

INSPECTION REPORT

NORTH PARK PRIMARY

Spennymoor, Co. Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 132172

Headteacher: Mrs. Christine Clough

Lead inspector: Mr. Andy Bond

Dates of inspection: 14 – 17 June 2004

Inspection number: 257045

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	242
School address:	Bessemer Green Spennymoor County Durham
Postcode:	DL16 6PP
Telephone number:	01388 815 943
Fax number:	01388 815 260
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor Neil C Foster
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

North Park is an average sized primary school with 242 pupils on roll, although 52 of these children are taught on a part-time basis in the nursery. The school is situated in a regenerated area of Spennymoor in County Durham and is the result of the amalgamation in September 2002 of three separate schools; a nursery, an infant and a junior school. There is a high degree of social deprivation in the area with almost half of all pupils qualifying for free school meals; this is above the national average. Social and economic factors are judged to be well below average. Children enter the nursery with well below average levels of attainment.

The ethnic background of pupils is almost entirely of white UK heritage. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. Twenty two percent of pupils have special educational needs, which is just above the national average; four of these pupils have statements (1.9%). The school roll number is growing steadily. There have been a large number of staff changes since the amalgamation.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
17263	Mr. Andy Bond	Lead inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Physical education Religious education English as an additional language
11468	Mrs. Judith Menes	Lay inspector	
23004	Mr. Christopher Taylor	Team inspector	English Geography History Information and communication technology Personal, social and health education
8316	Mrs. Jozefa O'Hare	Team inspector	Art and design Music Foundation stage curriculum Science Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates

Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	16
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	19
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

North Park Primary School is an effective school, which gives good value for money. Standards are generally below average by the end of Years 2 and 6, but pupils achieve well throughout the school. Overall, teaching and learning are good. The leadership and management of the school are also good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well throughout the school.
- Standards in science are well below average by Year 6, whereas in information and communication technology (ICT) they are above average.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the school is good but teachers could make it clearer to pupils what they have to do next in order to make further improvement.
- The provision in the nursery and reception classes is very good.
- The school is well led and managed by the headteacher, senior staff and curriculum leaders. Governance is satisfactory, but the governors' monitoring systems are not well structured.
- Attendance levels are below average.
- The school fosters pupils' personal development well and provides good support, care and guidance in order to create an effective learning ethos.

The school was amalgamated in September 2002, so no judgement can be made about improvement since the last inspection.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools ¹
	2001	2002	2003	
English	N/A	N/A	D	
Mathematics	N/A	N/A	D	
Science	N/A	N/A	E*	

Key: A - the highest 5% nationally; A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average; E* - the lowest 5% nationally*

Overall, pupils' achievement is good. Children begin school with standards that are well below average and complete their primary education in Year 6 with standards that are generally just below average. They receive a very good start in the nursery and reception classes, and by the time they begin Year 1, the majority of children are expected to reach all the early learning goals², with the exception of communication, language and literacy and mathematical development, which are expected to be below. In personal, social and emotional development children are expected to exceed these levels. At the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science are below average, but even so pupils achieve well. In ICT and religious education, standards are average. At the end of Year 6, standards are generally below average, but achievement remains good. However, in the present Year 6 class the percentage of pupils with special educational needs is high and as a result, standards are well below average in English, mathematics and science. Standards in science have been very low, and have become a priority in school development, but there is evidence to show improvement in

¹ It is not possible to draw a fair comparison to similar schools, based on those pupils who attained similarly at the end of Year 2, because these pupils only spent one year of their education at North Park. Comparisons with similar schools, using the criteria of free school meals entitlement, show standards are A in English, A in mathematics and E in science.

² The early learning goals set out what children should achieve by the time they reach the end of the reception year in primary schools.

Years 3, 4 and 5. In ICT, standards are above average in Year 6 and in religious education pupils reach the expected levels. There was insufficient evidence to make judgements on standards and achievement in other subjects. No comparative judgment has been made on attainment with similar schools, based on Year 2 results in 1999, but using the free school meals entitlement criteria to compare pupils' performance, standards in 2003 were well above average in English and mathematics and well below average in science. Based on their prior attainment, pupils with special educational needs achieve well, because they are given good support.

The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in school are good, and very good in the youngest classes. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Pupils' attendance in school is well below national levels. Pupils have good attitudes and enjoy school. There are very good relationships between pupils and with staff. Behaviour in school and at break times is good. The school promotes pupils' personal development well. There are low levels of attendance which have a negative effect on pupils' achievement. Punctuality is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Overall, teaching and learning are good. In the nursery and reception classes the quality of teaching and learning is very good. In Years 1 to 6 it is good. Children are given a very good start to their education because teachers in the nursery and reception plan their lessons very well. Children have opportunities to investigate a wide range of stimulating activities and develop their learning in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. In Years 1 to 6 teachers manage their classes very well and build up very good relationships with pupils. They use effective methods which make lessons interesting and enable pupils to concentrate on their work. Teaching and learning support assistants make a very valuable contribution to improving pupils' learning, especially for those pupils with special educational needs. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but teachers could do more to make it clear to pupils what they need to do next in order to improve.

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum with some good features, including a wide range of extra-curricular activities. English, mathematics and ICT make a good contribution to the curriculum, but there is insufficient use of practical investigations in science. Provision for personal, social and health education is good, but statutory requirements are not completely met in collective worship. The accommodation is very good and the very good range of learning resources supports the curriculum effectively. The school takes good care of its pupils. It provides good support and advice for pupils and there is satisfactory provision for taking account of their views. The school has developed a satisfactory partnership with parents and the community. There are good links with other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides good leadership and is given good support by the senior management team and the staff. The governance of the school is satisfactory overall, but there are some weaknesses in the monitoring of school performance. Management systems are effective and this allows the school to function smoothly. The school does not fully comply with statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship, because a period of reflection is missing from some sessions.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are pleased with the school and the education provided for their children. Pupils have positive views of the school too. They like coming to school and get on well with others in their classes. Pupils trust their teachers and feel confident that they will provide appropriate support and advice.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise standards in science in Years 1 to 6.
- improve the level of attendance in school.
- develop a more systematic approach to setting targets, so that pupils understand clearly what they need to do next in order to improve.
- improve the monitoring procedures of governors so that they have a deeper understanding of the school and can contribute more fully to school development.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure that an act of collective worship, which includes a period of reflection, takes place on each day of the school week.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards are below average by the end of Year 2, and well below average by the end of Year 6 for the present group of pupils. Overall, achievement is good from Years 1 to 6. In the nursery and reception classes children achieve very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils achieve well in Years 1 to 6 because of the good quality of teaching and learning in the school
- Children in the nursery and reception classes achieve very well because of the very good provision, especially the quality of teaching and learning
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of the good support they receive, particularly from teaching and learning support staff.
- Standards are well below average by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science, but almost 50 percent of these pupils have special educational needs.
- ICT standards are above average by Year 6.
- Standards in science have been very low in the last two years at the end of Year 6, even compared to similar schools.

Commentary

1. Children enter the nursery class with attainment levels which are generally well below average, especially in their literacy and numeracy skills. However, the very good teaching and learning which takes place in the nursery and reception classes means that children make very good progress over the next two years. The curriculum is well planned to meet the needs of children, offering stimulating opportunities to investigate a rich learning environment both indoors and outdoors. The accommodation is very good, being well tailored to the requirements of children in the early stages of learning. Support staff and teachers are well qualified and plan imaginative learning opportunities and assess children's performance well. By the end of the reception year, the majority of children have reached the expected levels of the early learning goals in knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development. In personal, social and emotional development most children exceed the expected levels. Although children achieve very well in communication, language and literacy and in mathematical development, owing to their very low starting point when beginning school, they do not reach the expected levels at the end of their reception year.

