutory requirements are fully met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are pleased with the way the school is run and the education it provides for their children. They are kept well informed and play their part in helping both the school and their children to succeed. Pupils like this school for they know that their views matter and that adults listen to them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Establish more efficient systems to track pupils' progress from Year 1 to Year 6.
- Involve subject managers more fully in monitoring standards in their subjects.
- Plan more opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of the multi-ethnic character of society.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are well above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils' overall achievement, including that of pupils with special educational needs, is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well and are likely to achieve the goals expected of them by the time they start Year 1.
- Pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2 is good; standards are well above average in both reading and writing, average in mathematics and above average in science, ICT and PE.
- Pupils' achievement is good in Years 3 to 6 and standards are well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics, ICT and PE.
- Boys and girls, including those with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils, make very good progress in their learning.

Commentary

1. The children are likely to meet the expected standards in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, and creative development by the end of the reception year and a substantial number will be reading and writing competently when they start in Year 1. The achievement of children throughout the Foundation Stage is good; this is because of the good quality of teaching. The children make good progress in their learning, particularly in communication, language and literacy, because of the very good provision to help those who have difficulties with speech and communicating with others when they first start in the nursery. This is a better overall picture than was the case at the last inspection.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.9 (16.3)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	15.9 (16.9)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.6 (17.1)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 33 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Over time, the trend in the school's results in national tests for reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 is above the national trend. Standards in the present Year 2 are set to continue this trend with standards well above average in reading and writing and average in mathematics. For several years now standards in writing have been consistently well above average, those in reading above average, and those in mathematics consistently average or above average, depending on the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties in the year group. This year, standards are very similar to those attained last year. Standards are well above average in all three subjects compared to similar schools. Standards are above average in science because pupils do a lot of practical work and so have a good understanding of scientific concepts for their age. Standards in ICT and PE are also above average, reflecting the emphasis the school places on these subjects and the opportunities pupils have to practise their skills.
3. Standards of the present group of pupils in Year 6 are well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics, ICT and PE. Pupils' performance is usually well

above average in English and mathematics but for the last two years has been less good in science. Last year, pupils' performance was much lower in English than in previous years, though standards remained above average in mathematics. The trend in the school's results was lower than the national trend though previously overall standards had been well above average.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.2 (28.7)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	27.9 (29.0)	26.8 (26.7)
science	28.1 (28.7)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 36 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- There were specific factors affecting the attainment of the particular group of pupils in last year's Year 6. Over 40 per cent had joined the school in the juniors, half of them joining in Year 5. There was a higher proportion of pupils with special needs which included pupils who had been in and out of different schools and those who had been excluded from elsewhere and had had no schooling for long stretches of time. Not all pupils therefore had benefited from the school's well-established and successful teaching of reading and writing. Compared to schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils did extremely well in mathematics, about average in science but below average in English. However, the majority of pupils who had attended this school since reception achieved nationally expected standards with a good proportion exceeding them in all three subjects. The school's data shows that achievement during their time in this school is very good.
- The commitment to teaching small groups gives greater individual support to all pupils and enables those with special educational needs and those who learn more quickly to make very good progress. As a result of these measures, a large proportion of pupils with special educational needs attain nationally expected standards and those who can attain more highly are given every support and encouragement to do so. They do very well. Boys and girls achieve equally well and there is no difference between the achievements of pupils from different minority ethnic groups. Consistently good teaching in all classes ensures that pupils build successfully on what they know and understand. Last year, the school focused on raising attainment in mathematics and science through adopting a very practical approach linked to real-life problems; this is proving successful in raising standards. Currently, pupils in Year 6 are benefiting from an extra lesson a week in science, counterbalanced by additional PE lessons, to give them extra practice before the national tests next term as well as more physical exercise to aid concentration. Above average standards in both ICT and PE reflect the good teaching and provision for these subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have very good attitudes, they behave well and the school makes good provision for their personal development. The school's overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is good, as it is above national norms and the majority of pupils arrive punctually.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils develop self-reliance, are very keen to learn and enjoy all aspects of school life.
- The school has a happy, friendly atmosphere where good standards of behaviour are expected and achieved; relationships throughout the school are very good.
- Pupils develop very good social skills and have a very good understanding of right and wrong.
- The systems to include pupils in helping to manage the school are excellent.

- Pupils' awareness of other cultures is not particularly extensive and some opportunities are missed to foster spiritual awareness.

Commentary

6. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and have strong self-awareness and confidence. Children in the nursery and reception classes achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development and develop an enthusiasm for learning that persists during their time in school. Attendance at 95.2 per cent is above the national median. Most pupils like coming to school and they enjoy the way their teachers make the lessons interesting and fun by using a wide range of resources. The interactive whiteboards and practical experiments in science are extremely popular. Pupils want to do well and are well motivated by the teachers' enthusiasm, sense of humour and encouragement. Pupils have a good work rate and are able to concentrate for long stretches of time. They talked enthusiastically about the extra-curricular clubs, their words tumbling over each other as they explained excitedly about all the different things they could do on Wednesday afternoons. Pupils speak out confidently, whether in class or talking to visitors, and are not afraid to ask questions to help them to understand. Pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes to school life and take a particular pride in pointing out all the good things about their school. They are keen to show off their classrooms, which they clearly view as their special place. Those pupils who are identified as gifted, talented or more able are equally positive about their experiences in school. Pupils from minority ethnic groups are well integrated and others respect their views when they hold positions of responsibility.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.3	School data	0.6
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

7. Parents are pleased with the high expectations the school has of their children's behaviour. They think that their children are very happy at this school and particularly praised the rapport between adults and children. Like the pupils, they are very keen on the system of 'Big Friends' whereby pupils in Year 6 have responsibility for a reception child. This is very well organised and ranges from helping out at playtimes to reading and sharing books on Friday afternoons. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good and it is not unusual to hear laughter emanating from classrooms or for adults to be seen chatting cheerfully with each other or with their pupils. Parents expressed concerns about bullying in the yard at lunchtimes and some were unhappy that the school took a too lenient approach to pupils with challenging behaviour. Unusually, teaching staff volunteer to help supervise pupils during the lunch break in order to minimise any such incidents. Pupils seemed less concerned than parents and felt that although there was a small amount of bullying it was usually dealt with effectively. The school is punctilious at monitoring any such incidents, including any potential racism, stamping firmly on language which could cause offence to those from minority ethnic groups and talking to pupils to moderate their behaviour. This seems to be effective. There have been two fixed term exclusions in the past year, which were justified.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
263	2	0

