

INSPECTION REPORT

HALTWHISTLE FIRST SCHOOL

Haltwhistle

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122201

Headteacher: Mr J Roberts-Green

Lead inspector: Mrs R S Rodger

Dates of inspection: 21-24 June 2004

Inspection number: 256322

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Type of school: | First |
| School category: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 3-9 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| Number on roll: | 200 |
| School address: | Woodhead Lane Haltwhistle Northumberland |
| Postcode: | NE49 9DP |
| Telephone number: | 01434 320467 |
| Fax number: | 01434 320345 |
| Appropriate authority: | The governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr L Thompson |
| Date of previous inspection: | June 22 1998 |

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Haltwhistle First School is situated in a small town in Northumberland. The area served by the school is mixed socially and economically but is broadly average with an average proportion of pupils who are eligible for a free school meal. A number of pupils come to the school from surrounding villages. There are 184 full-time pupils on roll, and 48 children attending the nursery part-time. Fifty one pupils have special educational needs, which is above average. The range of needs includes pupils with moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Three pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs, which is broadly average. All the pupils are of White ethnic origin, with a very small number of Black African pupils. They speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils who join or leave the school at times other than the usual time for admission to the school is very low. The school has recently achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark 2 and the Investor in People award in 2003. Attainment on entry is average. Most children have attended the preschool that shares the same site as the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|---|
| 10347 | Mrs R S Rodger | Lead inspector | English, history, geography, English as an additional language. |
| 9958 | Mr T Page | Lay inspector | |
| 3213 | Mrs J Elton | Team inspector | Foundation Stage, art and design, design and technology, music, religious education. |
| 16761 | Mr M Hemmings | Team inspector | Mathematics, science, information and communication technology, physical education and special educational needs. |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Haltwhistle First School is an **effective** school with some very good features. Pupils achieve well because of good teaching and leave the school at the end of Year 4 with above average standards. Standards are well above average in Year 2. The leadership and management of the school has contributed well to maintaining above average standards in recent years. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- standards in Year 2 are well above average and achievement is very good in English and mathematics;
- the provision for and achievement of pupils with special educational needs are very good;
- governors provide very good support;
- links with the community are very good;
- relationships are very good;
- teaching in the Foundation Stage is good and children make a very settled start in the nursery;
- opportunities to apply information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum are unsatisfactory;
- assessment of science is unsatisfactory.

Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good. The school has tackled the identified issues with success: subject leaders are now fully involved in school improvement and take good responsibility for managing developments in their subjects; all planning is now based on the National Curriculum requirements; and assessment arrangements are now thorough in English and mathematics - though less effective in science - and are used well to inform the next steps for pupils' learning and to identify those pupils who require additional support.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with: | all schools | | | similar schools |
|---|-------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2003 |
| reading | B | C | A | A |
| writing | B | A | A | A |
| mathematics | A | B | B | B |

*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*

Achievement is **good overall**, but varies throughout the school because of inconsistent teaching. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because of the very good support they receive. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve well. Attainment on entry is average. By the end of the Foundation Stage, standards are above average and

achievement is good. The results of the 2003 national tests in the table above show that standards in Year 2 were well above average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. Well above average standards have been maintained in Year 2, as a result of consistently very good teaching. Standards in Years 3 and 4 have improved throughout the year and are now above average in English and mathematics because a high priority has been given to improving teaching and giving pupils additional support. Standards are above nationally expected levels throughout the school in art and design, history and religious education. They are in line with nationally expected levels throughout the school in science and ICT.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well. Attendance has improved and is now satisfactory. Punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching in Year 2 and for pupils with special educational needs is very good and has a very good impact on their achievement. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good. In the best lessons, teaching is imaginative, challenging and innovative. The pace of lessons is good and pupils learn new knowledge and understanding effectively as a result. Pupils are generally well behaved and enjoy learning. Teaching assistants provide very good support, especially for pupils with special educational needs. Teaching and learning are best in Year 2, where pupils learn very effectively as a result of clear explanations and instructions. Planning is consistently good and marking gives pupils a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. Assessment arrangements are effective in English and mathematics and are developing satisfactorily in other subjects, apart from science where they are unsatisfactory. The good curriculum is effectively enriched by a good range of out-of-school activities and the needs of all pupils are met equally effectively. The school is very well resourced and the accommodation is very good. The care, welfare and safety of pupils are good and pupils' views are sought regularly through the school council and in more informal ways. Transitions from the preschool to the reception class and to the destination secondary school are effective. The partnership with parents is good and links with the community are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. Governance is very good. The governors' support for literacy and special educational needs is very strong and has a very good impact on improving provision. In the relatively short time the headteacher has been in post, he has created an effective and hardworking team of staff. He has effectively maintained the above average standards and good quality of teaching as well as introducing a range of innovative practices to broaden the curriculum and to give a higher priority to the arts and sport across the school. The climate for learning is good. Subject leaders have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. All statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very satisfied and appreciate the welcome they receive when visiting school and the guidance they are given to help their children at home. Pupils were unanimous in their

agreement that there would always be someone to turn to if they were worried in school and that their teachers are fair and listen to their ideas.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- make more use of ICT to support learning in other subjects;
- improve the assessment of pupils' work in science.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement is good overall; it is very good in Year 2 and for pupils with special educational needs. The very few pupils with English as an additional language achieve well. Standards in English, mathematics, art and design, history and religious education are above average by the time pupils leave school, at the end of Year 4, and they are average in science and ICT.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- As a result of very good teaching, pupils in Year 2 achieve very well and reach well above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics compared to similar schools.
- The support for pupils with special educational needs is very good and results in their very good achievement throughout the school.
- The high priority given to improving standards in Years 3 and 4 has resulted in above average standards in Year 4.
- Standards are above average in art and design and religious education.
- The above average standards in ICT have not been maintained since the previous inspection.

Commentary

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| reading | 17.2 (16.4) | 15.7 (15.8) |
| writing | 16.5 (15.7) | 14.6 (14.4) |
| mathematics | 16.8 (17.0) | 16.3 (16.5) |

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

1. The table shows how well Year 2 pupils achieved in the 2003 national tests compared to the previous year. The well above average standards in reading and writing are clear from the figures. Higher attaining pupils achieved well above average results in reading and average results in reading, mathematics and in the science teacher assessments. Current standards in Year 2 are at least as good as the results last year in reading, mathematics and writing. They are not as high in science because of the high priority given to other core subjects.
2. The results of the most recent national tests indicate that the well above average standards achieved in 2003 have been improved upon in Year 2. The decision to teach a more able group of Year 2 pupils for mathematics has meant they have been completing challenging work which has contributed to their good achievement. Standards in lessons in Year 2 generally match those attained in the national tests, except in science where standards are average. Year 4 pupils achieve above nationally expected levels in English

and mathematics. Standards in science are generally average and pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. The presentation of their work in science in Years 3 and 4 is poor and pupils have insufficient opportunities to develop investigational skills in a systematic way. All of these factors have an impact on their standards achieved.