Standards at the end of the Reception Year

Personal, social and emotional development	Above expected levels
Communication, language and literacy	Below expected levels
Mathematical development	Below expected levels
Knowledge and understanding of the world	In line with expected levels
Physical development	In line with expected levels
Creative development	In line with expected levels

2. The results of the national tests in 2003 showed that pupils in Year 2, attained well below average standards in reading and mathematics. In writing, test results were below average. In science, teacher assessments indicate below average standards. Compared with schools in a similar context, standards were above average in reading and writing, but

below average in mathematics. Although the vast majority of pupils reached average levels, too few attained the higher grade 3 and this had the effect of depressing overall results at the end of Year 2. In the present Year 2 class, standards are higher. The proportion of higher-attaining pupils is greater than the previous year. Evidence gained from the inspection shows that standards are below average in reading, writing, mathematics and science but compared to similar schools, standards are likely to be comparatively high. On the basis of one set of test results, girls do better than boys in reading, writing and mathematics, but differences are not abnormally wide. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well because the quality of teaching and learning is good in the core³ subjects. They have positive attitudes to school and concentrate well in lessons. In ICT, standards are average at the end of Year 2 and pupils achieve well. In religious education standards are in line with expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus and achievement is satisfactory. It was not possible to make judgements on standards and achievement in other non-core⁴ subjects because insufficient evidence was gained during the inspection period.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.6 (n/a)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	13.7 (n/a)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	14.2 (n/a)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 48 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. The results of the national tests in 2003, taken by pupils at the end of Year 6, were below average in English and mathematics and very low in science, the lowest five per cent nationally. Results show that in English, the percentage of pupils reaching the higher level grade 5 was the same as the national average and was just below in mathematics, but in science very few pupils reached this standard. It is clear that there is a weakness in the school provision in science. Analysis of pupils' work and test results pinpoint poor investigation skills and too few opportunities to undertake practical activities in science. A consultant has been engaged by the school to improve standards and early evidence indicates improving standards in Years 3, 4 and 5 because of the increased focus on scientific investigation. Higher-attaining pupils are receiving more attention with the provision of some extension tasks. Because Year 6 pupils have only spent one year at North Park, comparisons with other schools based on prior attainment from Year 2 are invalid. However comparisons with similar schools, using the free school meals entitlement criteria, indicate well above average standards in English and mathematics, but well below average standards in science. Evidence gained during the inspection show that standards in the present Year 6 class are lower. In English, mathematics and science, standards are well below average. Almost a half of the class has special educational needs; this is exceptionally high. However, some higher attaining pupils are reaching above average levels in English and mathematics, but almost a half are operating at below average levels. In science, the majority of pupils are attaining average levels, but there is no evidence of pupils performing at above average levels. The school has ambitious targets for Year 6 pupils in English and mathematics. It seems likely that it will not achieve the percentages targeted, especially for those pupils who it was hoped would attain the higher level 5. In the

³ The core subjects are English, mathematics and science

⁴ Non-core subjects are art and design, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, music, physical education and religious education.

2003 tests boys did better than girls in English, mathematics and science. The greatest difference was in mathematics where girls' performance was much lower, but there is insufficient evidence at this stage to identify a trend. Pupils are generally achieving well in the core subjects because of the good quality of teaching and learning. Those pupils with special educational needs are also making good progress because teaching and learning support assistants support them very well. They give encouragement and patiently break down tasks into small steps so that pupils improve their knowledge, skills and understanding methodically. The school shows a strong commitment to including everyone in lessons and to valuing their contribution.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.3 (n/a)	26.8 (27)
mathematics	26.3 (n/a)	26.8 (26.7)
science	24.9 (n/a)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 26 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- Standards in ICT are above average at the end of Year 6, which is a significant achievement for the school, considering that pupils enter the nursery with well below average standards. Achievement is very good in Years 3 to 6 because pupils develop good skills. The quality of teaching and learning is good and pupils have regular access to very good resources, such as the well-equipped computer suite. The co-ordinator has a high degree of expertise and has been responsible for increasing staff confidence in ICT. In religious education, standards are in line with expected levels by Year 6 and achievement is satisfactory. In all other subjects, insufficient evidence was gathered to make a judgement on standards and achievement by the end of Year 6.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in school are good, and very good in the youngest classes. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' attendance in school is well below national levels.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships between pupils, and with staff, support standards of achievement and good behaviour
- Pupils' good response to the high standards of behaviour expected of them has a positive impact on achievement
- Pupils enjoy school and are enthusiastic about the activities it offers
- Low levels of attendance have a negative effect on pupils' achievement
- Pupils work well independently and in groups

Commentary

- Pupils like coming to school. They take an interest in their lessons and work hard. They are friendly and develop very good relationships with each other and with the staff in the school. They co-operate well and work together effectively in pairs and groups. Year 6 pupils read regularly with Year 1 pupils, and both age groups are enthusiastic and find the experience worthwhile. Pupils are willing to help and take on responsibilities in class. They grow in confidence and self-esteem and can make thoughtful and sensible contributions to discussions. Pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes to their work and show interest in their learning, as a direct result of the teachers' and support staff's skills and encouraging manner.
- Pupils understand the reward system and feel that it is fairly applied to all, and effective in improving behaviour. The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour and ensures that pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly way. Pupils usually behave well, and often very well in lessons. When pupils do not behave as expected there are well-established procedures to involve parents. The school had four fixed-term exclusions in the

previous year. Bullying does occasionally occur but most parents and pupils feel that the school deals with it effectively and guidance is provided for pupils through the curriculum.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Mixed-any other mixed background

No of pupils on roll
240
2

Exclusions in the last school year

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
4	0
0	0

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

- The school develops spiritual awareness in pupils through assemblies, and visits to places of worship where pupils also learn to respect other people's beliefs and values. They understand the difference between right and wrong and value qualities of kindness and helpfulness. Pupils have learnt to work together through class councils for the benefit of all pupils and take a pride in the money they raise for charity. Pupils enjoy cultural experiences provided by visitors to school, such as theatre groups and a Chinese artist/designer who introduced them to Chinese New Year celebrations and taught pupils how to make masks and lanterns. The school is working to include racial awareness in the curriculum.
- Levels of pupils' attendance are lower than other schools, although there is little unauthorised absence. The school monitors pupils who are frequently absent, and involves the Educational Welfare Officer in following up these and all unexplained absences. However, the school is not rigorous enough in contacting parents if no information is received on the first day of absence, and does not sufficiently emphasise and explain to parents the importance of regular attendance at school, for example in the note on procedures for absence in the brochure. There is good provision through the reward system to encourage pupils to attend school.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.5
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
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 provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good and there is an effective ethos for learning in the school. The school provides good opportunities for enrichment activities and there are good systems for care, guidance and support. Links with other local schools and colleges are also good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. In the nursery and reception classes it is very good. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but teachers could make it clearer to pupils how they can make further improvement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In the nursery and reception classes teaching is very good and this enables children to achieve very well.
- Effective methods are used by teachers to capture pupils' interest.
- Teachers manage their classes very well and form very good relationships with pupils.
- Pupils work well together and show interest and concentration when completing set tasks.
- Teaching and learning support assistants make a very valuable contribution to enhancing pupils' learning, especially those pupils with special educational needs.
- Assessment procedures are thorough and the marking of pupils' work is positive but teachers could make it clearer to pupils how they can make further improvement.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 34 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0 %)	13 (38 %)	14 (41 %)	7 (21 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (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.

9. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school with almost 80 per cent of the lessons observed being good or better. In nursery and reception classes it is very good with almost three quarters of lessons judged to be very good. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed and there are few weaknesses in teaching. Occasionally, the pace of lessons is a little slow and pupils do not complete as much as they should and some teachers could match the work set better to pupils' capability. This would enable some of the higher-attaining pupils to achieve more. However, the overall picture for teaching and learning is good in English, mathematics, science and ICT and this is having a positive impact on increasing pupils achievement levels and raising standards in these subjects. There was sufficient evidence to evaluate teaching and learning in religious education as satisfactory but in all other subjects insufficient information was collected to make a valid judgement on the quality of provision.
10. Teaching in the nursery and reception classes is very good because the curriculum is well planned and relevant, in order to meet the children's needs at their particular stage of development. An exciting learning environment has been developed which gives children opportunities to investigate a wide range of activities, and stimulate their interest in learning. Children have very good quality learning resources, which, for instance, help to develop their understanding of capacity in water play or to enhance speaking skills by using a simulated mobile phone to send messages to their mothers. Teaching and support staff use carefully worded questions to promote learning and make children think. There is a strong, caring ethos within the classes and children gain confidence. Assessment procedures are good. Staff keep a careful check on what has been achieved and which areas of learning need to be developed next in order that children make further progress.
11. Teachers often use novel methods to spark pupils' interest in lessons and capture their imagination. In a Year 5 science lesson, the teacher took pupils outside into the playground. Stuck to the wall were three signs-'gas, liquid and solid.' He then posed questions about changes to the state of materials and pupils moved to position themselves under the correct sign. It soon became apparent which pupils understood change of state, for instance, that water turned from liquid to solid when frozen. Learning resources are

used effectively, especially in ICT where the interactive whiteboard gives pupils a clear visual picture. Teachers encourage pupils to demonstrate their knowledge to the class by using the electric pen on the whiteboard to illustrate the methods they have used. In English, a Year 2 class were well motivated because the lesson began with 'tongue twisters' and then gradually led on to the learning objective, which was related to alliteration.

12. There are very good relationships between pupils and adults and teachers manage and organise their classes very well. They insist on good standards of behaviour, but use positive strategies to coax pupils into applying themselves to their work. Regular praise is used effectively to encourage pupils to do their best. Teachers often circulate around the classroom, checking progress and making individual positive comments to pupils, which act as a spur for further improvement. Those pupils questioned during the inspection had positive views of teachers and said that they got on well together.
13. Most teachers have developed good systems, which encourage collaboration between pupils. They encourage pupils to think for themselves by asking open-ended questions and then suggesting that pupils formulate an answer, in pairs. Useful jottings are also made on individual whiteboards, which help pupils to clarify their thinking. Teachers value pupils' contributions and are aware of the need to draw everyone into the lesson by tailoring their questions carefully to the age and ability of the pupils. Teachers have generally high expectations and require well-reasoned answers to their questions, when presented orally in sentence form. Pupils generally settle well and concentrate on their work.
14. Teaching and learning support assistants make a very valuable contribution to lessons. They are well qualified, and show a high degree of patience and skill. In the main, they tend to work with a specific group of pupils, such as the lower-attaining group or those pupils with special educational needs. They participate fully in lessons, sitting close to their group of pupils during the introduction, prompting and encouraging them to think and respond to questions. They manage pupils well in group work, giving praise and breaking tasks down into easily understood steps. There is a good understanding between teachers and assistants; they operate as a team. They understand their role well and time their activities accurately in order to join together with the rest of the class for the plenary session⁵. Overall, the quality of teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs is good. Recent initiatives such as the appointment of a skilled counsellor are beginning to make a positive impact on pupils' behaviour.
15. Assessment procedures are thorough and constructive. Teachers modify their planning in the light of the learning outcomes and how successfully they have been achieved. Half termly tasks are based on the programmes of work completed by pupils and the optional Qualification and Curriculum Authority tests undertaken in Years 3, 4 and 5. Teachers plot pupils' progress and predict pupil attainment levels for the next year, based on their existing achievement. The quality of marking is sound overall, but some teachers could do more to give pupils a clearer understanding as to how they can improve. Positive comments are helpful, but such phrases as 'good try' or 'well done' do not give sufficient guidance to pupils for the next step towards improvement. Useful targets are set in mathematics and English for pupils to achieve, but teaching staff do not implement the system consistently throughout the school. Some teachers review them regularly and date specific targets when they are achieved, whereas other staff do not seem to have a review timescale. Those pupils with special educational needs also have targets which focus on improved performance, but they tend to be too vague and not specific enough for pupils to understand clearly.

⁵ The plenary is the final part of the lesson when the teacher usually reinforces the lesson objective and checks what pupils have learnt.

The curriculum

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum with some good features, including a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The accommodation and resources are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good range of suitable activities for children of nursery and reception age that provide a good start to their education.
- English and mathematics make a good contribution to the curriculum, but there is insufficient use of practical investigations in science.
- ICT is used effectively as a tool for teaching and learning across the curriculum.
- The school makes good use of visits and visitors to enrich provision.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- There is a good variety of lunchtime and after-school clubs.
- Provision for personal, social and health education is good, but the school does not fully meet the statutory requirements for collective worship.
- Accommodation in the new building is very good, and a very good range of high quality resources supports the curriculum effectively.

Commentary

16. The quality of learning opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage promotes the early learning goals for young children effectively. A wide range of well-planned activities and experiences gives them a good start to their education.
17. The school's provision is broad and balanced, and fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. The curriculum is socially inclusive and promotes good equality of opportunity for all pupils. Planning is good and ensures pupils' knowledge and skills build progressively as they move through the school. Teachers identify and plan good links between subjects. Literacy and numeracy, for example, are well promoted in other subjects, and there is good use of ICT as a tool to aid teaching and learning across the curriculum. Science, however, is a weaker element of the curriculum, and there is insufficient emphasis on developing pupils' investigative skills. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. The school is currently piloting a new scheme for teaching Social, Emotional and Behavioural skills (SEBs), while health education is taught as part of the science curriculum. A successful paired reading scheme benefits both Year 1 pupils and the Year 6 pupils who listen to them, while the *Better Reading Programme* provides an opportunity for selected pupils to read regularly with an adult. Whole-school assemblies are held on four days each week, but the school does not always meet the statutory requirements for collective worship. On the remaining day, not all classes have a time for quiet reflection or prayer.
18. A good range of visits and visitors, together with many lunchtime and after-school clubs, enhances pupils' learning well. Additional activities include computing, dance, drama and French, as well as many different sporting activities. Visits to museums and places of historical interest, such as Binchester Roman Fort, enhance pupils' understanding of the past, while the local area is used well as a resource in geography. Visits to a Sikh temple, the local church and a synagogue enhance pupils' understanding of different cultures in religious education, and trips to a farm and the Life Centre enrich experiences in science. Pupils in Year 5 enjoy a range of outdoor activities, such as fell walking and orienteering during a residential trip to Teesdale. The school takes part in gymnastics and sports competitions with other local schools, and the girls' netball team has been particularly successful. Visits by young musicians from the local secondary school and by professionals from the county music service enhance the provision for music, while a number of pupils receive violin tuition from a visiting teacher. Regular visits by several theatre companies enhance learning in English, history and mathematics, while an artist in residence recently helped pupils to design and make Chinese masks and lanterns.
19. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, and it is appropriately adapted for their needs by means of Individual Educational Plans. Teachers make sure that work given to these pupils matches their ability. Teaching assistants and learning support staff make a valuable contribution in helping to raise standards. They are well deployed to teach additional literacy and numeracy skills to small groups of pupils and to assist pupils with special educational needs. The pupils are usually set appropriate targets. However, in some classes, these targets are too broad and do not provide sufficient guidance related to what needs to be taught next and how this may be achieved. The co-ordinator acknowledges this fact and intends to address the issue shortly. Gifted and talented pupils are identified in all subjects, but currently, there is no additional provision. There are no pupils with English as an additional language.