8. The very good development of pupils' social and moral awareness has helped to establish the very good relationships throughout the school. Pupils work and play well together. Teachers encourage pupils to talk things through with each other and give them many opportunities to work together in pairs or in groups, taking collective responsibility, for example, for recording investigations in science. Pupils are taught to have a clear sense of right and wrong and discussion times and class councils help to promote a shared sense of purpose and pride that creates a very positive atmosphere in school.
9. While pupils' cultural awareness is developed satisfactorily through subjects such as art and design, music, history and religious education, pupils have relatively few opportunities to communicate with children and adults representing other cultures and faiths or to learn about living in a multi-cultural society. Pupils experience intense moments of wonder in some lessons but these are not part of a well co-ordinated approach to develop pupils' spiritual awareness across the curriculum or through acts of collective worship.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. The quality of teaching and pupils' learning is good in every class. The curriculum is very effective. Standards of care, welfare and health and safety are high. Partnership with parents is good. Contacts with the community are sound and links with other schools and colleges are very well developed.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Consistently good teaching in every class means that pupils learn well all the time. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching and learning in every class leads to very good overall achievement for all groups of pupils and very good progress throughout their time in school.
- Teachers have a good understanding of the subjects they teach and plan lessons thoroughly, ensuring the pace of lessons is brisk and that learning resources are used well, so that pupils acquire skills, knowledge and understanding well.
- Teachers relate well to pupils and have high expectations of good work and behaviour, resulting in pupils working hard and learning very well.
- Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively, particularly to help pupils with special educational needs, and this helps these pupils achieve well relative to their level of attainment.
- The monitoring of pupils' progress is good in the nursery and reception classes; however, the consistency of recording of pupils' progress in subjects in Years 1 to 6 is an area for development.

Commentary

10. Teaching is very good overall. It is rarely less than good and in every class pupils learn at a good rate. The impact of this consistently good rate of learning is seen in high achievement over a period of time by all groups of pupils regardless of ability or aptitude. Over 90 per cent of teaching is good or better and it rarely falls below this level. The following table shows the high level of good teaching seen during the inspection. Good teaching was seen in all classes; this is an improvement since the last inspection when teaching was satisfactory in the nursery and reception classes and good in other age groups.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 41 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (7%)	8 (19%)	28 (65%)	4 (9%)	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.

11. The proportion of very good or better teaching has doubled since the last inspection and there are outstanding elements in a number of very good lessons. The consistency of good teaching enables pupils, by the end of Year 6, to make very good progress compared to their attainment on entry to the nursery. Above all, teachers are happy and relaxed and there is a real buzz about the school. The reasons for this are a direct result of actions taken by the leadership team in their workforce reforms, designed to reorganise teachers' workload so that they have time to think about what they are going to teach and how they are going to do it. Resource managers are used to organise the resources needed for different lessons and every teacher has access to ICT and a network manager to help plan smooth running lessons. In addition, the very good management team has selected and trained capable teachers. Good quality teaching is the norm, maintained through effective monitoring of the quality of learning in all classes.
12. All teachers are skilful in teaching subjects of the primary curriculum. They plan activities carefully that interest and stimulate pupils to learn at a good pace. Pupils at each level of attainment, including those with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils, have work planned that is suited to their needs, with a good level of challenge. Learning resources, such as whiteboards linked to computers and blackboards, assist learning well so that pupils acquire new knowledge and understanding quickly, whilst having plenty of opportunities to practise new skills and to consolidate previous learning; for example, in a mathematics lesson, the teacher wrote very clearly on the blackboard and provided a good role model for the pupils on the presentation of their work. The teacher recapped on previous learning and involved all, including pupils with special educational needs, through carefully questioning. A pictogram was built up about pupils' favourite fruits; the results of the survey were then entered by pupils into a computer and projected onto an interactive whiteboard so that all could understand how to enter data. Pupils gained a much better understanding of how to sort and organise information in a simple way.
13. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Pupils know that they are expected to work hard and behave well and this assists their good achievement. The youngest children in the nursery and reception classes are encouraged to work productively whether independently, in small groups or with an adult. This good foundation is developed as pupils move through the school. Lessons are presented in lively and interesting ways so that pupils sustain interest and concentration and behave well in all year groups. In very good lessons, the use of ICT adds a snappy pace as well as giving quick summaries of progress in learning so far. In excellent lessons, pupils' excitement in learning new things is almost tangible.
14. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and teaching assistants are very skilled in helping these pupils. The planning of work is thorough and this helps these pupils to work alongside others on similar tasks at an appropriate level, often with the support of a teaching assistant. The teaching assistants are deployed very well to assist pupils' learning; for example, to work with large groups in the activity room or in the computer suite so that the teachers can assist other groups of pupils in the class. On other occasions, the teaching assistants work very well with small groups or individual pupils with special educational needs; for example, a teaching assistant planned very carefully an exciting game for two children in the nursery who have speech difficulties. The activity interested the children, who worked hard to repeat correctly words modelled by the adult.

15. In the nursery and reception classes, members of staff keep clear records of children's progress built up from planned observations during lessons. Recent national guidance on keeping track of individuals' achievements has been adapted well into a class list overview so that the staff and management can monitor efficiently the progress of individuals and groups of children. Throughout the rest of the school, the planning of lessons highlights opportunities to check pupils' progress and teachers keep their own records which are used soundly to plan future learning; however, no consistent records are kept of pupils' progress from year to year in subjects in Years 1 to 6, except for English and mathematics.

The curriculum

The school provides a very good curriculum, which promotes high achievement. It is complemented by a rich programme of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors to the school. Accommodation is satisfactory overall; learning resources are of good quality.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The school is forward looking and carefully managed innovations further enhance pupils' learning.
- The range of opportunities for pupils taking part in sports, the arts and other activities is very good.
- Pupils are well prepared for their transfer to secondary education.

