

INSPECTION REPORT

SKELTON SCHOOL

PENRITH

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112121

Acting Headteacher: Mrs F Rudd

Lead inspector: Mr D Byrne

Dates of inspection: 24th - 26th February 2004

Inspection number: 257484

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	68
School address:	Skelton Penrith Cumbria
Postcode:	CA11 9SE
Telephone number:	01768 484367
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A McKillop
Date of previous inspection:	15 th June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Skelton primary school is a very small rural primary school. It educates 68 boys and girls aged from 4 to 11 years of age. All pupils are of White British ethnic background and none speaks English as an additional language. The attainment of children when they start the reception class varies from year to year but is broadly average. The majority of pupils come from relatively advantaged backgrounds. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including statements, is also well below the national average. The pupil population is relatively stable with a below average percentage of pupils starting or leaving school at times other than the normal points of admission and departure. The school gained a School's Achievement Award in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
28076	Mr D Byrne	Lead inspector	English, science, information and communication technology, geography, history, physical education.
9981	Mr S Hussain	Lay inspector	
18027	Mrs S Mawer	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, mathematics, art and design, design and technology, music, religious education, special educational needs, personal, social and health education and citizenship

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very good** school that is very popular with parents and pupils. In English, mathematics and science, achievement is very good and standards are very high. Very good teaching promotes very good attitudes, behaviour and levels of personal development amongst pupils. The school is very well governed and very effectively led and managed by the acting headteacher. The school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards and achievement are very high across the school in English, mathematics and science.
- The acting headteacher provides very strong management and visionary leadership and is supported by a very effective governing body.
- Pupils make good use of information and communication technology to support learning.
- Very good teaching promotes very good attitudes, behaviour and levels of personal development.
- A very good range of activities outside the classroom makes learning exciting and interesting.
- The provision for the outdoor play of children in the reception class is unsatisfactory.
- Procedures for the assessment and the tracking of standards could be better.
- Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very well provided for.
- There are very good links with parents, the community and other schools.
- The school development planning process, although satisfactory, needs improving.

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection in 1998 and is now more effective. Standards are much higher in English, mathematics and science and many improvements have been made in the way the curriculum is planned across the school. The governing body are now very closely involved in all elements of the school's management but, despite improvements, the school development plan still lacks sufficient detail about future developments.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Achievement is **very good** overall. Pupils attain very well across the school in English, mathematics and science.

Year 6 results

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

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

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

Very high standards have been consistently maintained at the end of both Years 2 and 6 in recent years. In each of the last two years, 2002 and 2003, standards in the national tests at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science were in the top 5 per cent of all schools nationally. When compared to the results gained by pupils in Year 2, pupils achieved exceptionally well between Years 3 to 6 in English and science and very well in mathematics. Very high standards were also gained over recent years in reading, writing and mathematics in the 2003 end of Year 2 national tests.

Inspection evidence supports the picture indicated by the test data. Standards at the end of both Years 2 and 6 are very high in English, mathematics and science and pupils achieve very well. Pupils also do well in geography at the end of both Years 2 and 6 and in information and communication technology in Years 3 to 6. In the Foundation Stage, children achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good** and results in pupils developing very good attitudes, behaviour and levels of personal development. Attendance and punctuality are very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **very good**. The teaching is **very good** but procedures for assessment in subjects other than English, mathematics and science are too informal. Very good planning and teamwork make sure that the wide range of ages and abilities in each class are met very well. There is a good curriculum that makes learning stimulating for pupils. Very good use is made of educational visits and the environment to enhance learning. The accommodation and range of learning resources are satisfactory, except for outdoor physical development in the Foundation Stage. Pupils receive very good levels of care with very good attention to their health and safety. The school involves pupils very well in the day-to-day running of the school and listens to their views and opinions. Very good partnerships exist with parents, the local community and other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **very good**. The acting headteacher provides very good leadership. The school is very effectively managed, with a particularly good contribution made by the school's administrator. Governance is very good under the very good guidance of the chair of governors. The leadership of key staff is very good.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have very good levels of satisfaction with the school. They feel the school provides a very good quality of education that ensures that their children achieve as well as they can. Pupils enjoy school and are very happy with the quality of teaching and what they are taught. They feel they are involved in the running of the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the planning and provision in the Foundation Stage for promoting children's physical development through outdoor play.