3. Most children in the Foundation Stage are likely to achieve the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development. A significant number are likely to exceed the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy and creative development. Achievement in the Foundation Stage is good overall.
4. Pupils with special educational needs achieve especially well as a result of the rigorous systems in place to assess their individual needs when they start school. The team of professionals working with pupils with special educational needs includes teaching assistants, learning support assistants and a speech and language assistant. They have a comprehensively planned programme of work that also involves volunteer parents, to support these pupils individually. As a result, almost all the pupils achieved the nationally expected Level 2 this year in reading. Currently, there are 14 Year 1 pupils receiving one-to-one support to help them achieve as well as they can in the 2005 national tests. Pupils achieve so well because of the effectiveness of the early intervention for speech and language delay in the Foundation Stage and as a result of the effectiveness and impact of the work of the special educational needs co-ordinator. The recent identification of the additional needs for higher attaining pupils has led to targeted support for them in English lessons; this is having a good impact of improving their achievement, particularly in Years 3 and 4.
5. Standards are above average in English and mathematics by Year 4 and achievement is good. Standards are average in science and in all other foundation subjects. Leadership has prioritised raising standards in Years 3 and 4 in the past year with good results. The results of the non-statutory tests confirm the success of the actions to target pupils' and boys' reading in particular. Year 4 pupils exceeded the targets set for them in February by a wide margin in the recently completed optional tests. Higher attaining pupils achieved particularly well in reading and mathematics with a third of pupils achieving higher than expected levels. A range of effective actions identified at the start of the year by the senior management team have contributed to the good improvement in standards. Pupils are grouped by prior attainment for English and mathematics in Years 3 and 4 and parents have been informed of the ways in which they can support their children at home. Actions linked to the Basic Skills award have also contributed to improved achievement. More attention has been given to preparing the pupils to complete the tests by spreading out the tests and completing practice tests. In preparation for remodelling the curriculum, the school is beginning to give good attention to promoting literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.
6. Improvements to ICT, highlighted in the school improvement plan, have not been as consistent and standards remain in line with national expectations. Insufficient use is made of ICT to support learning in some classes. Standards in ICT are average, which is a decline since the previous inspection. Although leadership if the subject is good, it is apparent that some teachers lack confidence in the use of ICT and the subject has not had the high priority recently compared to previous years.

7. Standards in art and design, history and in religious education are above average throughout the school. The support of a visiting artist has contributed to improvements in the pupils' artistic skills. A strong feature of the teaching is demonstrating new skills; this is effective in leading to above average standards. Lessons in religious education are creative and good use is made of a range of visits and artefacts to support pupils' learning. This leads to above average standards throughout the school. In both subjects, the leaders model good practice in their own teaching, which has an impact on pupils' good achievement.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are happy in school, appreciate what it has to offer, and apply themselves well to learning.
- Relationships are very good.
- Pupils' respect and consideration for others, and an interest in the wider world which is stimulated by visits and visitors, are good.
- Attendance has improved in the last year and is now satisfactory.

Commentary

8. Pupils appreciate all that the school has to offer. They are rightly proud of their school and have good attitudes to learning. Their behaviour is good, and sometimes very good or excellent when teaching is inspirational.
9. Relationships between pupils and adults are very good. This leads to a confident and close-knit community where pupils know and care for one another and there is very little oppressive behaviour. Pupils are valued, respond well to being given responsibility and contribute to the smooth running of the school. Older pupils act as playground buddies, read to children in the nursery, and act as telephone monitors at lunchtime.
10. The school provides well for pupils' spiritual development by promoting an ethos of care and enthusiasm and encouraging them to develop their own insights. Pupils' spiritual development is good because the school develops an ethos within which all pupils can grow and flourish, respect others and be respected. A visit by a local artist stimulated pupils to compose evocative representations of earth, wind, and light, for silk-screen printing. An indication of the pupils' sense of awareness was an unsolicited comment made by a school council member during the inspection when he drew attention to the volunteer helpers who came in to help run after-school clubs.
11. Moral development is good. A clear moral code effectively supports the school community. Teachers are fair and adopt a consistent approach to managing behaviour, and pupils are happy to abide by the school rules. Pupils are very supportive to one another and are concerned when friends are hurt or are suffering from a disability. This enables the school to be genuinely inclusive and work towards a common goal.
12. Good social development is reflected in the sense of community within the school, and the positive contribution that pupils make to the wider community. It is evident in the way

pupils work together in pairs or small groups in the classroom, on the sports field, and in the way they conduct themselves on school trips. It is underpinned by the school's careful and effective measures to raise pupils' self-esteem.

13. Cultural development is good. The local heritage is celebrated well; for example, pupils have taken rubbings in the church, and created a mural depicting Hadrian's Wall. In addition, national festivals such as St George's Day and Pancake Day are observed. World religions form an important component of religious education and pupils are becoming aware of other faiths and beliefs. Sikh visitors to the school, African drummers, and a wide range of books and artefacts have enhanced this provision.
14. Attendance has improved noticeably over the past year and is now close to the national average. The school has reinforced the importance of good attendance with parents, has introduced awards for pupils, and has spoken to local employers. Punctuality is good. There have been no exclusions in the past year.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| Authorised absence | |
|--------------------|-----|
| School data | 4.7 |
| National data | 5.4 |

| Unauthorised absence | |
|----------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.2 |
| National data | 0.4 |

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 good. Teaching and learning are good overall. A good range of out-of-school activities enriches the inclusive curriculum, which is very well resourced and supports the needs of all pupils very well. Partnership with parents is good, but that with other schools and the community is very good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Assessment is good overall. It has improved since the last inspection and is now good in English and mathematics and satisfactory in other subjects, apart from science where it is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in Year 2 is very good and sometimes excellent.
- A very strong team of support staff ensures that the pupils with special educational needs achieve very well.
- Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good overall.
- Assessment in English and mathematics is good and developing well in other subjects, especially ICT.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 39 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 2(5%) | 15 (38%) | 15 (38%) | 6 (15%) | 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.

15. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection. Teaching and learning are very good overall and sometimes excellent in Year 2. In common with most teaching, what pupils are expected to learn is shared with pupils and referred to throughout lessons.
16. Other features of very good teaching and learning across the school include:
 - the use of praise to motivate and encourage pupils;
 - the emphasis on promoting basic skills, especially understanding of what the pupils read across the curriculum;
 - clarity of explanation and instructions so pupils understand exactly what they are expected to learn;
 - very good behaviour management;
 - brisk pace, well managed and organised lessons;
 - consistent involvement of the pupils in all parts of lessons, especially whole class discussions;
 - very good productivity;
 - the very effective use of teaching assistants to support pupils with special educational needs.
17. Where teaching is satisfactory, the introductory sessions are sometimes too long and pupils have insufficient time to complete their work. Sometimes, pupils are unclear what they have to do. There are some minor issues with behaviour management in one class. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. They often work in small groups which provide them with very good one-to-one attention and very good encouragement to participate in the lesson. Staff are well informed about the needs of individual pupils through their individual education plans, which are very detailed. For example, a small group of pupils with reading difficulties listened engrossed as a teaching assistant showed them how to segment unknown words and then encouraged the pupils to suggest their own strategies for reading unknown words. This was effectively followed up by the pupils reading the poem *Poppadums* together.
18. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are good. Expectations are high and teaching is often very challenging and, as a result, the children achieve well overall, and especially well in developing their communication skills. The teachers' or classroom assistants' level of questioning challenges the children to think about that they are doing and why. For example, encouragement to build up a ramp helped the pupils to discover that the higher the ramp the faster the vehicles travelled.
19. Assessment procedures have improved well since the last inspection and now all subjects are assessed. There are detailed tracking records to show progress in reading. Pupils are set individual targets for improvement that are shared with parents twice a year, and as a result parents are well informed and can support their children's learning at home. A recently introduced LEA assessment of writing is usefully helping teachers recognise at what level pupils are working. In several classes, pupils are kept well informed of their progress towards their targets through detailed marking which has a good impact on their learning. However, this is inconsistently applied throughout the school. Assessment of ICT

is developing well. Pupils each have a basic skills checklist that they monitor their own progress against. Assessment in science is unsatisfactory.