Commentary

16. The quality of the curriculum is very good overall and has built on that seen at the last inspection. It is designed to meet the needs of all pupils as they move through the school. From Year 2 onwards pupils have the opportunity to be taught in more able groups for literacy and numeracy. Both national strategies have been evaluated to complement the school's own provision and to focus on identified priorities. The overall effect is to bring together a very effective curriculum and as a result, by the time they leave the school, pupils' achievement is very good. This is reflected in the provision for pupils with special educational needs which is also very good. Individual education plans are in place ensuring that work is focussed and relevant, together with good support of teaching assistants. As a result, pupils with special educational needs share the very good achievement of their classmates. There is very good provision for more able pupils and for those who are gifted or talented. They are often taught together and are thus able to work at a pace that suits their ability.
17. Opportunities for enrichment are very good and provide pupils with additional opportunities to recognise and develop their talents. The school is a Pathfinder School for workforce remodelling and is using this initiative to make radical changes in the way it operates. This is clearly shown in the innovative and creative curriculum designed by its teachers, who are prepared to take risks to ensure that pupils are given the widest range of experiences possible. For example, the last hour of Wednesday afternoons is the time where visitors, specialists and people with diverse talents come into school to work with different groups of pupils from reception to Year 6. Provision is also made for pupils to work outside school during this time so they can be taught using specialist equipment, in the local college, for example. During the inspection it was the turn of infant pupils, some of whom were learning Irish dancing and various board games, others involved in art or working on computers. Recently juniors learnt Spanish, French and chess while others were doing sports in the local comprehensive school. This contact has an additional spin-off as the regular contact with teachers from the local community college, to which almost all Year 6 pupils transfer, ensures that they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
18. There is a wide range of lunchtime and after-school arts and sports clubs available to pupils. These include choir, recorder, history and technology, and football, rounders, cross-country

running and athletics depending on the season. Visits out of school and visitors to the school give pupils worthwhile first hand experiences in a range of subjects. A good example was the visit by Year 6 pupils to a local newspaper to use desktop publishing to design and print a front page on subjects such as Beatle mania and the world cup victory in 1966.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements for ensuring pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very good. The school provides pupils with good support, advice and guidance and involves them very well in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes very good provision for pupils' individual needs.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are very positive and trusting.
- The method of tracking the progress of pupils' learning could be improved.

Commentary

19. The headteacher is responsible for child protection procedures throughout the school. All staff are properly trained and made appropriately aware of any concerns about any child. The buildings are well maintained and subject to regular inspection by staff and governors. The health and safety procedures cover all aspects of first aid, medical provision, fire safety, external visits, school security and dealing with emergencies. All of these arrangements are managed very diligently and the staff concerned understand fully the importance of maintaining a safe working environment.
20. The pupils' questionnaires show that they enjoy being at school and are very happy to talk to adults if they have a problem. This evident trust between pupils and staff stems from the good understanding of individual children's needs, which has been built up over a period of time. A number of children live in difficult home circumstances or have particular problems and staff do everything they can to support them. For example, some children are given breakfast and company at the start of the day; some are given special responsibilities to raise their self-esteem; others are given jobs and duties which will help them to control their behaviour. At all times, adults act as exemplary role models for pupils. The older pupils also help to build positive relationships in the playground. When young children first come to the school they are given a 'Big Friend' who helps them to find their way around and settle into school routines. The happiness and security of children is of paramount importance at all times.
21. The school works very well to give pupils a voice and involve them in the life of the school. The school council has been in existence for several years. Each class has its council, which considers questions and ideas placed in the suggestion box. These may then be passed on to the full school council for further consideration. The main council meets regularly and the members record the discussions and decisions taken. In recent times the council has raised issues which have become part of the school development plan and they have attended meetings of the governing body. When there is agreement that a particular project should be pursued, they are given the responsibility to follow it through to a conclusion, rather than passing it on to adults. Councillors are confident that what they do has a real value to the school and their peers. In addition, the school uses 'Circle Time' very well (in each class) to encourage confidence in speaking about things that concern them.
22. Although each teacher records the progress being made by pupils in their class, there is no consistent method of bringing this information together in a simple form that shows the overall rate of progress of groups of pupils or individuals, in core subjects. This limits the ability of teachers to be able to respond to individual needs as well as they might and help pupils achieve even more than they do.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents is good and contributes well to pupils' learning. The links with the community are satisfactory; links with other schools and colleges are very good and contribute well towards raising achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Productive links with parents are well established.
- Parents are well informed and contribute to the school's work and their children's success.
- Links with other schools very successfully enhance the curriculum and prepare pupils for moving on to the next stage of education.

Commentary

23. The school has the trust and confidence of parents. In their questionnaires, parents have said that they are happy that they can approach the school at any time and that their concerns and suggestions will be treated seriously. Parents are very visible in school at the start and end of the day and talk easily with staff. However, there are more formal lines of communication that establish a continuous link between school and home. The regular consultation meetings with parents not only give an opportunity to talk about their child's progress, but also any other matters. The school also uses questionnaires to seek parents' views. These are sometimes general, but also about specific issues, for example, the pupils' annual reports and the introduction of Wednesday afternoon 'activities'. Each half-term the headteacher has a coffee-morning to which parents are invited, in rotation, so that over a period of time all have an opportunity to talk about matters that concern them. The agenda is entirely open, parents being able to raise any issue they wish, or simply talk about school matters in general.
24. Parents are well informed. School documents are comprehensive and of a good quality and the fortnightly newsletters keep parents up to date with important dates and events. The pupils' annual reports are in a transitional phase. Parents felt they could be improved and so a team of staff, governors and parents have fully overhauled the consultation and reporting process. The new arrangements should give a much more personalised approach to explaining pupils' progress and achievements. Because of the good relations and communication between home and school, parents play a valued part in its success. There is a very active parent teacher association, which helps the social life of the school, but also directly contributes a significant sum to school funds; parents help with reading and other work in class, they help on visits, they help with 'Wednesday activities'. They give good support to their children at home.
25. The school has very productive contacts with other schools. This is particularly so with the local community college (to which most pupils will eventually transfer at the end of Year 6). It is used for some of the 'activities' and each year group has at least two days working in their ICT suite. Staff from the college come in to teach specific lessons, for example, gymnastics for year one and science for Year 4 have happened recently. The nearby primary school is used for specialist music work and there are regular sporting links with others in the area. As the school has Beacon status, this means that several of the staff go out as advisors for leadership, management, SEN, workforce reform and ICT. Not only does this benefit the schools in the area, but those staff who go out inevitably see good practice in a variety of ways and bring this back into their own school – the improvement process works both ways.
26. During their time in the school most pupils will have made many visits to the local community college and this is the most important part of preparation for their moving on. When the time eventually comes they are already confident, but they are also prepared by a series of specific visits and during their final year, their teachers meet to hand over essential records and prepare for their integration. Former pupils come back to the school to talk about their experiences and this, too, helps allay any concerns that pupils may have.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management are very good overall as they were at the time of the last inspection. The leadership team of the headteacher and deputy is excellent; the leadership of subject managers is good. The school's management systems are very good. Governors play a satisfactory part in helping to manage the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher and deputy, working together in partnership, is excellent.
- The motivation and building of teams is highly effective.
- The school is very successful in reducing the administrative workload on teachers.
- The school makes very good use of its financial resources.
- The involvement of subject managers in monitoring standards is limited.