20. The refurbished building, including the purpose-built foundation unit and the well-equipped computer suite, provides very good accommodation. The caretaker and his staff maintain all facilities to a high standard. A good range of high quality resources is used effectively to support the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes good care of its pupils. It provides good support and advice for pupils and there is satisfactory provision for taking account of their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Class teachers know all their pupils very well, and earn their trust so that they can provide effective care and support
- Care of pupils in nursery and reception is very good
- Arrangements to introduce children to nursery and reception are very good
- The availability of a trained counsellor for pupils makes a strong contribution to provision for pupil support
- The school does not use learning and Individual Education Plan targets, or marking in books, consistently to ensure that pupils know what they need to do to improve

Commentary

21. The school takes good care of pupils through well-established procedures for health and safety, medication and child protection. There are good links with support services. Governors are involved in monitoring health and safety. The building and grounds are well cared for and regularly checked for hazards.
22. Pupils trust their teachers and feel confident that they will provide support and advice. Pupils with special educational needs have very good trusting relationships with their teachers and support staff, as evidenced during the inspection and from parents' and their children's pre-inspection comments. The care that all pupils receive from the headteacher and staff is seen in the way they are valued individually. In addition one of the classroom assistants is a trained counsellor, who each week offers pupils an opportunity to unburden themselves of any problems they are experiencing in school. Through working in classes and at break times she is aware of patterns of friendship or disruption which enables her to understand and advise pupils, who value her help. Class teachers know their pupils well and understand their individual needs. They encourage pupils to do well and celebrate success both in and out of school. Assessment procedures are satisfactory and enable teachers to monitor pupils' academic performance properly through the school. However, marking is not used consistently across the school to help pupils know what to do to improve, and targets and Individual Education Plans are not sufficiently clear and focussed to be fully effective in raising attainment.
23. Arrangements to introduce pupils to nursery and reception are gradual and flexible so that they can be adjusted to suit the needs of individual children. Feeder nursery and reception teachers meet with teachers from this school to share information so that they are fully aware of the needs of the children who are moving into their care.
24. Pupils feel that their ideas are listened to and class councils, operated in the past, enable pupils to become involved in school development, for example in improving facilities in the grounds. This aspect is likely to improve further when the planned school council is established next year.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has developed a satisfactory partnership with parents and the community. There are good links with other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with parents in nursery and reception are good and help pupils to settle into school quickly

- The school operates an effective open door policy for parents
- Good links with other schools support the transfer of pupils to secondary education
- Written reports do not include clear targets to show parents what their children need to do to improve
- Information for parents does not sufficiently inform them about the life of the school and involve them in their children's education

Commentary

25. Parents are pleased with the school and the education provided for their children. Most feel that the school is welcoming and friendly and that they can approach teachers with questions and concerns about their children. They are generous in their support for fund raising activities in aid of charities or the school. The school provides parents with helpful information when their children start in nursery or reception class and offers guidance on how to prepare children for school. Parents are welcome to come into nursery with their children and stay as long as they feel is necessary to help them to settle. They also have the opportunity to speak to the health visitor who visits the nursery regularly. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed of their children's progress. Not many attend annual reviews, despite the school's best efforts to involve them.
26. Information for parents on their children's progress is satisfactory, but written reports do not provide them with a clear idea of what their children need to do to improve in English, mathematics and science. Newsletters provide essential information for parents but do not fully involve them in the work of the school by including news of, for example, curriculum developments and pupils' activities and achievements. Parents were fully involved in a consultation exercise about uniform when the school opened, but this good practice has not yet become a regular feature to enhance communication.
27. The school is beginning to develop links with the community to enrich the curriculum and support pupils' personal development. For example a representative from the Royal National Lifeboat Institution visited the school to talk to pupils about the role of lifeboats and safety on the beach. Pupils visit a local supermarket and sing carols to customers at Christmas.
28. Links with the two local secondary schools are well developed and help pupils to become familiar with the school of their choice before they transfer. Work to ensure progression in the curriculum is beginning to be put into effect with both secondaries. Opportunities for pupils in physical education are enhanced by involvement with other local schools in activities centred on a sports college. There are good links with other nurseries and primary schools to support induction and transfer to and from reception and nursery classes.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides good leadership and is given good support by the senior management team and the staff. The governance of the school is satisfactory overall, but there are some weaknesses in the monitoring of school performance. Management systems are effective and this allows the school to function smoothly. There are no significant barriers to the raising of achievement levels.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides good, principled leadership and is building a strong staff team spirit.
- The school is well managed and performance is evaluated effectively by the senior staff.
- The key subject co-ordinators lead and manage their curriculum areas well.
- The governors fulfil their role generally satisfactorily, but monitoring systems are not well structured and there is too much reliance on the headteacher for information about the school.
- The school does not meet statutory requirements for the daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

29. The headteacher provides the school with good leadership based on strong principles. Since the amalgamation of the separate schools in September 2002, she has welded together effectively a well-motivated staff with a good team spirit; this now forms a good platform for future school development. The important priorities for the school have been recognised and strategic plans implemented to raise standards in the core subjects. A particular concern is the low standards in science, especially by Year 6. Advice has been sought from a science consultant and a tighter focus placed on scientific investigation. There are positive signs in Years 3, 4 and 5 that the new strategies are making a positive impact on raising standards in science. The school places a strong emphasis on providing all pupils with an equal opportunity to learn and make progress. From the earliest stages in nursery and reception, the school provides children with a good grounding in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Social skills are also highlighted in order to ensure that children relate well to each other and work together harmoniously as they progress through the school. The headteacher is keenly aware of deprivation factors within the locality and is careful to ensure that no pupil is denied curriculum entitlement due to inability to pay for trips or additional tuition. The governors and senior staff are committed to maintaining good levels of learning support so that all pupils, especially those with special educational needs, achieve well.
30. The school has good management systems and evaluates its own performance rigorously. The headteacher monitors the quality of teaching and learning and has a clear view of the performance of each member of the teaching staff and their particular strengths and areas requiring improvement. Induction procedures for new staff are particularly good. Two newly qualified teachers have received very good support in their first full year of teaching and the school is now reaping the rewards of good quality teaching from its most recent recruits to the profession. Performance management systems have been established effectively in a comparatively short time and the school now plans to extend its systems to include ancillary staff. There is a good programme of staff development and teachers are benefiting from improved levels of expertise. Financial planning is sound, taking into account the stage of the school's development since the amalgamation and the various budgetary adjustments that have been required. There is an above average carry forward sum into the 2004/5 budget, but this has sensibly been earmarked to cope with the work force reform programme and to provide teachers with release time from the classroom to complete management tasks. The headteacher and governors have a sound understanding of best value principles and use financial resources wisely.
31. The subject leaders fulfil their roles well and give good leadership and management. The development of English, mathematics, science and ICT have been the main areas of focus in the last two years. The co-ordinators for these subjects have had opportunities to monitor teaching and learning, review planning, scrutinise pupils' work and evaluate test results. This has placed them in a strong position to gain a clear understanding of the standards in their subjects and design well matched action plans for future development. Additionally, they have given presentations to governors to enable them to gain an understanding of the foci for improvement. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage⁶ is very good and contributes to the very good achievement levels of children in the nursery and reception classes. The special educational needs provision is

⁶ Foundation stage- the first phase of education in the primary school i.e. the nursery and reception classes.

organised and managed well and has a positive impact on the progress made by these pupils.