20. There are rigorous and effective procedures in place to identify pupils who need additional support, although this is not as thorough in the Foundation Stage. One- to-one support for reading is provided for pupils from Year 1 on a weekly basis by a band of voluntary helpers, including parents and governors. Progress is assessed continually using a modified assessment profile. In addition, the additional literacy support programme and targeted small groups are taught by teaching assistants to help them to 'catch up' if they have difficulty reading initial sounds. Sometimes, pupils with birthdays late in the year may spend an extra year in a class if it is decided this would benefit the child.
21. Individual education plans provided a very useful outline of what pupils needs to do to improve learning and standards. Progress towards their targets is recorded in great detail and external support is provided for those pupils needing it. A classroom assistant is training to be a speech and language support assistant; this is having a very good impact on the progress of the pupils taught by her.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good overall, and it is fully inclusive. There are good opportunities for enrichment. The accommodation and resources meet the needs of the curriculum very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum meets all pupils' needs well; the needs of pupils with special educational needs are met very well.
- Visits and visitors enhance the curriculum and contribute to innovative practices.

Commentary

22. All pupils have full access to the statutory curriculum, including a daily act of collective worship. In nursery and reception pupils work on some very interesting activities in all six areas of learning. These activities are usually linked to a central theme. In the rest of the school pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum with sufficient time for each subject. There is also a strategy where teachers identify and deliberately support pupils in Year 1 who are struggling with basic skills. All pupils have weekly-designated time in the computer suite. However, ICT is underused across the curriculum.
23. Gifted and talented pupils are identified. Provision for them is good in lessons with pupils grouped by prior attainment for English and mathematics in Years 3 and 4 and additional staff employed to extend them with specific programmes of work. These include more sophisticated language and number in a variety of contexts. Pupils with exceptional talents in sports or the arts are supported by outside specialists. The school is beginning to make planned cross-curricular links, for example, when a geography text was used as a key text in a literacy lesson to help pupils learn about the features of non-fiction books. This is part of the school's priority to promote innovation across the curriculum and to develop greater integration between subjects in line with the recommendations of the *Primary National Strategy*.

24. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. They achieve very well and have very positive attitudes to their work. There is early identification of needs and parents, pupils and staff work well together to compile individual educational plans, which are clearly defined with sufficient detail for targets to be relevant and achievable. These are incorporated into general lesson objectives and pupils receive additional support from teaching assistants to achieve them. They are also helped to work effectively with other pupils. This support is usually provided in the class but there are regular occasions when withdrawal is used to provide instruction in specific areas to meet more specific needs.
25. Participation in sports and arts is good. Pupils attend a residential outdoor pursuits week and there are extra-curricular opportunities in many areas such as computer, badminton, netball, football, rugby, music, drama and languages. The school participates in a number of local sporting tournaments and there are special events when visitors share their expertise with the pupils. These include scientists, musicians, artists and pet owners with exotic minibeasts. The pupils also visit local hospitals, rest homes and shops as well as places of interest further afield. All of these creative activities have a good impact on pupils' learning because they are keen and well motivated as a result. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils visited the Life Centre in Newcastle and as part of an English lesson, learned to write a formal letter of thanks to the Centre.
26. The accommodation is very good. Very effective use is made of the outdoor facilities to extend learning for pupils of all ages. Resources are very good. The school is appropriately staffed with the additional support of effective teaching assistants.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides well for pupils' care, welfare and safety. Support, advice, and guidance are good. The involvement of pupils, through seeking and acting on their views, is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are clear policies and regular risk assessments occur.
- Relationships between pupils, teachers, and other adults who work in the school are very trusting.
- Pastoral and learning support is effective, especially for pupils who have special educational needs.
- Pupils' views are sought and included very effectively in decisions about the work of the school.
- Induction arrangements are very good.
- Ancillary staff are unaware of the procedures for child protection.

Commentary

27. The school has good health and safety policies and procedures. There are regular risk assessments, both on the premises and for school trips. First aid is administered well and appropriately recorded. Child protection procedures are well known to teaching staff but are not disseminated to all ancillary staff.
28. Pupils quickly establish trusting relationships with their teachers and other adults who work in the school; all pupils say that there is an adult in the school that they could turn to for advice. Pastoral support and guidance is good because teachers know their pupils well, and monitor and record their achievements. Academic guidance sometimes suffers from inconsistencies in marking, and informing pupils of their individual targets. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported with well-focused individual education plans and intervention from specialist agencies such as the educational psychology service and speech therapy.
29. Pupils' views are valued and acted upon. The school council has achieved a range of improvements including paintings on the yard, extra sports equipment, a fairer allocation of space for girls' football, and an undertaking from the district council to improve safety in the school car park. Although the school council is composed of elected Year 3 and Year 4 representatives, issues are discussed more widely in classrooms and in assemblies, and minutes are posted prominently in the school entrance.
30. Induction arrangements are very good. The school benefits from sharing its site with the pre-school unit so that children from two years upwards become familiar with the surroundings. There is a full programme of visits arranged both for parents and children intending to join the nursery, and again when they move on to the reception class. Consequently the trauma often associated with new surroundings is reduced and this contributes to the good progress made by children in the Foundation Stage. There are several effective initiatives to ensure Year 4 pupils have a smooth transition to the middle school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are good. Partnerships with the community, and other schools and colleges, are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The parents hold positive views about the school.
- There is a good flow of information about the curriculum, but less about pupils' attainment levels.
- Parents' opinions are consistently gathered on a range of matters related to the school.
- The school has a high standing in the local community.
- The wide range of benefits that arise from strong and long established links with local schools and colleges are very good.

Commentary

31. Parents hold positive views of the school. All those returning their pre-inspection questionnaires agree that the school is well led and managed, and that teachers explain how their children's learning can be supported at home. Additional conversations with parents and observations by the inspection team confirm these favourable impressions. A

small minority indicated disagreement that they are kept well informed about their children's progress; this has some validity because feedback on homework is sometimes inconsistent. Pupils' annual reports are comprehensive. Targets are set at parents' meetings so that parents are able to monitor their children's progress. Parents of children with special educational needs, who have individual education plans, are provided with a very comprehensive record of progress.