Commentary

27. The headteacher and deputy have high aspirations for the school and are exceptionally successful in working together to achieve success. They have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school, they know where they must focus to be even more successful, and they communicate their ideas with clarity. They have identified the areas for improvement accurately. Most importantly, they are committed to the achievement of high standards in all aspects of the school's work and to enabling pupils who have different needs to fulfil their potential. This is reflected in the consistently high standards achieved by the pupils in their statutory tests, resulting in a School Achievement Award for three consecutive years. The school continues to maintain standards of staff development sufficient to maintain its *Investors in People* award. The school has 'Beacon School' status and, as such, makes its expertise available to other schools. More recently the school has been part of the 'Pathfinder Project' seeking innovative ways to fundamentally change working practices in schools and to provide better organisation for both staff and children.
28. In this school, senior staff are designated as the 'school improvement team', rather than the more traditional 'senior management team', and this is indicative of its overall commitment to making the school better, wherever that is possible. There is a culture of innovative thinking and evaluation of risk; there is a clear understanding that success breeds success. Where a specific improvement project has been identified, a team leader is appointed, together with the necessary team members to achieve success. The teams may comprise teachers, support staff, governors and parents, as appropriate, and have a high degree of delegated authority to plan and take decisions. As a result, the teams are highly motivated to succeed and because they communicate across the school well, the changes and innovations are 'owned' by the whole staff. Teams report their proposals and decisions to staff or governors' meetings and have achieved much success. Examples of this approach have been the development and commissioning of the ICT suite, the redesign of pupils' annual reports and the method of reporting to parents, and a full review of the Foundation Stage curriculum. A team is currently looking for innovation within the timetable, to 'make more time' within the working day. Many of these projects have been 'one-off' events, but the success of the approach is proving equally productive in the ongoing management of the foundation, infant and junior stages of the school.
29. As well as confidence, the above approach also creates valuable management skills at all levels. These are further enhanced as part of performance management. All staff have regular reviews and observations and this leads to the development of personal targets and training, as well as those to support the wider school improvement plan. Support and administrative staff also have the benefit of this approach. The Leadership Team is sensitive to the need to keep the demands of work and home in balance and tries also to give personal social targets, and all staff are encouraged to leave at a reasonable hour. Because staff are highly motivated, well trained and versatile, they also spend time in other teachers' classes, where the pupils

benefit from a change of teaching style, or perhaps specialist teaching skills. Teachers also benefit from the variety, but can also get a better perspective of standards and learning across the school. Teaching assistants are very well qualified, for example in special educational needs, speech and language development, awareness of the problems for pupils with hearing impairments and in ICT. They are also very experienced and have the skills and confidence to teach directly groups of children, or half a class. This in turn means that teachers are often able to work with much smaller groups than normal and are able to give more focused support for learning. This is a key factor in ensuring that pupils who have different needs or abilities are fully catered for.

30. The school is one of a few schools taking part in the 'Pathfinder' project to reduce the administrative workload on teachers and all staff have been involved in this, to a greater or lesser degree.

Example of outstanding practice

The school has succeeded in reducing the administrative workload on teachers.

Achievements, so far, to reduce the workload on teachers have been impressive. The delegation of responsibilities to improvement teams has reduced the need for a full staff meeting every week. Instead there is a short briefing on a Monday morning and a full meeting about every three weeks. The headteacher and deputy now have more time to stand back and think strategically. It also means that they have the time to cover classes and more economically release staff for continued training and development. The daily timetable has been adjusted to give staff non-contact time during the morning. Activity afternoons each week give further non-contact time and all teachers have specific, allocated time each year for personal development work. Resource Managers organise and prepare the necessary resources needed for lessons, removing the task from teachers. Teachers have laptop computers and overhead projectors in their classes, so that lesson materials can be retrieved and stored electronically. The network manager has a significant impact on reducing teachers' workload through recognising staff needs and developing their expertise. His skills are now being used by other schools to the financial advantage of Forest Hall. Innovative and excellent practice helps the school to achieve extremely good value for money.

31. Management has a very good understanding of the principles of 'Best Value'. The school challenges itself to improve continuously by reviewing its practices; non-contact time has been created for teachers; through its work as a Beacon School and through the deputy's work for the *Implementation Review Unit*, new ideas are constantly being introduced. The budget is constantly reviewed and inventive ways considered to make it go further. Managers compare their performance against other schools nationally and within their own area. Their own practice is constantly matched against other schools which are visited. The school consults both parents and pupils very well; their views are understood and taken into account when planning the future of the school. The school competes by taking on responsibility for its own cleaning contract, its own grounds maintenance, the installation of its own computer network and much of its own repairs and maintenance. These initiatives clearly contribute strongly to the very good value for money achieved.
32. Although this is a very successful school, with effective leaders of the subjects of the curriculum, they could be even more effective if they took more responsibility for the monitoring of teaching, learning and standards in their subjects, across the school.
33. The school's income increased by nearly £200,000 last year when it was given Pathfinder status. The large balance carried forward to the next year is for the salaries of those on fixed-term contracts as part of the Pathfinder project.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	775746
Total expenditure	726449
Expenditure per pupil	2585

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	8983
Balance carried forward to the next	58280

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

It was not possible to report in full on all the areas of learning individually. Knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development were sampled as too few lessons were seen to be able to make secure judgements on provision in these two areas. About a quarter of the children have significant communication and language problems on entry to the nursery and a larger proportion than usual have special educational needs. The school makes very good provision for these children and they make very good progress throughout the nursery and reception years. Improvement since the last inspection is good, particularly in teaching and learning which is never less than good in any of the three classes. The foundation stage is well led and managed and the new assessment systems are proving a useful guide to children's achievement at each stage of development.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well and, by the end of the reception year, most children are on course to meet expected standards.
- Parents are welcomed into the nursery at the start of the school day, which helps children to settle well.
- Children are eager to learn.

Commentary

34. Children enter the nursery with below average levels of attainment in this area of learning and make good progress. The teaching is good. The planning of lessons is thorough and is based firmly on the national guidance. Children's confidence and relationships with other children and the staff develop well though participation in the wide range of activities available each day in the nursery. Staff have high expectation of good behaviour and quiet reminders are usually sufficient for boisterous children.
35. Parents are welcomed into the school and often bring their children early to play on a range of wheeled vehicles and toys in the outdoor area. Members of staff encourage children to self-register their attendance by finding their names and placing them on a prepared board at the entrance. Most children separate willingly from their parents either at the door or within the classroom. Some parents work alongside their children for a short time on an activity. A minority of children can be upset when parting from their parents; however, members of staff provide good support for these children.
36. In the reception classes, children listen and respond well to instructions from staff. Most pupils can concentrate in a large group for a short period of time. They are interested when working on their own or in a small group; for example, making models from plastic construction sets. They talk about things that are special to them. They express their views willingly; for example, they made comments about how a story from the Bible made them feel.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in all three classes and children learn to read and write well for their age.
- Teaching assistants are used very effectively to help children who have language problems.