32. The governors are supportive of the school and have a sound understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Since the amalgamation, they have built up their knowledge of the new school and are keen to develop their role further. They have taken appropriate guidance so that almost all statutory requirements are met. However, elements of collective worship are neglected, although it is not the school's intention that this should be the case. Arrangements for collective worship are left to the discretion of individual staff on Mondays, to be slotted in to a convenient time frame during the school day. Some teachers fail to set aside sufficient time and the act of collective worship is overlooked. Additionally, some whole school collective worship sessions do not give pupils time for quiet reflection. Governors monitor the performance of the school through various committee structures and meet with the headteacher to discuss and analyse test results and national statistical information. However, in general they rely too much on the headteacher to produce key documents, such as the governors' annual report and the school improvement plan. There are no structured systems for governors to visit school during the day and gain an independent view of the quality of provision. Some governors, especially parent governors, visit the school quite regularly, but in other capacities, such as lunchtime supervisors. Although this helps them to gain a better understanding of the school in its daily setting, it does not give governors a distinct focus on key areas of school development. There are appointed governors for literacy, numeracy and special educational needs. Relationships between senior members of staff and governors are good and there is an appreciation of the dedicated effort made by teachers to establish the new school.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	£642,790	Balance from previous year	£46,851
Total expenditure	£586,314	Balance carried forward to the next year	£56,476
Expenditure per pupil	£2,422		

33. The expenditure per pupil is below average compared with other primary schools. Educational provision is generally good, especially teaching and learning and pupils' achievement levels are also good. Taking these combined factors into account, the school gives good value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Children's attainment on entry is well below average in all areas of learning; in language, their attainment is low. They start on the Foundation Stage curriculum in the nursery and make very good progress towards achieving the early learning goals, which most reach by the end of the reception year in knowledge and understanding of the world, and in physical and creative development. In personal, social and emotional development, children exceed the expected levels. In language and in mathematics, their levels are below those expected for their age.

Teachers and staff plan the curriculum very well to make it appropriate to children's stage of learning. The nursery and the reception classes work very closely to the spirit of the Foundation Stage learning programme. The curriculum provides the children with many good opportunities to explore and to investigate inside and outside the classroom. At this time of the year, the teacher in the reception justifiably introduces a modified literacy and numeracy session to make the curriculum more formal. This enables the children to transfer smoothly into Year 1.

As a result of the very good leadership of the Foundation Stage manager, provision in this area has improved greatly, because of the skilful amalgamation of separate nursery and primary schools in the locality. The quality of teaching is consistently very good and the move towards establishing Foundation Stage as one unit, contributes to children's very good achievements. In consequence, the school has created a very strong platform for children's future education.

Planning is very good, as it takes account of children's interests, abilities and progress. The close co-operation between all staff ensures that information is shared and used to guide children's next stage of learning. It is central to successful inclusion, enabling all children, including those with special educational needs, to make very good progress. The nursery nurse and the assistants provide valuable well-planned support to groups of children. Accommodation and resources are very good, used well and contribute very well to the overall quality of teaching and learning. The outdoor areas are suitably arranged to encourage children's learning and ambitious play.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in children's personal, social and emotional development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well through the very good teaching they receive;
- Teachers and staff ensure that all children feel secure, valued and included;
- The staff provide a very good balance between child and adult initiated activities, which promote children's independent learning.

Commentary

34. Children achieve very well in personal, social and emotional development because of the very good teaching and are expected to exceed the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. The teachers and staff ensure that all children feel secure, included and valued; they all matter individually. The staff have very high expectations of behaviour and learning and set a very good example. As a result, there is mutual respect. Children

behave very well, and take responsibilities when organising their play. They are self-confident and initiate new ideas, such as painting the fence and the climbing frame, using large paintbrushes and water. Through the variety of activities provided for them for independent play, children know how to organise themselves and understand that there are rules for working and playing together. They happily share resources in the invitingly arranged areas both indoors and outdoors. They are enthusiastic, independent learners, as a direct result of the attention the staff give to this crucial area of their development. The very good balance between teacher and child-initiated activities enables the children to make choices and to develop independence. The total integration between nursery and reception classes provides an added dimension for independent play and for promoting enjoyment of learning.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well because teachers and support staff are particularly skilled in developing children's language skills;
- There is very strong focus on the development of language skills in all activities.

Commentary

35. Children make very good progress in their communication, language and literacy through the highly skilful teaching they receive in nursery and reception classes. The staff provide very good opportunities for talk and for modelling of sentences. In the nursery, for example, the teacher talks to the children about things that interest them. One child proudly shows the England football kit he is wearing. The teacher seizes this opportunity to ask him whether England won, to which the child sadly shakes his head in response. During the inspection, children were observed writing to the zoo, to 'send' them a pet, reading sentences with the teacher, thereby consolidating language acquisition very effectively. Through literacy, the children learn about other cultures, such as African, for example, having Handa's Surprise read to them.
36. In the reception class, the teacher has introduced a simplified literacy session to introduce the children to the letters and sounds needed to build their reading and writing skills. The particular strength is the support given to groups of different abilities, to enable the children to learn. In addition, the staff provide stimulating and imaginatively planned activities to ensure that children's language skills are successfully consolidated. Very few children reach the expected level, but their achievement is very good.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of mathematical language and skills is very good; consequently, children achieve very well;
- Children learn through practical activities.

Commentary

37. The very good teaching provided in the nursery and in the reception classes, results in children achieving very well. In consequence, the overall standard is just below that expected for children of this age, particularly in number. In the nursery and the reception, the teacher and staff plan and resource a very good range of practical activities to give the children the hands-on experience which leads them to understand shape, size, weight and capacity. The staff stress the importance of correct vocabulary and ensure that the children know and use it in their activities. In the nursery, for example, the teacher asks the children to tell her the shapes on a shirt. When one replies that 'the shapes are like windows' another child remembers that these are squares. The reception children actively learn from first hand experience, such as buying tickets to go by bus to see the Rainforest animals. They counted the tickets, to ensure that the number matched to the number of people on the bus. The children explore ICT and move the cursor successfully to find an escape route from the maze.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well through very good teaching;
- Teachers and staff create a lively learning environment to stimulate children's curiosity.

Commentary

38. Children are provided with a wide range of experiences to stimulate their curiosity. In consequence, they achieve very well and reach the required learning goals. The nursery teacher helps the children to explore their senses and combines very effectively this learning with speaking and listening, discussing and tasting a variety of fruits. They learn about their own and other cultures through the rich variety of experiences on offer. The children know about the Chinese New Year and buy Chinese food from the local store to celebrate it. They celebrate Christmas, Pancake Tuesday and Divali, for example and through these experiences, they learn to appreciate the rich diversity of this country's culture. Both nursery and reception children learn to use the computer and competently arrange animals in sets and groups, according to species. While growing a variety of plants outdoors or 'grass creatures', using socks and grass seeds, the children recognise that plants are living things, which grow and change and what they need to survive. During the inspection, children were delighted to see their caterpillars changing into cocoons. Through these imaginatively planned experiences, the staff provide these children with early learning in science.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well through the good teaching that they receive;
- Outdoor accommodation is very well resourced and used to ensure that maximum learning takes place.

Commentary

39. The teachers and staff provide the children with numerous opportunities, which maximise learning in this area. As a result, children reach the appropriate learning goal by the time they enter Year 1. The children confidently use wheeled toys and skilfully manoeuvre them without bumping into one another. They confidently use the range of equipment and resources, which improve movement and control. The children use construction kits and malleable materials for a variety of purposes. In the hall, reception children learn health and safety rules, such as the need to warm up before undertaking exercise. Throughout these activities, teachers and support staff provide very good commentary and ask questions skilfully to extend learning across all areas.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are provided with very good opportunities to develop creativity;
- Children achieve very well because of the very good teaching they receive.