32. There is also a good flow of general information about what is happening in school, including a reader-friendly newsletter. Meetings are arranged to cover specific curriculum initiatives so that parents can help their children at home.
33. Parents' opinions are canvassed every eighteen months and this leads to potential concerns being addressed before they become problems. As a result, parents work in effective partnership with the school and together have improved pupils' attendance, and have maintained the supply of school uniforms following the closure of the original supplier. Parents work hard to raise substantial sums for the school through the Parents and Teachers Association (PTA).
34. The school is an integral part of Haltwhistle. It educates the vast majority of its young children, it is a significant employer, and is a focal point for many young families. Benefits arising from the community include sports coaching and the shared use of facilities, visits from local artists, and strong links with Holy Cross church that are effective in reinforcing the school's Christian ethos. The school gives back to the community by taking harvest gifts to elderly people, singing carols at the hospital, and observing Remembrance Sunday with the Royal British Legion. Pupils are also very active fund raisers and their participation in the North East Children's Cancer Run raised over six hundred pounds for the charity.
35. Links with local schools lead to very effective joint arrangements for staff training and an exchange of ideas. Transfer arrangements for pupils and curriculum continuity are materially assisted by the close links that have been established with the middle school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. Governance of the school is very good. Leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher, governors and staff all have a shared vision that puts the needs of the pupils at the heart of the school.
- Leadership and management of special educational needs are very good: the governor with this aspect of the school's work as her responsibility makes a very good contribution to developments.
- The literacy governor has a good impact on the provision for higher attaining pupils in Years 3 and 4 through her work with those pupils.
- School development planning has raising standards at the heart of its priorities.

Commentary

36. Leadership by the headteacher is good. Governors describe the headteacher as very receptive and open to suggestions; the school is a 'well-led democracy'. Teamwork is a very strong feature and the views of all matter. The inspection confirms this view. Consultation with parents, pupils, staff and governors is a strong feature of decision-making and all staff have a stake in the school's development. A high priority is given to creating a vibrant and stimulating environment both inside and outside that reflects the high priority to happy and hard working pupils. There is not a dull corner in the school.
37. Governance is very good. Governors are well informed through their links with subject leaders and regular visits to school. The recent achievement of Investors in People acknowledged the supportive and challenging role of the governing body. Governors are kept well informed by their clerk, and as a result, all statutory requirements are met. Governors work in very close partnership with the headteacher to set the future direction for the school's work. Governors have sought out training and plan to arrange area-based training to ensure all governors can attend given the long distance to the local education authority centre. The literacy governor now works in school as a teaching assistant, supporting higher attaining pupils in Years 3 and 4. The governor for special educational needs has a very good impact as a result of the professional knowledge she brings to her role and very good partnership with the special educational needs co-ordinator. Governors use their professional skills very effectively to support the school. They are also kept well informed via regular subject leader presentations at their meetings.
38. In the short time the headteacher has been at the school, he has used the previous inspection report as the basis for the agenda for improvement and put in place a series of effective actions to maintain the above average standards and achievement and very effectively turned round a falling roll situation that contributed to staff reductions last year. There is a strong team spirit across the school with all staff working towards the same aim to keep the needs of the pupils at the centre of the school. The hard-working staff take their subject responsibilities seriously, with the result there are effective procedures in place to check development in almost all subjects.
39. The Foundation Stage manager is new to the school; she has a clear vision for the future development of an integrated nursery and reception class unit due to open at the start of the next school year. She leads very effectively by the example of her very good teaching and ensures that the curriculum is well planned and assessment procedures are rigorous. Teamwork is strong across the nursery and reception; support staff are well deployed and make a good contribution to children's learning.
40. Leadership and management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs are very good. The co-ordinator has a very clear view of the way their needs are being met across the curriculum and ensures that pupils who need extra help are identified early and the continuous assessment of their performance is used very well to meet their needs.
41. Arrangements to check the quality of teaching and learning are good. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is planned to involve all staff on a rolling yearly programme. Two subjects are identified each year. This is an effective system that gives all subject leaders a good opportunity to check progress in their subjects. Teachers are usefully provided with issues for discussion and targets to help improve their teaching and good arrangements for 'performance management' are in place.

42. The school improvement plan is compiled in consultation with all staff, who complete precise action plans for their subjects or areas. It is matched closely to the financial position, which is well checked by the governors. The headteacher and governors have worked well to overcome the lack of funding in the past few years. Although a potential barrier to improvement, this has not been the case, despite some staffing reductions last year. This is no longer the situation; in September 2004 the school will have an additional reception class teacher and a full-time nursery teacher as well as additional learning support staff.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

| Income and expenditure (£) | | Balances (£) | |
|----------------------------|--------|-------------------------------------|------|
| Total income | 514000 | Balance from previous year | 3800 |
| Total expenditure | 513000 | Balance carried forward to the next | 4800 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2565 | | |

43. Financial management is very effective. The governors provide a clear lead in this aspect of the school's work. Although costs per pupil are below average, the governors and the headteacher ensure that standards do not suffer. They have firmly placed the school at the heart of the town and recruit a capable band of voluntary workers who help in the school and contribute to the standards achieved. For example, fourteen parents work weekly with individual pupils to help them improve their reading. There are close links with the Sure Start Crèche on site. The governors consciously spend all the budget on the pupils in the school. They apply best value principles very well in all aspects of their work.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

44. Provision is good in the Foundation Stage. Children experience a warm, attractive and structured environment where there is a good balance of teacher-led and child-selected activities. Nursery and reception classes have three separate classrooms but the subject leader ensures staff work effectively as a team when they plan, review and work together on joint projects. They also share an attractive outdoor play area but as reception children have only restricted access to this area, activities cannot be developed across the whole curriculum. The school has effective relationships with the independent pre-school on site. There is a thorough induction package, which eases transition into the nursery and reception and finally into the rest of the school. When children enter nursery, although they have a wide range of ability, generally their attainment is average, the same as the level expected nationally in all areas of the curriculum. All children achieve well including children for whom English is an additional language, because teaching and learning are good and because of the caring relationships between adults and children. Provision is well led and managed and the exceptionally competent teaching assistants in nursery have benefited from Sure Start ideas and training. Good assessment systems ensure that children's progress in all areas of learning is carefully monitored. However, sometimes, because the opportunity to assess is missed, work is not always adjusted during the day to meet children's developing needs. Compared with the last inspection, good progress has been made and teaching and learning have improved. Parents are informed weekly about their child's learning and termly about their progress. Links with parents continue to be good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have high expectations of behaviour.
- Children learn to co-operate well with other children.

Commentary

45. At the start of the day nursery children self-register and greet the teacher, other adults and other children. In this way a happy but purposeful atmosphere is established from the beginning. Similar well-established routines continue throughout the day and children conform to these with a minimum of fuss. Movement about the building and into the outside play area is always orderly. Children know how to take turns and how to maintain the rules of a game. When told to stop or change activity, they respond immediately. In the reception class, children learn to put up their hands to answer and listen without interruption when another child is speaking. Nursery staff work conscientiously at class cohesion and confidence. They ensure by good modelling and praise that children are courteous and well mannered at the lunch table and enjoy their meal as a social occasion. Reception staff also develop pupils' understanding of courtesy and consideration by

discussion and a system of incentives. Teachers encourage interactions within the class and teach children how to share ideas and support each other. As a result, all children enter Year 1 confidently expressing their opinion to the class and well able to co-exist and co-operate with most individual children and most groups.