- Develop effective and manageable ways of assessing, recording and tracking pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Improve the process of school development planning so that a longer-term vision is planned and recorded.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **very good** overall and standards are **well above average** in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in English, mathematics and science.
- Standards at the end of both Years 2 and 6 have been consistently very high in English, mathematics and science over recent years.
- Pupils do well in geography across the school and in information and communication technology in Years 3 to 6.
- Children in the reception class work hard and achieve well overall.

Commentary:

The Foundation Stage

- 1 Children start school with average standards. The good provision in the Foundation Stage results in children achieving well in their personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world, and satisfactorily in their creative development. It was impossible during the inspection to observe any outdoor physical activities to make a secure judgement about children's achievement and standards in terms of their outdoor physical development.

Key Stage 1

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.9 (19.0)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	17.2 (18.0)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	17.7 (18.3)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 11 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- 2 Standards at the end of Year 2 have risen significantly in English, mathematics and science since the last inspection. Inspection evidence is that standards are very high in each subject. Even though pupils start Year 1 with good standards in reading, writing and mathematical development, they improve on these and by the end of Year 2, achieve very well. They develop very good writing skills. They also read very well, not only for pleasure but also to find information. Writing skills advance quickly in Years 1 and 2, and by the end of Year 2 pupils write very well showing a level of competence that is far higher than expected for their age. In mathematics, pupils also make very good progress in Years 1 and 2 and achieve very well. They develop a wide range of strategies and methods to solve mathematical investigations. The very high standards in science are based on the high levels of competence of pupils in performing scientific

investigations. Pupils develop a very secure knowledge and understanding of science and use this to support a good range of scientific enquiries. Pupils achieve well in geography. They develop a good knowledge of their local environment and develop a good understanding of simple maps and the main features of Skelton as compared with a Scottish Island. Standards in information and communication technology and music are in line with national expectations and pupils achieve the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education.

Key Stage 2

- 3 Standards are much higher overall in English, mathematics and science than they were at the time of the last inspection. In the 2003 national tests, pupils in Year 6 reached standards in English, mathematics and science that were very high. They were in the top 5% of all schools nationally and also in the top 5% of similar schools based on the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. All test results, however, need to be treated with care because of the small number of pupils in each Year group. The very high standards, however, have been maintained for a number of years and this supports inspection evidence that standards in English, mathematics and science are very high. Statistical data indicates that the rate of pupils' progress between Year 2 and Year 6 was very high in English and science and high in mathematics. There is no statistically significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs are given very good support and make very good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.2 (31.4)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	30.7 (30.3)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	32.1 (31.9)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 13 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- 4 Inspection evidence shows that pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve very well in English, mathematics and science and reach very high standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils develop very good skills of writing, including the use of punctuation, grammar and spelling. Pupils develop a particularly good knowledge and understanding of imaginative writing and of using different forms of poetry. In mathematics, pupils successfully build on the good start they make in Years 1 and 2 by extending the range of strategies for solving mathematical problems. The skills of scientific testing are improved further in Years 3 to 6, although pupils could still be more accurate in gathering and using experimental data. By the end of Year 6, pupils develop good skills of using the computer in order to support their learning, especially in terms of locating and finding information associated with lessons. In geography, most pupils develop a good knowledge and understanding of geographical features. Research skills are effectively developed, including the use of maps and ways of comparing life in Skelton with that of children in developing countries.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**, promoting amongst pupils **very good** attitudes, behaviour and levels of personal development. Attendance is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships ensure that pupils feel safe and secure in school.
- Pupils are very keen to learn and work very well on their own or with others.
- The incidents of bullying or harassment are very rare and pupils behave very well at all times.
- Pupils enjoy school and this contributes to very good levels of attendance.
- Sensitivity to the views of others and to different cultures and traditions results in pupils developing high levels of tolerance and respect for others.