Commentary

37. Children enter nursery with skills that are well below average overall. Adults are skilled at talking to the children, asking questions and making jokes to elicit a response. Higher attainers pretended to be different characters from a story when answering the register and average attainers who were making gingerbread men giggled at the notion that these might run away. Learning assistants, trained in developing children's speech, offer invaluable assistance to those whose communication skills are very limited, helping them to talk rather than pointing to show what they mean. As a result, these children begin to catch up very well, absorbing and using new words rapidly.
38. Reception children achieve well as they are taught in small groups. This enables the teaching to concentrate on developing the children's reading and writing skills effectively. In all three classes, the teaching is very well organised and sets high expectations within a gentle and calm atmosphere that develops children's confidence and skills well. Lessons are well planned to ensure that children with different levels of attainment are well catered for. Higher attainers begin to write plausible words such as 'hlycopta', average attainers space out their words well and lower attainers read out what they have written with pride. The children are encouraged to talk about their work and most listen to stories attentively. As a result, children are likely to reach the goals set for them at the end of the reception year and a good proportion to exceed them.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most children are on course to reach the goals expected of children by the reception year.
- Children in the reception classes are prepared well for learning in Year 1.

Commentary

39. Children achieve well in this area of learning because the teaching is good. Children in the nursery experience a wide range of counting and sorting activities; for example, sorting plastic elephants according to colour and then counting. Members of staff engage children well in discussion and encourage children to count. Most children can count up to five objects, although some need help to do this. Computer programs are also used to develop counting skills.
40. In the reception classes, the teaching builds on previous learning and prepares children well for numeracy lessons in Year 1; for example, children sat on the carpet as a whole class and listened and responded to the teaching about patterns before working in small groups on related activities. A good range of tasks consolidated and extended children's learning well. Some children made patterns in different colours of paints or sequenced plastic blocks whilst others made repeating patterns using coloured letters of the alphabet. A few pupils worked on the computer independently to move coloured blocks on the screen to make repeating patterns. Towards the end of the lesson, the pupils and teachers came together again to discuss the learning.
41. In **knowledge and understanding of the world**, lessons are planned carefully to ensure all aspects of this area of learning are taught. In the lessons seen, children made jelly, which was

obviously a very new experience. The teaching challenged children to predict what might happen; for example, when jelly was made from 'fizzy' water. Children were questioned well and all had their turn to express their views. In the computer suite, the teaching helped children to learn skills in using computers to assist their learning in literacy.

42. In **physical development**, outdoor and indoor activities are planned well to provide a range of experiences such as co-operating together using wheeled toys to negotiate round obstacles or developing children's skills in running, jumping and dancing in the hall, learning to use the space around them sensibly. The resources for learning are good in the nursery and every opportunity is used in all three classes to ensure that the children get a lot of exercise. There are many activities for children to choose from that help to develop their co-ordination. A favourite activity in the nursery was trying to link different sized plastic elephants of the same colour together; this took a lot of concentration but several children persevered until they had completed a full circle.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good curriculum is well taught and enables children to achieve well.

Commentary

43. Thorough planning of this area of learning gives children opportunities to take part in a wide variety of experiences, including the development of understanding of music and musical instruments taught by a music specialist. In a very good lesson, children learnt how to make lively, bright and fast-moving sounds effectively and creatively on a percussion instrument of their choice to represent the busy actions of the day. The teacher's enthusiastic approach enhanced both enjoyment and learning. In both nursery and reception, the children have many opportunities to paint and their work is celebrated in large displays in all the rooms. Most pupils have a good idea of size and proportion and are able to copy, for example, a sunflower well, filling the paper and including details to show the change in colour at the centre of the flower. By the end of the year the children should all meet the goals expected in creative development.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Throughout the school pupils' achievement is very good and they attain standards in reading and writing that are well above those seen nationally.
- The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good.
- There is a strong emphasis on developing writing through other subjects.
- The co-ordinators manage the subject well.
- Opportunities to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills are not formally planned or assessed.

Commentary

44. When they start the school a significant proportion of pupils have below average language skills. However, as a result of consistently good teaching in every class they make good progress in the Foundation Stage and this continues as they move through the school so that

by the end of Year 6 their achievement is very good. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 are on course to reach standards in reading and writing that are well above those expected for their ages. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because they are helped well and every effort is made by staff to raise their attainment by carefully planned work, support and encouragement. The school has worked equally hard to successfully raise the achievement of higher attaining pupils and to improve on the overall above average standards reported at the last inspection. Standards in writing have been consistently well above average for the past five years. Standards of speaking and listening have been maintained at above average because teachers encourage pupils to talk and to share their ideas. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