46. Because of these high expectations and the good quality of teaching and learning children achieve well and most are on course to reach standards set for this age group with a significant minority working beyond.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers give a high priority to speaking and listening.
- Opportunities to read and record occur throughout the day.
- Teachers engender a love of books in their children.

Commentary

47. Speaking and listening are developed very well throughout the day through role-play, co-operative group work and adult-child interaction. Teachers plan in detail an interesting oral starter to every lesson and check that children understand it before they begin activities. They also try to ensure that all children contribute and that all children listen. Staff vary their word order when asking questions and seize every opportunity to increase pupils' vocabulary, praising them when they use the same words in speech. They also ask a range of questions which require extensive answers. This enables children to use language for different purposes and, because of the supportive environment, they are sufficiently relaxed to try out ideas and expressions.
48. Children enjoy listening when teachers read to them with great expression and organise interesting activities from books. In nursery they have fun predicting the rhythm and rhyme. They love looking for picture clues, can recognise letters and certain words and they enjoy sharing a memory when the text prompts them. In reception, teachers use different versions of a story to hold the children's attention and because they are familiar with the story they enjoy reading short sections together. As a result, they warm to the characters as the author reveals different aspects. Teachers also share non-fiction with the children and many prefer the different lay out, the photographs, the captions and the short bursts of text. Using photographs of themselves they compose similar sentence captions of their own: "I am pushing my scooter round the hills." "Shannon is riding down the hill."
49. Activities and games to recognise and record phonics, words and sentences are organised efficiently throughout the day and the children have produced much recorded work across the curriculum. In nursery the staff begin the day helping the children complete the date and weather chart, choosing set words and sentences. They also introduce a letter for the day and the children find objects to correctly illustrate that sound. These regular routines help children to learn basic skills in an interesting way. In reception, children make smaller words from the word 'tortoise' and sentences using key words. The more able children can now confidently retell the whole story of *The Tortoise and the Hare* using several simple sentences with words which are phonetically recognisable.

50. Teaching and learning are very good in this area of the curriculum and because of this, children achieve well and make good progress. They are on course to achieve the early learning goals with a significant number working beyond, particularly in oral communication and reading, with writing not far behind.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Basic mathematical skills are taught effectively across the curriculum.
- The outdoor area enhances children's mathematical development.
- Children's interest is captured when mathematics is used for real purpose.

Commentary

51. Teaching and learning are good in this area and children achieve well. The majority are on course to achieve the early learning goals and a significant proportion will exceed the expected goals, especially in shape, space and measure. Throughout the day the staff set up different activities to count, match, sort, sequence and label apparatus. There is much repetition to consolidate these basic ideas and teachers provide commentaries, questions and answers which secure understanding well. Children begin counting as soon as the school door is closed to check their own self-registration. They are confident with digit numbers to 20 and some even know how to write these. When they complete the date chart they also show confidence with the ordinals, the days of the week and the months of the year. They know their colours and recognise a few simple shapes.
52. Children's ideas about shape, space and measure are enhanced by the outdoor area with its paths, well-defined areas and its three-dimensional structures. Nursery children have easy access to this resource and teachers use it well to develop these ideas. In reception, where there is more recording of number, children represent their counting in computerised graphs about eye colour and methods of travelling to school. They also sort out time sequences and adapt basic shapes to show comparison, using labels such as 'tallest' and 'shortest'. Marking is good in reception. It is encouraging and indicates the way forward and incorporates this assessment into individual targets, which are communicated to the parents.
53. Children are highly motivated when they are applying their mathematical knowledge to tasks which involve them, such as measuring and constructing a crown so that they can be a 'wild thing' and attend Max's party. They also enjoy problem solving such as constructing a ladder of certain dimensions for a fictional fireman and making a basket to carry a few cherries for a particular character's Grandmother. The children were engrossed with these projects and their accuracy of measure and knowledge of shape grew rapidly.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers organise a very interesting range of experiences for the children.

Comments

54. All children are on course to achieve the early learning goals in this area of learning by the time they leave reception. The children experience an interesting curriculum to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world. This is because of the wide range of topics studied and the easy access to interesting school grounds and village environment. The school has close links with the community and uses all the expertise on offer. For example, visitors have brought in pets, such as a tortoise for children to observe. In addition, the fire brigade demonstrated its fire fighting equipment and children have visited shops, a railway station, an ambulance station and a library.
55. Teaching and learning are good in this area and children achieve well. Teachers use cross-curricular links to make experiences meaningful and the interesting activities they organise develop new knowledge, skills and attitudes. The co-ordinator keeps these projects under review to ensure a broad, balanced curriculum and records the children's enjoyment and interest so as to make any relevant changes. Access to a pond, hedge, trees and wild meadow area in school grounds helped pupils observe the different habitats and seasonal changes described in the science aspects of this area of learning.
56. Although there is evidence of ICT in children's work only one nursery child was seen using the computer during the inspection. Reception work analysis reveals children have had experience of word processing, free drawing and representing mathematical information graphically.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers provide opportunities throughout the day to refine children's fine motor skills.
- The outdoor play area provides good opportunities for physical development.

Commentary

57. Teaching and learning are good in this area. All children achieve well and are on course to reach the early learning goals in this area of learning by the time they leave reception.
58. The children's fine motor skills are developing very well and by the end of reception they complete fine detailed work with brush, chalk, pencil, glue and scissors. This is because teachers in both nursery and reception arrange lots of practical activities across the curriculum, handling a variety of materials, so that the children experience model making, collage and general artwork.
59. Some good robust play was seen during the inspection when children rode tricycles, scooters and similar vehicles at speed with increasing control and co-ordination. They also swung from suspended tyres and climbed and chased each other around the track. Staff supervised well to ensure general safety because the area is rather small. However, they rarely challenged the children to extend their development and so concentration was

not sustained on a particular piece of equipment. This was not the case with the focussed ramp activity, where children were encouraged by the teaching assistant to build up slopes in order to discover the effect on wheeled vehicles. Towards the end of this activity children's estimates of the distance a vehicle would travel were becoming more accurate. This was not only due to frequent experimentation but also to the teacher's questioning and summarising skills, which helped children to reflect on their findings. In reception, the teacher alerted children so that they were aware of the effect of exercise on the body. They realised that by dancing energetically in time to the music their heartbeat was raised.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are exceptionally good at helping children communicate and develop their own ideas in exploring colour, shape, texture and sounds.
- Sometimes role-play areas need more direct teacher intervention.