Commentary

- 5 Pupils enjoy coming to school and thrive on the exciting and stimulating lessons and activities provided for them. As a result of very good relationships that are established between teachers, support staff and pupils, pupils feel safe and secure. Both in lessons and when at play and during lunchtimes, pupils behave very well. In the very rare incidents of disagreement, staff handle matters very effectively to diffuse problems. Pupils conduct themselves in a calm manner and show very good levels of self-confidence and initiative in their work. Throughout the school, from the Foundation Stage to Year 6, pupils respond very well to expectations for them to make choices and, in so doing, pupils develop a sense of enterprise. The very effective systems for class and school councils develop mature and responsible attitudes amongst pupils. In lessons, pupils are confident and self-assured in trying out new ideas and politely suggesting alternative views. Pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes to their learning and are keen to do well. Their behaviour is very good and because relationships in the school are strong and supportive this helps them to relate well to others.
- 6 There have been no fixed-term or permanent exclusions in the last twelve months. Throughout the school pupils treat other with high levels of respect and tolerance. The effective use of activities such as regular acts of collective worship and opportunities for discussions as part of personal, social, health and citizenship education develops amongst pupils very good levels of self-awareness. Pupils have a strong sense of the importance of values and principles in order to live a good life. They are proud of their village and immediate culture but are open to the views of others who are different from themselves. They respect the importance of festivals and traditions that are associated with cultures and religions that are different from their own and are curious to learn about them. Pupils treat each other fairly and have a very good understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Through a wide range of activities involving raising funds for children less fortunate than themselves, pupils demonstrate good levels of sensitivity to the needs of others.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	4.3	School data:	0.0
National data:	5.4	National data:	0.4

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

- 7 The overall level of attendance is well above the national average and pupils are very punctual. The school monitors absence effectively.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **very good**. The quality of teaching and learning is **very good**. There is a **good** curriculum with **very good** levels of curriculum enrichment. There are **very good** levels of care and support. **Very good** partnerships exist with parents and there are **very good** links with the community, other schools and educational establishments.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Assessment is good in the Foundation Stage. In Years 1 to 6, the procedures for recording and tracking standards are **satisfactory** in English, mathematics and science, but unsatisfactory in other subjects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong teaching in English, mathematics and science is a key factor in the very high levels of achievement gained by pupils.
- Effective teamwork between the class teacher and teaching assistant in the reception class ensures that a wide range of activities is planned to inspire children to learn.
- There is very good teaching of pupils with special educational needs.
- Across the school, lessons are effectively planned to meet a wide range of ages and abilities in each class.
- Good use is made of resources to bring learning alive.
- Teachers make good use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning.
- Assessment procedures are good in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory in English, mathematics and science. They need improving in other subjects.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 22 lessons:

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	10	9	3	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.

- 8 Teachers are very caring and supportive of pupils both in terms of their academic and their personal development. Very strong teamwork helps staff to develop very good planning systems that result in lessons being effectively organised and managed so that the wide range of ages and abilities within each class is fully met.
- 9 In the Foundation Stage, the class teacher very skilfully manages activities for the reception children that meet their needs. Activities are well planned and successfully excite and stimulate children to want to learn. The teaching assistant is a vital part of the provision for the reception children. She provides good quality directed support for these children, thereby enabling the class teacher to concentrate on the needs of other pupils in Years 1 and 2. There is a good emphasis on enabling reception-aged

children to develop, at an early age, activities that develop a love of books and an early awareness of writing. Reading activities are regularly provided and children soon start using reading scheme books. In mathematics, children benefit from high expectations to use numbers and to understand basic mathematical terminology. Good use of the local environment supports children's development of their knowledge and understanding of the world. The teaching of creative development is satisfactory, but provision for music and painting is reduced because of limitations of access to staff and to space. It was not possible to judge the quality of teaching in physical development. Assessment is effectively used to identify the needs of children in the reception class. Information is used to guide planning so that the needs of individual children are met very well.