45. In all classes, teachers plan interesting lessons with clear learning objectives. In whole class shared reading and writing sessions, pupils analyse a range of texts and these are matched well to their reading levels. The closing parts of lessons are used well to involve pupils in reviewing what they have learnt and to identify areas that might need more time spent on them. Pupils learn well and clearly get a lot of enjoyment from interesting lessons that challenge their different abilities effectively. They are taught in a variety of groupings and this helps teachers to maintain a good pace and rate of learning. The teachers' enthusiasm rubs off on the pupils. Throughout the school, pupils are quick to talk about their love of books, reflecting the emphasis the teaching places on being able to read competently at an early age. All pupils in Year 2 read confidently and higher attainers discuss in a surprising amount of depth the books they enjoy and are able to use a glossary to find out the meaning of words such as 'archaeologist', 'papyrus' and 'hieroglyphics.' By the time they reach Year 6 most pupils are self-motivated and independent readers who read different types of literature with a great deal of interest. They like a variety of novels and begin to understand the different styles which authors use to catch their interest. Higher attaining pupils choose to read more demanding texts such as poetry and non-fiction, explaining that they are more complex and are a challenge to read. Teachers' high expectations help pupils to understand that what they read is not always straightforward and that sometimes they have to read between the lines. A good example of this was seen in one lesson when pupils readily understood that a dog named Pincher was 'likely to be aggressive'.
46. The teaching of writing is equally effective in all classes and follows a similar pattern to that of reading in terms of being well organised, having clear learning objectives and time at the end of lessons to review what has been learnt. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are writing stories with properly organised sentences and a simple structure. Their writing shows clear development and higher attaining pupils put together some interesting descriptive phrases. The spelling of the most commonly used words is usually accurate. Of particular note is the well-developed joined handwriting style of almost all pupils. In the juniors, pupils' writing is well structured and often lively and imaginative with a good use of vocabulary. Handwriting is joined, clear and fluent and helps the good quality of presentation in pupils' books in all other subjects. Links are often made with other subjects and the skills learnt in literacy lessons are practised effectively in others. This helps pupils to see that what they learn is relevant and useful as well as consolidating aspects of reading and writing taught in the literacy sessions. Teachers obviously understand the different ways in which pupils learn. In a Year 5 class, for example, with a high proportion of boys, the class teacher made a conscious effort to select material that would appeal to boys. A good sense of humour took the pressure off and they really became involved. They were given ample opportunities to use their own initiative and so achieved very well. Marking of pupils' written work is good and gives clear indications of what pupils need to do next in order to improve.
47. The subject is well led and managed and plans for improvement are clear and relevant. Although pupils' work is monitored and subject managers have a good idea of standards throughout the school, there is no system whereby some of the best practice in the school can be shared, comparing introductions or concluding parts of lesson, for example, or working alongside each other to further develop teaching skills. Teachers' planning does not include which aspect of oracy they wish to develop and rarely includes opportunities for pupils to reflect and comment on their own and others' work and so involve them in a purposeful

discussion. An area for development is to ensure that skills in speaking and listening are regularly assessed.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

48. Teachers plan their lessons identifying opportunities to link subjects together. As a result, pupils use their language and literacy skills well in other subjects. For example, a Year 6 pupil shows a very good use of vocabulary when writing as a Second World War evacuee, *'The sky matched my mood. Grey.'*

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of pupils is good because the teaching is good.
- Teaching assistants give very good help to pupils with special educational needs.
- The teaching of higher attaining pupils is of a high standard.
- The subject is led well; however a system to track pupils' progress, over time, is an area for development, particularly in Years 1 and 2, and the subject co-ordinators do not have a clear view of standards throughout the school.
- The planning to use mathematics in other subjects is insufficient.

Commentary

49. Standards of the present group of pupils in Year 6 are likely to be above average by the time the pupils leave the school. By the end of Year 2, standards are likely to be average. Throughout the school, pupils' achievement is good because of the high proportion of good or better teaching.
50. The planning for pupils with special educational needs is thorough so that pupils can work alongside other pupils well, particularly when helped by the capable teaching assistants; for example, in a lesson in Year 2, the teaching assistant helped pupils to do similar work to others by encouraging them to use plastic blocks to visualise and calculate addition of sets of ten. In Year 6, lower attaining pupils were helped through discussion to recognise simple fractions.
51. The teaching of higher attainers, including gifted and talented pupils, is organised very well so that these pupils in Years 2 to 6 can be taught separately, on occasions. The quality of teaching of these pupils in the lessons seen in Year 4 and Year 6 was of a high standard.

Example of outstanding practice

A sequence of fast-moving activities helped a group of more able pupils in Year 4 to understand fractions and to apply this knowledge to solving increasingly complex problems.

In a lesson in Year 4 the teaching was demanding and inspirational with the pupils finding out for themselves about fractions. A lively and challenging countdown game got the lesson off to a good start with pupils being given lots of opportunities to explain their answers. They began to see that there could be many different ways to arrive at a correct solution. Taking a pizza, it was clear that different numbers of cuts produced different fractional amounts. They began to consider whether a number pattern could be established. Expert questioning, to draw responses from the pupils, helped them to work out some rules. They discovered that if the pieces are not equal then the number pattern changes. The task created a real buzz of excitement as pupils discovered that in order to get the maximum number of pieces the cuts must intersect. They then tried different methods to apply what they had learnt to larger numbers, discovering that number patterns work better than drawing. The lesson culminated in a definition of fractions which the pupils themselves created. Their homework, to draw a pizza cut into 11 slices and to validate the pattern in the prediction, completed the high level of challenge and ensured that pupils' learning was secure.

52. In a very well planned lesson in Year 6, the teaching challenged pupils very effectively to solve problems mentally. Resources were used very well to help pupils to visualise patterns when finding sequences of square numbers. Pupils worked very hard and achieved very well. Their very good attitudes to learning and high standard of behaviour assisted their learning.
53. The subject co-ordinators lead the subject well. Improvements have been made in the quality of teaching and in the planning of lessons using national guidance. As a result, standards, by the end of Year 6 in the national tests, have improved since the last inspection. Teachers have had opportunities to visit leading mathematics teachers in other schools; however, the subject co-ordinators have not worked alongside other teachers in the school to gain a better understanding of the quality of pupils' learning and standards. The school has developed a system, linked to the sublevels of the National Curriculum, to monitor pupils' progress from the results of the Year 2 tests to the end of Year 6; however, the procedures have not been extended to include attainment on entry to Year 1 or teacher assessments at the end of Year 1. Targets for pupils' attainments are only given for the end of Year 6 but not for the end of each term or year throughout the school. The recording of standards from Years 2 to 6 is presented on individual class sheets but has not been transferred to a spreadsheet showing the progress of year groups over time. This would enable the management to check efficiently the progress of individual and groups of pupils over a period of years.

Mathematics across the curriculum

54. While mathematics is used satisfactorily across the curriculum, numeracy skills are not specifically planned for in most other subjects. Examination of pupils' work, including displays, shows relatively few examples of mathematical skills being practised or assisting the learning in other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils achieve very well because teaching is good throughout the school.
- Pupils learn well through carrying out practical tasks.
- The subject is well led and managed though there is room for improvement in co-ordinators' understanding of the standards achieved in each year group.