Commentary

60. Teaching and learning are good, and as a result the children achieve well in this area of learning and are likely to meet the early learning goals by the time they leave reception. Children enjoy their music sessions because teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about the experience. They established an excitement by creating suspense when they opened the music box and by participating alongside the children as they worked through the session. In painting sessions teachers do not over-direct activities so that children learn stereotypes and lose their ability to create from their own imagination. Teachers are exceptionally skilled at talking to children and asking questions so that children communicate and refine their ideas into what would be possible to make. They check that children adhere to a design brief but after that, they do everything they can to ensure individual success; for example, when designing a playground. There are, however, some occasions during role-play when children do not make progress and where intervention is required to take the actions forward and prevent unnecessary repetition.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good in Year 2 and pupils reach well above average standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing; higher attaining pupils are well supported by the literacy governor.
- The support for pupils with special educational needs is very good and as a result, they achieve very well.
- The provision for books in school is very good, especially the well-resourced library.

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good; it is very good in Year 2 and sometimes excellent.
- Good use is made of volunteer parents to help individual pupils improve their reading.
- Assessment arrangements are thorough.

Commentary

61. The pupils in Year 2 are well motivated to learn because of the probing questions and continual encouragement to infer and predict what might happen next. Higher attaining pupils in Year 4 are effectively supported by the literacy governor on a regular basis. Achievement by Year 4 has improved considerably this year and is now good as a result of this well-targeted support. As a result, standards in reading and writing are above average in the non-statutory tests.
62. Pupils with special educational needs sometimes work in small groups or individually with teaching assistants or the special educational needs co-ordinator. Irrespective of the groupings their needs are met very effectively throughout the school because:
 - they learn phonics in an inspirational manner; using a vowel rap
 'a-e-i-o-u
 That is how we say them
 a-e-i-o-u
 That is how we play them.
 - pupils enjoy the books they read;
 - explanations about what they have to do are very clear;
 - continuous assessment means that all staff know what the pupils need to do next.
63. Volunteer parents provide regular one-to-one support for pupils in Year 1 to help develop their early reading skills. This is clearly one of a range of effective measures to increase attainment because almost all Year 2 pupils achieved at least the nationally expected level in reading in the national tests. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, as a result of the additional support now provided for pupils requiring help in lessons; the well above average standards have been maintained.
64. Pupils are avid readers. They have access to a well-resourced library from which they can borrow books to read at home on a weekly basis. Incentives are offered to the pupils via the headteacher's book awards for pupils who have read a specified range of books over time. High quality big books are used effectively to teach reading to the whole class; for example, pupils learned to use the language of non-fiction as a result of the well targeted instruction to identify features of non-fiction texts in Year 1. Achievement in reading is good overall.
65. Teaching is good overall, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils are continually interested in reading and books generally because a high priority is given to good quality resources. The multicultural poetry book used to motivate pupils with special educational needs was a good example as the pupils read *Poppadoms* and then talked about different foods. Relationships between adults and pupils are generally good and pupils are expected to work hard; they do because they know that is expected of them. One exception was in the class of higher attaining Year 3/4 pupils in which they became restless because the purpose of the task - to write poem based on a visit the previous day - lacked clarity for the pupils to understand what to do. Strengths of the teaching that contributed to good learning across the school were:

- modelling of writing to help pupils understand language conventions;
- high expectations of behaviour leading to the full attention and involvement of pupils in their learning;
- learning intentions based on the objectives in the National Literacy Strategy to ensure continuity and progression in what the pupils were expected to learn;
- well targeted deployment of teaching assistants, especially to support higher attaining pupils in Years 3 and 4.

66. Assessment is thorough. The subject leader works with the special educational needs co-ordinator to identify all pupils' levels of attainment. Records are detailed and parents are well informed of the progress their children make in reading. Leadership of the subject is shared between two managers. This is generally effective, although each leader has a better knowledge of the key stage in which they teach and not an overview of the whole school. The steps to improve standards by Year 4 have been effective and have had a good impact on raising standards, for example, specific pupils have been identified for additional support and parents work regularly with pupils not making the progress they should. Key letters, sounds and words are prominently displayed outside in the playground for pupils to use in their playground games. Subject leaders are keen to promote the wider use of the subject across the curriculum and so enhance learning and standards in other subjects. This is progressing well.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

67. As part of the priority given to implementing 'Excellence and Enjoyment', there are planned opportunities to apply literacy learning across the curriculum and vice versa. For example, a big book *The River Journey* was used to help pupils learn about features such as photographs of non-fiction texts and to predict what happened next in an English lesson. Year 3 and 4 pupils drafted a letter of complaint and learned how to use formal language following their visit to the Life Centre in Newcastle. Achievement is as good in the few examples of cross-curricular writing as all writing completed in literacy lessons.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Year 2 achieve standards that are well above average.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching for pupils in Years 3 and 4.
- The support for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes, which have a helpful effect on their learning.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to support learning.

Commentary

68. Most pupils in Year 2 achieve very well and reach standards that are well above average. In Year 4, most pupils achieve well and show standards that are above those expected for their age. The co-ordinator has played a significant role in helping the school to make good improvement in the subject since the previous inspection. Her high quality teaching in Year 2 means that pupils make very good progress in learning new mathematical ideas, while at the same time effectively consolidating prior knowledge and understanding. This was evident in a lesson when pupils were learning to read the time on an analogue clock. She is a very good

role model for other teachers and is able to give advice to help them develop their subject expertise. There is now a clear view of the quality of provision in the subject and how it could be further improved, which was not the case at the time of the previous inspection.

69. Teaching and learning are good overall, but there are inconsistencies in the provision between the two classes for pupils in Years 3 and 4. In one class, pupils make good progress and achieve well because of better classroom management and higher expectations of pupils' behaviour. In the other class, pupils make satisfactory progress but are capable of achieving more.
70. In most classes, the good subject knowledge of teachers enables them to set work that meets the individual needs of their pupils and, as a result, they achieve well overall. Throughout the lesson, pupils are reminded of what they are learning so that they are clear about what is expected of them. Activities are interesting and practical, and are often linked to pupils' own experiences, so they take a keen interest in what they are doing. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well by teaching assistants and this enables them to take full part in activities and meet the targets on their individual education plans. Of particular note is the very good teaching of the subject leader for pupils with special educational needs. In a lesson the subject leader taught in Years 3 and 4, her very good teaching led her group to make very good progress in their ability to estimate the capacity of different containers and then make careful measurements, in litres and millilitres, to see if they were correct. The standards of presentation of pupils in Years 3 and 4 are not good enough, with teachers not having a high enough expectation of what they can do. The subject leader does not teach regularly in Years 3 and 4.
71. Pupils show a lot of enjoyment in their mathematical activities, and this leads to their behaviour being good. Consequently, they are able to maintain their concentration for lengthy periods of time. They collaborate well in pairs and small groups, which makes a positive contribution to their personal development. Assessment arrangements are good, which allows teachers to have a clear view of their pupils' attainment and know what is needed next to improve their performance in the subject. However, this is not always communicated to pupils and so they are unsure as to the level at which they are working and what they need to do to move to the next level. The planning procedures are successful in ensuring that all pupils are given work that builds on previous activities, so they are able to develop their learning in a progressive manner. There is little use of ICT to support learning, such as in gathering and displaying data and recording the findings of mathematical investigations.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. There are good opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy skills in other subjects. For example, in science, pupils in Year 4 have made accurate temperature readings from thermometers during investigations into thermal insulation. In history, timelines have been created, while in geography co-ordinates are used confidently when using maps to locate specified buildings and areas of interest.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good emphasis on developing pupils' learning through practical investigations, though these sometimes lack sufficient structure.
- Pupils have positive views about their work in science and their attitudes are good.
- Standards of presentation in Years 3 and 4 are poor.
- Activities are linked well to pupils' own experiences.
- There is not enough use of ICT to support learning.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