- 10 In Years 1 to 6, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons are very well planned to suit the needs of all pupils. Teachers have a good subject knowledge of each subject of the National Curriculum. Literacy and numeracy lessons are sensibly planned to meet the pupils' needs. Very high expectations are made of pupils to record their work by applying high quality skills of presentation. Teachers make sure that pupils set their work out neatly and this results in pupils developing a sense of pride. During lessons pupils are very attentive and across the school, pupils work very hard and give their best in lessons. Teachers are enthusiastic about what they teach and successfully motivate pupils to learn. In many lessons, teachers make very good use of questioning and discussion techniques to establish problems that need to be solved. This problem solving approach challenges pupils to think for themselves and is particularly good at challenging higher-attaining pupils. Teachers make good use of resources such as overhead projectors, white boards for pupils and computers. During a very good lesson in science in Year 3/4, exceptionally good use was made of a prepared multimedia presentation to focus pupils on the naturally occurring materials used in buildings in the village. Teachers are confident in encouraging pupils to use the computer to support learning. This contributes to pupils developing very good attitudes to computers. The teaching of music is satisfactory with strength in the tuition of musical instruments.
- 11 The small amount of teaching assistant support available is used particularly well in Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 to provide group teaching for English, mathematics and some science. This support is a key factor in raising standards further and in providing an appropriate curriculum for the reception children. The teaching for pupils with special educational needs is very good across the school and this is the main reason why these pupils achieve so well. Work is well planned and matched closely to the particular needs of these pupils. The support teacher who is employed for a few hours each week works well with the class teachers to plan and record the progress pupils are making.
- 12 Procedures for assessing pupils in Years 1 to 6 are satisfactory but are very reliant on the knowledge that teachers carry in their heads. Ways of assessing standards in English, mathematics and science are satisfactory, and the results of the national tests in English and mathematics are carefully analysed to inform what is taught and how lessons are planned. In other subjects, the school lacks a suitable way of recording standards and using the information to track pupils' progress so that the impact of provision can be monitored.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good** and is enriched by a **very good** range of learning experiences. There are not enough teaching assistants to support teachers and the wide age range in all classes. Accommodation and resources are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum in English, mathematics and science is very well planned and enables pupils to achieve very well.
- Although effective links are beginning to be made across subjects, further monitoring is needed in some foundation subjects to raise achievement.
- The school does not have enough support staff.
- Visits, visitors and expertise in the school are used very well to enrich the curriculum.
- The curriculum for Foundation Stage is good overall.
- Good provision is made for the pupils with special educational needs.
- The indoor accommodation for physical education is far from ideal.

Commentary

13. The acting headteacher has strengthened the curriculum well. The planning and organisation of the curriculum for the wide age range in each class is particularly effective in English, mathematics and science and pupils achieve very well with high standards that have improved from the last inspection. The small amount of teacher support available is used particularly well in Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 to provide group teaching for English, mathematics and some science and this support is helping to raise standards further and to provide a good curriculum for the reception children that prepares them well for the transition to Year 1.
14. Although there are only three children with special educational needs in the school, their needs are identified early and because the provision is good they achieve very well. Their progress is monitored regularly to ensure that they receive the help identified in their targets and have equal access to the curriculum.
15. Very good provision is made to enhance pupils' learning and experiences through a wide range of visits and visitors to the school. There are close links with different churches in the area and a particular strength is the promotion of environmental awareness. This has resulted in the building of an excellent wildlife area in the school grounds, which is enriching many areas of the curriculum. A very good range of extra-curricular activities is provided and pupils regularly take part in sporting and arts activities. The school is currently taking steps to improve its provision for personal, health and social education. It is making good progress with public services such as the police, health and fire services, who are contributing effectively to personal safety and healthy living. A recent initiative by the school is the work being done to achieve the healthy schools' standard. A priority for the school is to make the curriculum more interesting by linking subjects together and making sure that the skills of English, mathematics and information and communication technology are planned and taught alongside the foundation subjects. Good progress is beginning to be made, but more monitoring by co-ordinators is needed in some foundation subjects to help raise standards further.
16. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory. However, the accommodation and resources for physical development in Foundation Stage are unsatisfactory because