Commentary

40. Children are provided with a very good range of stimulating activities, which enable them to develop their imaginative response. Consequently, children reach the appropriate learning goal. The nursery children explore musical instruments to accompany songs and experiment with sounds to represent the different jungle noises. They order materials from the builders, so that they can make a house. Reception children eagerly undertake the roles of visitors to the Rainforest and stop at the swamp to look at the crocodile and to observe other animals. All the activities are carefully planned to make learning exciting and fun for the children.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work for average and lower-attaining pupils is well matched to pupils' needs, but there is insufficient challenge for higher-attaining pupils in some lessons.
- Teaching and learning are good throughout the school.
- Pupils have good attitudes to work and achieve well, although standards are generally below average.
- The leadership and management are good.
- Good use is made of computers to draft, re-draft and present text attractively.
- Targets are not specific enough for individual pupils to understand clearly how they can improve their work.

Commentary

41. Pupils' achievement is good throughout the school. They have good attitudes and work sensibly. Pupils' speaking and literacy skills are well below average when they join the school. As a result of good teaching, pupils make good progress, though standards are still below average by the end of Year 2. Many pupils in Years 3 to 5 achieve the expected standard, but, because few pupils achieve better than this, standards are generally below the national average. In the current Year 6, standards are well below the national average because nearly half the pupils have special educational needs. Pupils with special educational needs receive good assistance from teachers and teaching assistants and make good progress as a result. There are no pupils at an early stage of acquiring English as an additional language.
42. Standards in **speaking and listening** are below average in Years 2 and 6, although pupils make good progress throughout the school. Most pupils listen attentively and are keen to answer questions, although their vocabulary is often limited. Good use is made of *talking partners* to encourage discussion between pupils, for example, in Year 1, when pupils used visual clues to predict what a story might be about. Teachers structure lessons well to provide many opportunities for developing pupils' speaking skills. In Year 2, for example, pupils recited a tongue twister about *five flying fairies*. Older pupils are encouraged to use interesting synonyms to broaden their vocabulary. They respond well to their teacher's questions, take an active part in class discussions and share ideas sensibly. Pupils enjoy role-play and drama lessons. In a well-organised religious education lesson, for example,

pupils studying Buddhism acted out the story of Siddhartha. This helped to develop their voice projection and their confidence when speaking. All pupils have an opportunity to develop their speaking skills during class council sessions. Pupils in Year 6 take part in a drama production that enables them to improve their performance skills in front of a larger audience.

43. Standards in **reading** are below average in Year 2 and are well below average in the current Year 6. Pupils of all ages are keen to read, however, and achieve well. Staff listen regularly to pupils' reading during guided reading times, and parents are encouraged to share books with children at home on a daily basis. Reading with an adult is also encouraged through the *Better Reading Programme*, and pupils in Years 1 and 6 enjoy taking part in a shared reading project. Both schemes help pupils read more confidently and with greater understanding. Pupils in Year 2 talk with interest about the books they are reading and re-tell the story briefly. Higher-attaining pupils read simple stories confidently, but many other pupils read more hesitantly. Pupils use a range of strategies to read unknown words, but their understanding of more unusual vocabulary is limited. By Year 6, higher-attaining pupils read a wide variety of texts fluently and with good expression. They understand the subtleties in the text and infer additional information by reading *between the lines*. Most pupils, however, read simpler stories, and find it difficult to explain subtleties in the text. Lower-attaining pupils have a limited understanding of words such as *twilight* and *sensitive*. Pupils have satisfactory research skills and use the school library and classroom libraries well to locate information on a variety of topics.
44. Standards in **writing** are below average in Year 2 and are well below average in Year 6, though pupils achieve well throughout the school. Pupils in Year 2 write in full sentences, though their use of capital letters and full stops is inconsistent. Pupils use a range of different genre for a variety of purposes including instructions, stories, letters and poetry. Pupils are encouraged to plan thoroughly before starting to write. In Year 3, pupils planned a formal reply to an enquiry. Lower-attaining pupils used a writing frame to prepare their response and average pupils received good guidance on how to begin each section; higher-achieving pupils, however, were not given sufficient opportunity to use their own initiative when devising a suitable reply. Pupils model their writing on the styles of different authors. Pupils in Year 5, for example, used Anthony Brown's *Voices in the Park* as a model when describing the Metro Centre from the point of view of different characters, while Year 6 pupils analysed the style of author Michael Morpurgo. Pupils are encouraged to write at length by using connectives such as *because*. In Year 6, one boy wrote *the tiny dog looked hungrily at the tall tree because there was people having a picnic up there, so they gave a little bit of yummy sandwich to him*.
45. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers engage pupils well, have good behaviour management and offer strong encouragement. This ensures that pupils concentrate hard and learn well. ICT is used well as a resource for teaching and learning, and computers are used regularly to draft and re-draft text and to improve the presentation of finished work. Pupils' work is assessed soundly, and the results are used well when planning future lessons. Targets are displayed clearly at the front of pupils' exercise books, but these are often not specific or focused enough to help individual pupils improve their work. Marking does not always include sufficient advice on how pupils might improve their work. Widespread use of small group teaching for *Booster Groups* and the *Additional Literacy Strategy* helps targeted pupils improve their standards. Good support by teaching assistants during lessons ensures that pupils with special educational needs achieve well.

Leadership and management are good. The co-ordinator monitors school performance well and is closely involved in the analysis of test results. The subject is well resourced.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

46. Teachers make good use of opportunities to develop language and literacy skills in other subjects. Pupils write detailed accounts of Jesus' baptism in religious education. They retell the story of Katie Morag in geography, and write vivid accounts of child labour in Victorian times in history. There is a good emphasis on developing pupils' literacy skills by writing in a variety of styles across the curriculum.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Lower-attaining pupils and those pupils with special educational needs are given good support.
- Assessment procedures are satisfactory but pupils could be given more guidance on how they can improve.
- Pupils have positive attitudes and collaborate well in lessons.

Commentary

47. Pupils achieve well throughout the school because they have good attitudes to learning and the quality of teaching is generally good from Years 1 to 6. Standards are generally below the national average. Although the majority of pupils reach average standards in mathematics, too few reach the above average levels and this depresses the overall school standard. In the present Year 2 class, standards are below average and this is generally the case in other year groups. However, in Year 6 standards are well below average because almost half the pupils in the year group have special educational needs. The school supports these pupils well and ensures that they make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.
48. Pupils in Year 2 count to 100 in tens competently, both forwards and backwards. The majority of the class count in twos in a similar fashion to 30, but lower-attaining pupils are less confident and often use their fingers as an aid to counting. Most pupils know their number bonds to 20 and subtract the cost of an item of fruit effectively, when giving change from 20 pence. Pupils know how to double numbers, but lower-attaining pupils find difficulty with doubling numbers beyond ten.
49. Year 6 pupils respond well to quick fire questions, some high-attaining pupils working out 5 cubed and the square root of 144 quite quickly. Most pupils can convert improper fractions to mixed numbers successfully and in shape and space they draw nets of cubes and cuboids accurately. Lower-attaining pupils within the year groups have less well-developed computational skills and often struggle to subtract hundreds, tens and units. For example, they are slow to realise the possibility of rounding up or down to a hundred when calculating 304-198.