Commentary

55. Results at the end of Year 6 are back to the high standards of two years ago, reflecting the improvements in the curriculum and the way that teaching and learning are organised. Standards of the present group of pupils in Year 6 are likely to be well above the national average by the time pupils leave the school; this is an improvement since the last inspection when pupils' performance in national tests was average. By the end of Year 2, standards are likely to be above average because pupils learn well through undertaking many practical tasks. Throughout the school, almost all pupils, including those with special educational needs, attain nationally expected standards, and a large proportion exceeds them. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.
56. Pupils' overall achievement, from the time they start school to when they leave, is very good. They achieve well in lessons because of the consistently good teaching in every class. The way the lessons are organised, so that in large year groups half the class are taught together while the other half does another subject elsewhere, means that pupils have greater individual attention and many opportunities to learn through asking questions to which they want to know the answers. Marking is meticulous, helpful and evaluative. The curriculum is very carefully

planned so that pupils build on what they know and understand. Teachers encourage pupils to use their knowledge to reflect and make informed predictions and to draw accurate conclusions from Year 1 onwards. Discussions are often animated as teachers encourage pupils to work out precisely what is happening and why, as in Year 6 for example, when pupils observed a candle burning. The very good level of questioning led to pupils' realisation of the complex process of reversible and irreversible changes involved. Teachers use ICT extremely well to reinforce teaching points and scientific vocabulary; this helps average attainers to check their understanding and gives a focus for teaching assistants to give additional explanations to lower attainers and those with special educational needs. The resource managers are used very well to ensure that equipment is in place at the start of lessons so that no time is wasted.

57. Teachers plan a wide range of opportunities for pupils to observe, predict, test and evaluate in practical situations, thus helping them to develop important skills as well as gain in scientific knowledge. Pupils' discoveries are carefully guided, as in Year 1 when pupils used simple equipment confidently to make observations and say whether what happened was as they expected. By Year 6 it is almost second nature for pupils to jot down what they observe as they carry out investigations. Pupils learn well from each other in groups that are mixed in terms of ability and gender. In Year 3, for example, pupils used scientific equipment sensibly, to test the permeability of different types of rock in order to discover which would be the best to make a watertight roof on a brick-built shed. Pupils are encouraged to record the findings of their investigations in their own way, which provides higher attainers with opportunities to develop their ideas and leads to some high-quality work in every class. In Year 6, practical investigations, covering magnetism, air resistance, gravitational force and friction, effectively revised what pupils knew about different forces and clearly indicated to both the teacher and pupils that they needed to sharpen up their scientific vocabulary. Thus practical work formed an important element in testing pupils' scientific knowledge and understanding.

Example of outstanding practice

The use of ICT to direct learning through instructions, information and explanation was used to very good effect to enable pupils to understand some of the properties of liquids, solids and gases.

Pupils in Year 5 were on the edge of their seats with anticipation. Preliminary investigations in the first 15 minutes had already established some differences between liquids, solids and gases through blowing up inflatables, releasing the air and comparing balloons filled with water with solid blocks. Words like 'transparent, flexible and rigid' were emerging when suddenly the next question appeared on the screen: 'How can solids and liquids flow out and expand into the surrounding atmosphere?' They were about to make carbon dioxide! Their excitement, as the vinegar combining with baking powder fizzed up dramatically in the plastic bottles, gave way to urgency as they strove to put the balloons on the end of the bottles and secure them with elastic bands, then wonder as the balloons filled with gas. When the teacher very carefully demonstrated to each group that carbon dioxide can be poured from a bottle to blow out a candle flame, pupils' sense of wonder was tangible. The next instruction filled the screen: 'go outside and act out how the particles inside solids, gases and liquids behave'. Pupils knew exactly what to do, huddling together for the solid and darting around in a free-style sort of dance to represent gases but when it came to enacting a liquid they gleefully rolled on the ground while one directed the flow. The pace of learning, the fun and the use of ICT to reinforce what pupils learnt were exceptionally good.

58. The subject managers' action plan to push experimental and investigative work is clearly effective in improving pupils' scientific knowledge. Very good links with the local college enables junior pupils to benefit from the specialist equipment that the college provides. The subject managers make good use of the time given to them for managing the subject to check planning and resourcing, and to help solve problems for individual teachers. An area of weakness, however, is the lack of understanding by subject managers of standards in each year group because the systems to track pupils' progress are not sufficiently developed, especially in Years 1 and 2.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because the quality of teaching is good.
- Pupils are not sufficiently aware of the safe use of the Internet.
- Teachers have a good understanding of pupils' attainment but the recording of this information is not consistent throughout the school.
- The computer suite is well equipped.
- The leadership of the subject is very good and the management is good.
- The subject is being used increasingly to assist learning in other subjects.
- Links with a local City Learning Centre enhance the opportunities for pupils throughout the school.

Commentary

59. By the end of both Years 2 and 6, standards are above the national expectations; this is an improvement since the last inspection. National guidance is used well to develop pupils' skills in the subject. Lessons are well organised, enabling pupils at all levels of attainment to achieve well. The quality of teaching and learning is good; for example, in a well planned lesson in Year 1, the teacher used a computer linked to a large screen well to remind pupils how to open up a word processing program. This gave pupils confidence to design a poster using text and pictures. Care was taken to make sure computers were set up correctly for left-handed pupils and those with special educational needs. An 'expert' pupil was chosen to help others when necessary whilst the teacher was helping a small group. The 'expert' was proud to be chosen and fulfilled his duties well through discussion when difficulties arose.
60. Older pupils use the Internet to access information to assist their learning in other subjects. The computers at the school are screened to reduce the risk of access to unsuitable web sites; however, the school has not advised pupils and parents on the safe use of the Internet so that when pupils are working at home on their own computers they are not aware of the possible dangers associated with this source of information.
61. Lesson plans give details of opportunities to check pupils' progress and teachers have a good grasp of pupils' attainment; however, consistent whole school systems are not in place to monitor pupils' attainment and progress in the subject over time. This has also been identified by the subject co-ordinators, and some teachers are piloting manageable recording methods.
62. The school has a good-sized, well-equipped computer room, although some of the systems are becoming overloaded because of the high level of use of the network and the specification of the computers. The computer suite is used very well. The organisation of lessons so that each pupil works individually on one computer assists their progress. Teaching assistants are used very well to teach groups of pupils. The accommodation is enhanced further by well-sited interactive whiteboards and projectors linked to computers in several classrooms, as well as in the computer suite, which help teachers to demonstrate new learning and enables pupils to discuss their learning with each other.
63. The senior managers and subject co-ordinators have a very clear view of the potential of ICT as a tool to aid pupils' learning as well as to reduce teachers' workload. A very effective team has evolved, including teachers, teaching assistants and the ICT manager; this is having a positive impact on the provision for the subject and pupils' learning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

64. The use of ICT across the curriculum is very good. Throughout the school, teachers plan to use ICT to assist learning in other subjects; for example, in Year 6 pupils produced a multimedia presentation about the River Nile and the Amazon to assist their studies in geography. The pupils were aware of the features of good presentations such as the need for them to be colourful, interesting, factual and well organised.

65. Very productive arrangements are made to enable pupils throughout the school to spend time at the local City learning Centre; for example, during a visit to the centre, Year 6 pupils took digital photographs and accessed the Internet with children from the reception classes in a project 'All about me'. Year 5 pupils produced a multimedia presentation about Victorian Britain, and pupils in Years 1 to 3 made digital movie animations.