there is no outdoor area or resources for children to regularly participate in planned outdoor activities. Until recently, weaknesses existed in the provision for physical education for all pupils in the school. Effective steps have recently been taken to rectify this and all elements of the subject are now taught. However, the small hall is also used as a classroom and dining hall. Although arrangements are made to use the village hall for physical education, its use is time consuming and it is far from ideal in its facilities and challenge as there is no large apparatus available. However, the older pupils benefit from a series of lessons using large apparatus at a local secondary school and this is just one of the very good links that have been established to ensure a smooth transition for Year 6 to the next stage of their education. The school does not have enough support staff, particularly in Years 3 to 6. This shortage of staff puts pressure on teachers when dealing with the wide age range of needs in each class.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **very good**. The school provides **very good** support, guidance and advice and has **very good** procedures for seeking the views of pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very strong procedures to ensure that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment.
- Pupils have very good, trusting relationships with adults in school.
- Pupils have easy access to well-informed advice, support and guidance to help them progress.
- Induction arrangements are very good.
- The school has very strong arrangements to seek, value and act on pupils' views.

Commentary

17. New children to the school are gradually and sensitively inducted. Most come from the nursery located on the same premises as the school and full advantage is taken of this to support induction. For instance, children from the nursery often join in school assemblies. New children are also invited to a *teddy bears' picnic* before they start school life. The care and support that children in Foundation Stage receive is very good. As far as possible a good balance is achieved between giving children opportunities to work independently and providing effective guidance and support. As a result the children are secure, valued and well cared for in this inclusive environment. Regular meetings take place with parents to discuss the children's progress and there are good procedures to introduce both parents and their children to school before they start in reception.
18. Child protection procedures are very good. The school's designated officer for child protection is well trained, and very good levels of communication about such matters exist between staff. Safety risk assessments are carried out in accordance with statutory requirements and the governing body is very well involved. The school attaches high levels of importance to first aid demonstrated by the fact that four staff are fully trained to administer first aid. The school works effectively with external agencies to promote health and safety. For example, the police regularly give talks for pupils. Also, Year 6 pupils are pleased that the school offers safe cycling training for

them. Pupils with special educational needs receive a very good level of care, support and guidance to enable them to take a full part in school life.

19. The school has a strong family ethos and very good relationships at all levels. Staff work well together to support all pupils in their learning. Much information is held about pupils and this is well used to set targets and give them good advice, support and guidance. Where necessary, the school engages support specialists to meet particular needs, for example, the educational psychologist. There are many opportunities for pupils to make their views known to staff and for them to become involved in the school. It is pleasing to see that the school has adopted so many of their suggestions. The school council is a very good vehicle for pupils to develop as young citizens. Although the council has only started recently, it has already written to governors and persuaded them to direct funds to resolving the acoustics problems between classrooms.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **very effective** partnerships with parents and there are **very good** links with the community and other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have a very high regard for the school.
- There are very effective arrangements to involve parents through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.
- Parents receive very good written information about children's progress and school events.
- Parents make a strong contribution to their children's learning at school and at home.
- The school has established many links in the wider community that enrich learning.