50. All the prescribed learning areas in mathematics are covered thoroughly and the school focus on mental mathematics strategies is helping to speed up pupils' calculation skills. ICT is used effectively to enhance pupils' learning. Assessment procedures are sound and there is significant evidence to show that teachers modify their planning in the light of assessment of their lessons. Pupils' performance is also tracked appropriately through the school with predictions being made for expected standards at the end of the following year. The marking of pupils' work is positive and encouragement is given; however, teachers' approach to giving guidance on how pupils can improve further is inconsistent throughout the school. Additionally, there are group targets pasted into pupils' books, but teachers do not always indicate whether these have been achieved.
51. Pupils are making good progress in their learning because teaching is good. Teachers have a good grasp of the subject and use technical terms accurately. They plan thoroughly and share the learning objectives with their classes so that pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn. The tasks that are set are usually challenging, but teachers sometimes give insufficient thought to matching work more closely to pupils' capability. Although many pupils are working to their optimum level, there is some scope for extending higher-attaining pupils further. Learning support and teaching assistants are used very effectively to raise standards; particularly with pupils who have special educational needs or those that operate at a lower level. They are patient and skilful and explain processes clearly, using the guidance given by teachers to break down the learning processes into simple steps. Classes are managed very well and strong, positive relationships are developed. In Year 5 the teacher skilfully encourages pupils to work together in pairs to find the properties of two-dimensional shapes. They make jottings on their whiteboards and the results are passed to a selected scribe who collates the information. Pupils behave well and work hard in lessons. They enjoy mathematics because teachers often use novel methods. In Year 1, for instance, the mathematics lesson took place in the playground. Pupils were given a number each and had to put themselves in to a sequence from 0 to 26. Another set of numbers was distributed so that pupils could order themselves in sequence according to odd and even number patterns. Pupils reacted very well and helped each other to find the correct position in the line. Teachers are careful to ensure that all pupils join in lessons and are given the same opportunities to make progress.
52. Although the co-ordinator for mathematics is absent from school on maternity leave, the evidence shows that leadership and management of the subject are good. Analysis of test results is undertaken thoroughly and a focus for improvement set for the following year. Teaching and learning are monitored well and staff are given clear pointers for improvement in their work. The accommodation is very good. Classrooms are spacious and teachers ensure that there are visual aids displayed around the room to help pupils with their mathematical work. Resources are very good and teachers use these effectively in lessons to enhance pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.

Mathematics across the curriculum

53. Pupils use their mathematical skills effectively in other subjects of the curriculum. There are good opportunities in geography to record and interpret graphs, in history to use time-lines and in religious education to sequence events. In ICT, data handling is also used to complement work in mathematics.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are low because too few pupils reach above average standards, but they are rising in those classes where there is strong emphasis on investigative science
- Overall, pupils are now achieving well in science because the teaching is currently good
- There are good links with other subjects
- Pupils are enthusiastic about science, particularly when they investigate for themselves
- Leadership of the subject is good

Commentary

54. Results in Year 6 in the 2003 national tests and in similar schools comparisons were very low. In Year 2, teacher assessments showed a good percentage of pupils attaining the appropriate levels, but none gained the higher level required to enable the school to reach the overall national average standard. As the school is newly established, comparisons with the last inspection report cannot be made.
55. The school recognises the need to address the low standards and is taking positive action to rectify matters. Towards this end, the co-ordinator for science has involved the Local Education Authority consultant in ensuring that there is a whole school approach, particularly in investigative science. Test results have been analysed, weaknesses identified, including data handling, and resources purchased. There is now a clear understanding among all staff what needs to be taught year by year and the need to strive for higher levels by the end of Years 2 and 6, especially for those pupils who have the potential to reach higher standards. In addition, the pupils with special educational needs have received intervention programmes, to enable them to access the science curriculum fully. The co-ordinator acknowledges that the effects of these initiatives will take time to filter through to each year group. Nevertheless, there is evidence now that these initiatives are beginning to pay dividends. In Years 3, 4 and 5, for example, pupils are now reaching standards close to the national average.
56. Inspection evidence indicates that the overall standards in science in Year 2 are just below average, which is an improvement on the previous year. Several factors are helping standards to rise. Challenging work is now being given to the higher-attaining pupils and there are now regular opportunities for the pupils to undertake investigations. A stronger focus on discussion and key scientific vocabulary is helping the pupils to learn effectively. During the inspection, the pupils were observed investigating, which surfaces would make a car travel furthest. In the last part of the lesson, the teacher gave the pupils an opportunity to explain their results and to check whether their predictions were correct.
57. In the current Year 6, pupils' standards are poor. The present cohort is weak in science and half of the class has special educational needs. In a discussion with the pupils in that year, it was clear that they enjoy science, especially when they are involved in investigations for themselves. In an effective, well-planned lesson on liquids, the pupils proposed ways of ensuring that their tests were fair. The teacher made learning relevant by linking the investigation to everyday application. She used scientific terms such as 'viscosity' and insisted that they used appropriate language when explaining their investigations. Their low standard of literacy is an additional factor in poor attainment in science.
58. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour and encourage the pupils to do their best. The teaching assistants and the support staff are very effective in enabling all pupils to be involved and to learn. They

interact with the pupils and ask questions skilfully to help them to articulate their understanding of science. Assessment procedures have been established and information used to set targets for improvements. However, these are set for groups not for individual pupils. In addition, marking is not consistent throughout the school. Furthermore, there are occasions when the pupils copy work from a source. These factors detract from the overall provision for science.

59. There are good links with other subjects and plans are in hand to extend them systematically across all year groups, particularly in using ICT. In a very good lesson in Year 3, the teacher ensured that the pupils used their developing skills across other subjects, such as English, mathematics and ICT. The teacher's infectious enthusiasm for the subject resulted in pupils' high achievement in this lesson. The more able pupils, for example, suggested the importance of scale when constructing a graph. The data gathered during this investigation were interpreted on the interactive white board, very successfully, extending pupils' learning.
60. Leadership and management of science are good. The subject co-ordinator leads by example; she has done much in a short time to develop science through providing in-service training. The importance of correct scientific vocabulary is stressed in each year group and learning through investigations and enquiry is emphasised. The subject is justly top priority area for school improvements.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good** and is a strength of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching results in older pupils having well-developed ICT skills.
- Good assessment ensures that work is well matched to pupils' individual needs.
- Pupils and teachers use computers with confidence, and there is good use of ICT to assist teaching and learning across the curriculum.
- The co-ordinator's very good expertise and the very good resources have been significant factors in enabling pupils to achieve well.

Commentary

61. Standards are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2 and are above expectations in Year 6. This is a significant achievement in a school where pupils' attainment is well below average on entry. Achievement is good in Years 1 and 2, and is very good in Years 3 to 6. By the time they leave the school, pupils are competent in using ICT skills effectively as a tool for learning. This has been achieved through good teaching and because of the very good expertise of the subject co-ordinator and the very good resources available. In addition to a well-equipped ICT suite with 28 computers, the school has a networked computer in each classroom and a number of portable laptop computers. It has purchased a flexible range of resources, including several digital cameras, a wide range of software, interactive whiteboards and overhead digital projectors, and has plans to improve provision further. All the requirements of the National Curriculum are met, and older pupils are fluent in their use of word processing, spreadsheets, databases, multimedia presentations and control technology. Staff are confident in the use of interactive whiteboards, and are keen to use the latest technology as a teaching aid.

62. The quality of teaching is good, overall, in Years 3 to 6, and is sometimes very good. No teaching was observed in Years 1 and 2. The co-ordinator's expertise is used well as he teaches the subject to more than one class of older pupils. Careful lesson planning ensures a logical progression in the development of skills. There is a good balance of time between teaching skills and *hands-on* activities, so pupils have plenty of opportunities to use computers for themselves. There is a good emphasis on pupils' assessing their own skills. This enables teachers to plan work that closely matches each individual's needs.
63. The co-ordinator monitors standards well and supports staff effectively. There are good plans for developing the subject further. An after-school ICT club enables pupils to practise their skills and develop higher order skills.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

64. ICT is used well as a tool to aid teaching and learning across the curriculum. Computers are used effectively in English, for example, for drafting and re-drafting text and for word processing pupils' poems and stories attractively. Pupils use the internet to research information in history, geography and art, and use data-handling programs in mathematics, science and physical education.