HUMANITIES

Work was sampled in geography, history and religious education. As only two lessons were seen in history and one each in geography and religious education, it was not possible to form secure judgements about provision in these subjects.

66. In the one **geography** lesson seen, Year 6 pupils identified landmarks on a map of North Tyneside. The lesson was planned in detail and suited to meet the needs of all pupils. The scheme of work is based on national guidance and enables teachers to cover the full programmes of study.
67. In **history**, pupils in Year 2 pupils were studying the life of Florence Nightingale and developing an increasing sense of time and the past. In a good lesson in Year 4, pupils looked at evidence to find out more about life in Anglo-Saxon times. The planning was very good and provided for three different ability groups who each had to study texts to find out what Anglo-Saxons ate and drank and how they cooked, and how these differed from today. The subject was brought to life because the teacher prepared a 'pottage' for pupils to taste which stimulated lots of comments and comparisons about the taste, smell and feel of Anglo-Saxon food with their last meal at home. Pupils used their skills in literacy well, to take notes which they then used to form the basis for more formal writing.
68. In **religious education**, the curriculum is planned carefully to meet the requirements of the local authority's syllabus for the subject. As they move through the school, pupils study the major world faiths, including Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism. In the lessons seen the quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory. Pupils in Year 4 have a sound knowledge of Christianity and can compare the writing in the Gospels to identify areas where the stories are similar and different. In Year 6, pupils explore the festivals in the Church calendar such as Refreshment Sunday and their links with events in the Bible. In this lesson, pupils shared Simnel cake and this helped to give them an insight into long-established traditions. However, in both lessons, opportunities for spiritual development and reflection were missed.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Physical education was inspected in detail and is reported in full below. There was insufficient evidence to make firm judgements about provision in art and design, music, and design and technology because it was only possible to see a few lessons.

69. In **art and design**, wall displays and samples of previous work indicate that pupils are provided with opportunities to work with a range of materials in creating pictures and designs. They also study pictures produced by other artists and then try to copy the style of the work, as seen in paintings by pupils in Year 2 in the style of Mondrian. Pupils are clearly taught to look closely at form and content, as revealed in the pictures by Year 6 pupils using computer graphics in black and white to convey images of movement using straight and curved lines in the style of Kandinsky. They are taught specific techniques effectively. In one lesson, using red as the main colour, younger pupils painted using a dabbing technique graduated colours fading to the palest pink in an oval shape working from the outer to the inner edge, against a background of darkening strips of colour. This helped pupils to see exactly where the light was coming from and why. Older pupils show a good grasp of abstraction and are able to convey emotion effectively as in their pencil drawings based on Munch's *The Scream*.

70. Pupils clearly undertake a great deal of work in **design and technology** and the displays in most classrooms show that pupils learn an appropriate range of joining and making techniques using a wide range of materials. In one lesson, lively teaching combined with careful planning enabled Year 1 pupils to design and make a fruit salad. They could explain what they had to do to improve their design and lower attainers received very good support to enable them to achieve success. Older pupils' slippers are well constructed and pupils' explanations of where improvements could be made were well expressed.
71. In **music**, pupils follow a curriculum designed to give them practical experiences in the different areas of learning. They are given opportunities to learn the skills of performance and of musical appreciation. In singing, pupils pitch notes accurately and their enunciation of words and attention to the rhythmic flow of music is good. The one lesson seen was excellent.

Example of outstanding practice

In an excellent lesson, pupils in Year 6 composed and performed a blues sequence which incorporated improvisation.

Using ICT to illustrate to pupils what they had done in the last lesson and to remind them of the differences between scales and chords, pupils went on to develop either rhythmic or melodic improvisations to form instrumental breaks between chord sequences. The teaching kept up the pupils' interest by varying the way they played, using occasional demonstrations to keep the whole thing moving. The result was precise, accurate and rhythmic chord playing, punctuated by plausible, improvised interludes. By the end of the lesson, pupils had composed their own lyrics, keeping to the blues format, based on headlines and common phrases. The excellent rapport between teacher and pupils led to a totally uninhibited response and active participation by both boys and girls that got better and better, ending with a perfectly tuneful and rhythmic blues sequence performed with some flair based on the notion that their 'brains were overloaded with too much homework!'

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in dance and games are above average by the end of Year 6.
- The enthusiasm of the subject co-ordinator and other teachers ensures pupils have a very broad and worthwhile curriculum.

Commentary

72. Pupils achieve well and reach above national expectations in most areas of the subject by the end of Year 6 because the quality of teaching is good. In dance, teachers have a very good understanding of how to interest both boys and girls because their high quality demonstrations and enthusiasm percolate through to the pupils. Both pupils and teachers enjoy taking an active part in the lessons; for example, both teachers and pupils maintained, with great enthusiasm, a complex sequence of movements in a country dance. In a well-planned and interesting lesson in Year 4, pupils were given good opportunities for energetic exercise. The teaching challenged all to improve, resulting in pupils working hard and achieving well. The planning of games lessons is effective and pupils make good progress; for example in a Year 5 and 6 lesson, well organised groups worked well together to practise netball skills while other pupils gained experience in throwing and catching rugby balls. Arrangements for swimming have been improved recently because the management realised that too few pupils were able to swim the nationally expected 25 metres by the time they left the school. Pupils now have swimming lessons for part of the year in Years 3 to 6.
73. Standards by the end of Year 6, on balance, have been maintained at above average since the last inspection. The skills and enthusiasm of the subject co-ordinator and many of the other staff help to provide a rich curriculum with additional opportunities to take part in a wide range

of sporting activities run by specialist coaches. Very effective links with other schools provide very good opportunities for pupils to take part in competitive sporting events in athletics, cricket, cross country, hockey, netball, rounders, rugby and soccer.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

74. No lessons were seen and so no judgements can be made on provision. From looking at pupils' work and speaking with both teachers and pupils, it is clear that this area of learning makes a significant contribution to pupils' social and moral development and to their good attitudes to learning. Because there is a strong emphasis on raising self-esteem, pupils achieve well. Effective systems ensure that pupils develop confidence and responsibility and, as a result, they develop very good all-round relationships and respect the differences between people. Pupils work co-operatively and collaboratively in groups. Discussion times are used to good effect to consider topical issues and problems. The school nurse talks with older pupils about changes in their lives and pupils are made aware of the dangers of drugs. The school recognises the need to develop a formal written scheme of work for use throughout the school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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