Commentary

- 20 The school has improved its links with parents and made good improvement to community links since the last inspection. The parents' questionnaire confirms that parents are very satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school. Staff are always happy to meet with parents to discuss any individual concerns or problems. The school's open door policy also enables parents to make suggestions and give their views at any time. Very good quality of information to parents keeps them very well informed about school policies, its provision and the standards and progress of their children. The prospectus and governors' annual reports are outstanding in their presentation. Pupils' annual reports are concise, giving a clear picture about how well they are doing, together with future learning targets. There is also very good information to parents about forthcoming work in each class and newsletters are also very helpful. The links with parents of children with special educational needs are very good. Parents' views are always taken into account when preparing the targets in their child's individual education plan.

- 21 The school is an integral part of the village community. The Friends of Skelton School work very hard in organising many social and fundraising events. Money raised is used to reduce the cost of certain school trips and to buy additional learning resources such as computer equipment. Parent helpers give their time generously by supporting lessons and after school clubs. Many parents gave excellent support to the school by helping with much decorating around the school following building work. Educational projects with primary schools have included arts and poetry projects and

the highly successful 'Africa week'. There are also very good educational links with secondary schools. For instance, Years 5 and 6 have just completed a series of information communication technology lessons at a local high school. There are very good mechanisms in place for the transfer of pupils to secondary schools. The school puts much back into the community. For example, pupils play a major role in the success of the annual Skelton Show.

Leadership and management

The leadership and the management of the school are **very good**. The headteacher, along with the key staff, provides **very effective** leadership and ensures that the school is **very well** managed. The governance of the school is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The acting headteacher is very effectively maintaining and improving the school.
- All staff work together with shared commitment to the pupils' needs.
- The school administrator is very effective and is a vital part of the school's management team.
- The governing body is very effective and shares a common vision with staff for the school's development, but the school development planning documents do not include specific targets beyond a year.
- The very effective management of finances results in all income being wisely spent.

Commentary

22 The school is very well led and managed. The acting headteacher successfully combines a very demanding teaching commitment with managing and leading the school. She provides very good leadership and ensures that there is a very good quality of education and strong ethos throughout the school. Very good attention is given to ensuring high academic standards whilst also encouraging pupils' personal and social development. The strengths within the school over recent years have been maintained and enhanced by the introduction of a number of well-paced changes, for example the use of the village hall to enable pupils to access all parts of the physical education curriculum. Very effective teamwork between teachers and support staff ensures that there is a clear educational direction and a shared desire for providing the best possible quality of education.

23 The day-to-day management of the school is very good. The school administrator is a very effective part of the school's management team. In addition to typical secretarial duties, very effective contributions are made to maintaining finances, marketing the school within the community and ensuring that many aspects of health and safety are effectively maintained. Procedures for evaluating how well the school is performing are effective. Staff and governors have a very clear vision for what needs to be done to improve the school even further, but some formal procedures need strengthening. Performance management procedures are fully implemented but do not yet fully link in to the school development plan. As a strategic tool, the school development plan is weak in that it does not project targets for more than one year and lacks sufficient detail regarding timescales, costs and success criteria. The staff team effectively manages the curriculum and ensures that the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and for children in the Foundation Stage is well managed.

- 24 The governing body is a very supportive and effective group. Under the outstanding leadership of the chair, governors are constantly evaluating what the school does and the impact of decisions upon the pupils' education. There are very good levels of communication between the governors and the acting headteacher, which ensures that the governing body is kept fully informed of the school's achievements and areas for improvement.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	175 856	Balance from previous year	18 939
Total expenditure	178 961	Balance carried forward to the next	15 834
Expenditure per pupil	2 632		

- 25 Financial management is very good. The budget is carefully planned and the governing body has a clear long-term strategic plan for its finances. Despite significant pressures on the budget in recent months due to staff illness, the school has managed to keep its budget balanced, thereby maintaining essential spending for the pupils' benefit. The large surplus included in the table above has been reduced to maintain the budget this year (2003/04). The budget surplus is currently very low but is projected to rise again in future years. There are very effective procedures for ensuring that all available income is carefully spent. All available resources are used wisely; staff are deployed effectively and accommodation is used as well as it can be.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The overall provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and some aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world, and the teaching is effective in these areas of learning.
- The leadership and management, organisation and planning for reception children within a mixed age class is good, and enables them to exceed overall the standards expected for their age.
- The accommodation lacks a specific area for outdoor play.
- The reception children receive good levels of support from an experienced nursery nurse, especially for language, mathematics and some aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world.
- Assessment information is used well to plan the next stage of learning.
- Information and communication technology skills are very well developed, with very good levels of achievement.