73. Most pupils in Years 4 and 2 achieve in a satisfactory way and reach standards that are expected for their age. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with the subject leader providing a good role model to colleagues through the quality of her teaching. This was seen in a lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4, when her expertise helped them to make good progress in their understanding of how the human skeleton grows as people become older. She has identified the need to teach investigative skills in a more systematic manner to raise standards. For example, pupils have lots of opportunities to be involved in practical activities, but there is not enough emphasis on developing individual basic scientific skills in this work. This limits the development of such skills as making close observations, taking careful measurements, recording findings in a variety of ways and in considering what these findings tell them. It also means that, by the time they are in Year 4, pupils' conclusions to their experiments tend to be a description of what they have done rather than an evaluation based on prior scientific knowledge and understanding.
74. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with pupils often being given work that is linked well to their own experiences. This enables them to use existing knowledge and understanding to help them when learning new scientific ideas. A good example of this is the work pupils in Year 4 have done when investigating which materials make the best curtains. Activities are interesting and learning is made fun. This was the case in lessons for pupils in Years 1 and 2 when the imaginative tasks led to them to make good progress in their understanding of pushes and pulls as forces.
75. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about their work in science. They have positive attitudes to their work and show enjoyment in their activities, particularly when they are practical ones. Behaviour is good and enables pupils to maintain their concentration and have a good work rate. However, in Years 3 and 4, teachers do not have high enough expectations of how pupils record their findings and this leads to standards of presentation being poor.
76. The curriculum successfully promotes pupils' personal development. For example, when they are given the opportunity to show initiative and take some responsibility for their own learning when working collaboratively during their investigations. Science is enriched by such events as science week, when the subject is given a high profile and all activities have a scientific theme to them. There is not enough use made of ICT to support learning in the subject. Assessment arrangements are not rigorous enough to enable the school to track the progress of individual pupils and let them know how to improve their work. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy skills, such as when taking temperature readings from

thermometers during investigations into thermal insulation. The school has maintained the provision reported in the previous inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of the subject leader's teaching is a good example for other staff.
- Pupils are not given enough time on computers in classrooms to suitably develop their skills.
- Pupils have good attitudes to their work, which has a positive effect on the progress that they make.
- ICT is not used enough to support learning in other subjects.

Commentary

77. Most pupils in Years 3 and 4 achieve satisfactorily and reach national expectations by Year 2 and 4. This shows that the school has been unable to maintain the high quality provision noted in the previous inspection. Since then the subject has not had such a high profile, as the school has put a lot of effort into successfully implementing national initiatives such as the literacy and numeracy strategies. Nonetheless, pupils are given suitable opportunities to develop their basic skills across all aspects of the subject in their weekly sessions in the computer suite.
78. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with the subject leader having a clear view of the subject's strengths and weaknesses. This has enabled her to create an action plan for improving the subject. She has provided training to improve teachers' expertise and gives good quality support and advice to colleagues. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although lessons are planned well to maintain the pupils' interest and concentration. This was evident in a good lesson for pupils in Year 4 on learning how to use a computer program to create a variety of mathematical shapes. The teacher explained the program carefully so that pupils were clear about what they were to do and what was expected of them.
79. The way that teachers encourage pupils to work collaboratively in pairs on the computers makes a good contribution to their personal and social development. As a result, pupils enjoy working on computers. They are confident and well motivated and also take good responsibility for learning when working independently. The curriculum is satisfactory and is currently being improved by the subject leader, who is working with the adjoining middle school to help pupils acquire the skills needed when they transfer to it.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

80. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise and refine the ICT skills gained in the computer suite, when back in the classroom. Consequently, there is little use of ICT to support and enhance learning in other subjects.

HUMANITIES

Religious education was inspected in full and is reported below. Geography and history were sampled.

81. No **geography** lessons were observed. The subject leader is relatively new to the post and has checked all medium term planning to ensure the subject received enough coverage and so the subject's leadership is satisfactory. Good use is made of the local environment and there are plans to develop this in the coming year. Aspects of the subject are already taught in English, where, for example, pupils used a non-fiction text about rivers to learn that photographs are a good source of information. Currently, the nationally agreed scheme of work is in place and units of work have been completed on comparing contrasting localities and identifying features in the local environment. However, much of the work by pupils is completed on work sheets.
82. One **history** lesson was observed. Displays and pupils' work were checked. Standards are above average by Year 4. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection. Pupils have a good understanding of chronology, well shown in the class constructed time line of the Viking period. Generally, the subject provides a good opportunity to apply literacy skills through the accounts of historical events. Teaching and learning were good in the lesson seen. For example, Year 3 pupils used digital photographs to compare an area in Haltwhistle with how it was in the past. Good use of observational skills and the anecdotal recount by a pupil of his grandfather's work as a blacksmith added to the good historical enquiry throughout the lesson.
83. Year 2 pupils have compiled a book about Florence Nightingale which included a contents page showing all the aspects in the book covered. The youngest pupils in Year 1, within their books, wrote captions on their drawings of old and new things at the seaside and on photographs. In addition, higher order reading skills were promoted as pupils were encouraged to interpret a range of views, for instance, why the Fire of London started. Throughout the school, assessments are completed at the end of each unit to assess pupils' level of understanding in line with the nationally recommended assessment procedures.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan interesting activities to consolidate learning.
- No visits have been made to non-Christian places of worship.

Commentary

84. Standards are above expected levels overall and achievement is good. This represents good progress since the previous inspection. Pupils in Year 2 know about the Christian church and about baptism and weddings. They also know about aspects of Judaism including the festival of Hanukah. In Years 3 and 4 pupils extend their knowledge of the Bible and also learn about Sikhism. By Year 4 most pupils can make links between values and commitments, including religious ones, and their own attitudes and behaviour.
85. Lessons observed and evidence from work scrutiny indicate that teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and develop previous learning so that pupils' understanding is consolidated. Teachers make good use of stories, church visits,

artefacts and discussion to introduce new learning. They check pupils' understanding by questioning and then organise collaborative experiences so that pupils negotiate with each other to produce a finished product or contribution. In this way, Year 1 pupils were able to position pictures of religious artefacts correctly on a plan of the church and Year 4 pupils found six well-argued reasons why St. Cuthbert had qualified as a saint! Pupils enjoy their learning because the activities they are given to do are absorbing, imaginative and help them reflect.

Example of outstanding practice

Year 2 pupils took part in a role play of a church wedding as a final lesson in a unit of work on marriage.