HUMANITIES

65. Only one lesson was observed in **geography** and no lessons were seen in **history**. Inspectors discussed these subjects with pupils and examined teachers' planning and pupils' work, but there was too little evidence to make overall judgements on teaching, standards or provision in either subject.
66. In **geography**, pupils cover a wide range of topics and fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. There is a good emphasis on practical investigations. Younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 conduct a traffic survey and explore how local roads could be made safer. They examine the impact of tourism on the seaside by visiting Tynemouth, and use stories and photographs to study how life on a remote Scottish island differs from their own. Older pupils make good use of ICT resources to carry out individual research. Pupils in Year 5, for example, download local maps of different scales and discover facts about the Colorado River from the Internet. Year 6 pupils use web pages to research mountain environments, word process an account of the monsoon, and use a data-handling program to produce bar graphs showing the seasonal monsoon rainfall.
67. Teaching and learning were satisfactory in the one lesson observed. Good use was made of the interactive whiteboard for Year 4 pupils to watch a slide show of the digital photographs they had taken in a local park during the previous lesson. Pupils then discussed how the area could be cleaned up and improved. Pupils started to write a letter of complaint to the local council, but the instructions given by the teacher were not clear enough for pupils to understand exactly what was required.
68. In **history**, good planning enables pupils to develop a variety of historical skills. Younger pupils, for instance, develop a sound understanding of chronology by examining the differences between "new" and "old" toys. They study photographs of seaside holidays in the early twentieth century, and realise that many things we take for granted had not yet been invented. Older pupils make good use of the Internet when researching topics such as Boudicca and the Blitz. They make good use of a range of resources including time

lines, maps and artefacts when studying life in Victorian times. In discussion, pupils in Year 6 were enthusiastic about their historical research and showed considerable empathy for children employed in the local mines or as housemaids during the nineteenth century. Effective links with other subjects include research on Ancient Greek scientists and mathematicians, writing (and word processing) poignant poems about the Blitz, and comparing early tourism with its modern counterpart.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development.
- The school has a very good range of resources, which are used effectively to develop pupils' learning.

Commentary

69. It was only possible to observe one lesson during the inspection period, but additional evidence was gained from discussion with pupils and teachers and from the scrutiny of pupils' work. From the evidence acquired, it was clear that standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are in line with the Locally Agreed Syllabus. In Year 2, the pupils have a sound knowledge of Christian festivals and re-tell stories of Christmas and Easter with a reasonable degree of detail. They are familiar with a number of parables told by Jesus, such as the Sower. This term, they have studied stories of Buddhism and performed a play for the pupils in the school, telling the story of Siddhartha and the Bodhi Tree. The teaching in Key Stage 1 was satisfactory. The teacher had good knowledge and planned the work well with clear learning objectives being identified. There were good relationships amongst pupils in class and they felt confident to make a contribution to discussions and provide good reasons to explain why religious leaders acted as they did. Pupils were keen to learn and behaved well. However, the pace of the lesson was too relaxed and more could have been achieved in the time available. Overall, achievement levels are satisfactory in Key Stage 1.
70. By the end of Year 6, pupils write in the first person, and in some detail, the story of the Crucifixion and produce a polished word-processed copy. Pupils also learn from religion and compose sensitive prayers, such as a prayer for peace- 'Dear Lord, keep everyone in your heart, no matter how nasty or bad. Please can you stop all wars and evil? Bring peace to the world. Amen' they have a clear understanding about how people from different cultures should be treated. One pupil says 'You should show respect because they are just the same as us.' Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Key Stage 2. Those pupils who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress in their work because they receive good support from classroom and learning assistants.
71. The curriculum is relevant to pupils' backgrounds and experiences and covers a wide range of religions. Learning resources are very good and help pupils to gain a greater understanding of other faiths. A number of visits to local places of worship contribute effectively to pupils' learning. Religious education is well represented in class and school displays. In Year 2, Buddhist greetings cards for Wesak are attractively displayed and in Year 4, Sikh garlands and photographs of a visit to a gurdwara reflect the importance that teachers give to the subject.

72. The subject is kept under review by an experienced and committed co-ordinator and a useful plan of action is produced annually to develop the subject further. No formal monitoring of standards has taken place yet, but this is understandable, given the schools' stage of development since amalgamation.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Too few lessons were observed in each of the following subjects: **art and design**, **design and technology**, **music** and **physical education** to make a firm judgement about provision. Inspectors spoke to co-ordinators and asked pupils about what they had learnt and they also looked at displays and examples of planning and previous work.

73. In **art and design**, the available evidence shows that there are strengths in all aspects of the subject. Art contributes well to pupils' overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are good examples of pupils working together with the artist-in-residence, making Chinese masks and a large dragon co-operatively in Year 2. Pupils learn about artists from other cultures, such as Buddhist, sending each other greeting cards to celebrate Wesak. In Year 3, there are striking three-dimensional flowers made out of copper wire. The work in Year 1, following a study of Piet Mondrian, resulted in the pupils' painting in this style and replicating it by using balsa wood, which they coloured effectively. ICT is beginning to be used to support art teaching and learning, as evidenced in Year 4. The pupils took photographs with a digital camera and effectively translated their ideas onto a repeating pattern.
74. **Music** is currently being developed throughout the school, but it is not a strong feature of the overall provision, as acknowledged by the governors, who would like to see the subject developed more. Pupils sing tunefully in assemblies and have opportunities to be involved in performances at Christmas, for example. The present Year 6 pupils expressed their excitement at being able to participate in a class production of 'Alice in Wonderland.com', before they leave the school. Music is played in assemblies, but opportunities are missed for the pupils to learn to appreciate it, because excerpts are not introduced by providing information about the composer. Furthermore, pupils do not listen to music, as it is only used as a background, to bring pupils into the hall and when they are dismissed.
75. In **design and technology**, discussion with pupils showed that they had a clear understanding of the design process. The moving vehicles made by pupils in Year 6 had been tested and modifications made to improve the performance of the vehicle. Currently, these pupils are designing and making slippers. The curriculum provision is well balanced with pupils having opportunities to complete a project each half term. The school has a good range of resources, which allows pupils to use saws, hammers, clamps, and hole punches in the construction processes. Pupils have a good understanding of safety and know that glue guns are not to be used without adult supervision.
76. In **physical education**, pupils receive a wide range of interesting and varied experiences, especially in Years 3-6. The curriculum covers all the prescribed areas and, in Years 5 and 6, residential courses are arranged to develop pupils' expertise in outdoor adventurous pursuits. Extra-curricular activities are good. There are many after school clubs, which allow pupils to improve their competitive games skills. The school netball team has an enviable reputation in the locality, having won all their matches. The school has forged good links with a local sports college and this is having a favourable impact on improving staff expertise and raising standards. There are good resources and the accommodation is satisfactory. There are plans in the near future to develop an adjoining piece of land in to a school playing field. This should enhance provision further.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

77. No overall judgement can be made on the provision for **personal, social and health education** (PSHE) because no lessons were observed. However, discussions were held

with pupils and teachers and planning documents and displays around the school were examined. Evidence indicates that there is an appropriate personal, social and health education programme. The school is currently piloting a new scheme for teaching Social, Emotional and Behavioural skills (SEBs) during PSHE lessons, and class discussion times encourage pupils to talk through any problems encountered in working and living together, and the use and misuse of drugs. During science lessons, older pupils learn about the importance of a balanced diet as part of a healthy lifestyle. Sex education is taught according to agreed approaches.

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	N/a
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	5
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	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
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	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
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).