Commentary

- 26 Reception children are taught in a mixed age class along with Years 1 and 2. In the class there are eight reception children, one of whom attends on a part-time basis. In this small school, attainment on entry varies from year to year but it is always average or above average. The attainment of the current group of reception children is at an average level. By the end of reception, the children exceed the standards expected for their age in most areas of learning and achieve well. In creative development standards are at expected levels and achievement is satisfactory. It is not possible to make an overall judgement on provision, standards and achievement in physical development because this area of learning was not observed. The skills used by the children in handling pencils and other tools in lessons, however, are well developed and above expectations.
- 27 The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. The provision has improved well since the last inspection because the teacher who is also the Foundation Stage co-ordinator manages the curriculum and the planning and organisation of the mixed age class very skilfully. She ensures as far as possible in her good teaching that reception children receive a good balance of well-focused group teaching and opportunities to learn productively through structured play. Assessment procedures are good and information is used well to plan work at the correct levels for all reception children alongside the older pupils. The teaching is sometimes very good when the nursery nurse is present to provide additional support for the reception children in literacy and numeracy sessions. However, there are a few sessions in the afternoon when the teacher is without the support of the nursery nurse for aspects of creative development and investigations, and at these times the learning is not always as productive for the children. Because of the constraints of the accommodation, the reception children do not have their own play area outdoors or regular access to large equipment for physical development. There is a play-group on

the school site and the children sometimes use their equipment at break times but this is not a planned activity. However, sand and water is always available and the children benefit significantly from an excellent wildlife and garden area for investigations.

- 28 In **personal, social and emotional development**, the teaching is good and the children achieve well. This area of learning receives a high focus when children start in reception and they are now very well settled into classroom routines. The good progress is helped by successful arrangements to introduce the new children and parents to the school. Before they start, reception children already in school invite the new children to a *Teddy Bears' Picnic*. They write out invitations and make sandwiches and cakes. The reception children also benefit considerably from the very good behaviour and positive attitudes of the older pupils in the class, which they copy. For example, when they are all together listening to an adult they are very attentive. They listen politely to what others have to say and wait for their turn to speak. Many examples were seen where children worked confidently without supervision, behaving sensibly and sharing resources. Because relationships are very supportive and the qualities of caring and sharing are reinforced, the children are happy in school and have a strong desire to learn.
- 29 The teaching is good in **communication, language and literacy**, and children achieve well. Planning and organisation are very effective and the well-directed use of the nursery nurse ensures that reception children receive good, focused adult support in a small group. This and the strong emphasis placed on the development of language skills across all learning results in children easily exceeding the standards in their speaking, listening, reading and writing. In these group sessions very good attention is paid to learning sounds and words and forming letters correctly. In 'free choice' activities children often retell well-known stories together or write letters and lists from the 'themed corner', which is currently a 'cottage in the woods'. The promotion of early writing skills is good and children are confidently writing their own simple sentences. Speaking and listening are very well developed and every occasion is used to extend the children's vocabulary, as for example in a very good discussion about a dragon the children had made as part of their creative development. Because children practise their reading regularly in class all are now on the early stages of a reading scheme, building unknown words confidently and talking about the characters in the stories. Children receive very good help with reading at home and this is valued highly by the school because it contributes positively to their learning and achievement.
- 30 In **mathematical development**, the children work mainly with the nursery nurse and receive good teaching in a small group to help them to achieve well. They acquire a good understanding of numbers and are helped to solve problems through practical activities and play. During the inspection, assessment information was used particularly well to adapt a previous lesson on money so that the children gained a better understanding of different values of coins. In this lesson skilled questioning by the nursery nurse helped children to use money to buy some cakes and biscuits they had made from play dough and pay with the correct coins up to ten pence. The children are helped to use the vocabulary associated with money and to extend their knowledge and understanding by learning words such as 'greater' and 'smaller' when choosing their groups of coins. Already, children count confidently to twenty and beyond and recognise missing numbers on a number line. One higher attaining child knew very quickly that if she took three objects away from fifteen she would have twelve left.