Pupils attended a classroom wedding they had arranged! This project had begun some weeks ago when the pupils had discussed the meaning of marriage and the special nature of the promise. Using their own knowledge and experience of weddings, the teacher had helped pupils write an order of service, design the layout of their classroom to reflect a church, issue wedding invitations for the appointed day and design place setting cards for the reception. Everyone took part in the service and dressed for the occasion. One pupil officiated as the vicar and some of the actual words of the church service were used. Confetti was scattered and the bride and groom led their guests to the specially transformed library for the wedding breakfast. Here, the pupils opened presents, gave speeches and proposed toasts. After the ceremony the best man thanked everyone for attending and the guests left for a disco and playtime! Pupils achieved very well because of the excellent levels of motivation and involvement. The teacher had used all cross-curricular links, especially literacy. They enjoyed participating in the ritual and by use of role-play had understood the nature of the marriage contract and sacrament.

86. Pupils make annual visits to the church but no other place of worship although pupils have met representatives from Newcastle's Gurdwara during their study of Sikhism. The vicar and Methodist minister frequently visit the school. Assemblies are interesting, provoking thought and reflection. They contribute well to the pupils' spiritual education. The subject is well led and managed and the co-ordinator is currently preparing staff for the revised SACRE document, which comes into effect in September 2004.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Design and technology, music and physical education were sampled and art and design was inspected in full. The subjects are reported below.

87. One **design and technology** lesson was observed; pupils' work was analysed in displays and photographs and a discussion with the subject leader also took place. Standards are average throughout the school. Pupils experience a wide range of craft materials and construct artefacts such as moving toys using mechanical and electrical devices. Pupils also study food technology, as in Year 4 when pupils designed a scrumptious sandwich in a box. In addition, environmental visits to well-known structures such as the Angel of the North inspire further design work. However, there is limited evidence of the use of ICT and rigid materials such as wood are rarely used. The co-ordinator has analysed pupils' work and after discussion with pupils and teachers can identify areas for development when the subject comes under staff review next term. The Year 2 lesson seen, in which teaching and learning were both very good, involved pupils' designing and making a place setting card. This had a very good cross-curricular link with a religious educational project on weddings. There was very good teacher demonstration of the analysis of an artefact with written instructions for further support. With the teacher's help pupils were able to recognise ambiguities in these instructions, thus refining their understanding of linguistic clarity and comprehension. Pupils had good precise motor skills and were able to achieve some fine detail in their cutting and in their decoration. Half way through the project they were able to observe and discuss the work of other pupils well, and this made them more critical of their own work and more able to make the necessary adjustments.
88. Only one **music** lesson was observed and the subject was discussed with the temporary co-ordinator. There is a separate music room and resources are good. Some of these, however, are underused because there is no music specialist on the full-time staff.

Nevertheless, a commercial scheme has been purchased which teachers follow for an hour each week in order to ensure pupils' progressive access to performing and composing. Instruction by visiting musicians is available in recorder and keyboard and about fifteen pupils from Years 2 to 4 take up this offer. The lesson observed in Year 1 was good because the teacher extended the original commercial plan to include a graphic score which improved performance. In this way, pupils became more involved with their learning and used their instruments with more control. Pupils participate in an annual Christmas production, which includes music and in a carol service at the local church. They also attend concerts at the neighbouring middle school.

89. There is a broad and balanced curriculum for **physical education** that has good opportunities for enrichment, and which makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal and social development. One lesson was observed. For instance, pupils take part in a variety of extra-curricular activities and work with professional coaches to develop their skills in netball and football. These activities have been built up by the subject leader, whose work has had a positive effect on provision. The residential stay at an activity centre enhances the curriculum for pupils in Year 4, where they take part in physical activities such as canoeing, climbing and orienteering. All pupils, from reception to Year 4, have sessions in the local leisure centre to promote their swimming skills and develop their knowledge and understanding about water safety. This centre is also used well to promote basic skills in other physical activities, such as badminton. There are enough resources to cover all aspects of the subject. The accommodation is good, with a spacious hall and sufficient outdoor hard surfaces and grassed areas for effectively developing the pupils' physical education skills.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have access to a broad curriculum.
- Enthusiastic teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Teachers encourage self-assessment.

Commentary

90. There has been good progress since the previous inspection because standards are now above average overall and achievement is good. The subject leader leads and manages art and design well by example, monitors all aspects of this subject and knows the areas for development.
91. Pupils experience a wide range of techniques, resources and topics. They study a range of artists such as Picasso, Kandinsky and Henry Moore and explore methods of communicating such as monochrome, pattern and three-dimensional structure. They also receive specialist tuition from visiting artists in fabric techniques such as batik. Work often illustrates aspects of the local environment during the changing seasons or a discrete art topic such as portrait. Analysis of work throughout the school on this topic reveals that from simple collages in Year 1 to represent general faces, pupils use increased detail and

a wider range of materials and techniques to show both physical individuality and character. Pupils' work in all of these media is attractively displayed about the school alongside interesting cultural artefacts.

92. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Teachers are keen to develop pupils' creativity and know how to do so. They bring in interesting objects such as motorbikes for the pupils to observe and depict. They support by matching resources to the individual. In a Year 4 lesson the teacher provided different drawing guidelines and photocopies with varying amounts of detail to ensure all abilities were challenged when reproducing Picasso's *Les Aimants*. Teachers demonstrate techniques well to ensure pupils' good use of drawing tools, and ask pertinent questions which concentrate pupils' attention on the relationships portrayed in a painting and on the message communicated. Staff also set pupils challenging tasks. In a Year 2 class, pupils were encouraged to change the nature of a piece of driftwood. This, pupils tackled with gusto. Ideas were teeming and the teacher, by discussion and commentary, helped pupils communicate their ideas practically and with a degree of finesse of which they could be proud. She also encouraged pupils to improve work, which was not satisfactory.
93. Teachers regularly encourage discussion about individual work. They give pupils the opportunity to view the work of others and draw attention to prominent aspects. These strategies motivate the pupil to reflect on a piece of work and to refine it if necessary. Pupils enjoy this subject and talk with confidence about what they enjoy.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

This subject was sampled.

94. Personal, social and health education is very effectively promoted throughout the school. Assemblies, 'circle-time' and when fruit is shared in class are used very well to promote pupils' personal, social and health education. The pupils are also taught about sex and relationships education with particular attention to alcohol and drugs abuse. Teaching also ensures that pupils learn respect for people, property and premises throughout the day. Pupils are well supported by a buddy system during play and lunch times. Pupils also raise money for many charities.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

| <i>Inspection judgement</i> | <i>Grade</i> |
|--|--------------|
| The overall effectiveness of the school | 3 |
| 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 |
| Overall standards achieved | 3 |
| Pupils' achievement | 3 |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities | 3 |
| Attendance | 4 |
| Attitudes | 3 |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions | 3 |
| Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |
| The quality of education provided by the school | 3 |
| The quality of teaching | 3 |
| How well pupils learn | 3 |
| The quality of assessment | 3 |
| How well the curriculum meets pupils needs | 3 |
| Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities | 3 |
| Accommodation and resources | 2 |
| Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety | 3 |
| 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 | 2 |
| The school's links with other schools and colleges | 2 |
| The leadership and management of the school | 3 |
| The governance of the school | 2 |
| The leadership of the headteacher | 3 |
| 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).