- 31 The children achieve well in most aspects of the **knowledge and understanding of the world**. The subject is enriched by many visits and visitors and by good teaching overall. The teaching is best when the nursery nurse is available and lessons are planned separately for the reception children. This happened during the time when the children visited the local church and looked at houses in the village. The activities that followed were challenging and practical. Choices were given to the children in their learning which increased their knowledge and understanding of the world. By contrast, during a lesson on light, the mixed age class were taught together and at times some concepts were too difficult for the reception children to understand. The nursery nurse was not available, and because the teacher focused her support with Year 2 pupils, the follow up work for reception children lacked enough challenge. Religious education is taught well and is often linked successfully with moral and social issues. The children, for example, are currently learning about different parables and messages from the stories that are relevant today, particularly about caring for others. ICT skills are very well developed and generally there is free access to computers during the day. The children are already finding the correct program, adding captions from a word bank for their pictures and patterns and printing their own work. This represents very good levels of achievement.
- 32 In **physical development** planning is not adapted for the reception children to cover the Early Learning Goals because there is no outdoor play area or appropriate resources. Although the school and village hall are used for physical education, these lessons are usually planned for the older pupils in the mixed age class and the reception children join in when they can. No lessons were observed during the inspection. Fine motor skills, however, are taught well and children use pencils, scissors, brushes and other tools very confidently.
- 33 In **creative development** the children achieve satisfactorily and teaching is satisfactory. When the children work with adults in a small group for art and craft they make good progress in developing their skills. They mix colours to paint pictures of characters from traditional tales and learn to make patterns in clay with leaves and other materials from the wildlife area. There are now more occasions since the last inspection for children to have regular access to role-play activities. However, a lack of space prevents painting and collage materials being freely available for children during the day. In the weekly music session with a visiting teacher, although the lesson was satisfactory, the children had to sit for too long listening to the teacher on tasks that were sometimes inappropriate. There are few opportunities for them to explore sounds together in their imaginative play or to learn to play and sing together in different ways.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils speak, read and write very well and achieve very well across the school.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to apply their language and literacy skills across the curriculum.

- English is popular amongst pupils and makes a good contribution to promoting very good attitudes to learning.
- Very good teaching provides pupils with imaginative and stimulating lessons.
- Teachers know pupils very well but pupils' progress over time is not formally recorded and tracked.

Commentary

- 34 The performance and analysis data report (PANDA) for 2003 indicates that standards have been consistently high at the end of both key stages over recent years. This data, however, has to be treated with caution given the very small numbers of pupils taking the tests. Inspection evidence shows that pupils achieve very well across the school in each area of English (speaking and listening, reading and writing). Standards at the end of Year 2 are currently well above national expectations. Standards at the end of Year 6 are currently not quite as good as they were in the 2003 national tests, because of the differences in the natural ability of the different cohorts, but they are still very high. The small percentage of pupils with learning difficulties in English are taught very well, resulting in them doing as well as they can, even though their standards are slightly below that of other pupils. There is no evidence of any significant difference between the performance of boys or girls.
- 35 Many pupils start Year 1 with relatively good standards of speaking and listening. Very good teaching recognises this and across the school pupils are challenged to build on and extend these good skills. Very effective teaching methods demand that each pupil develops and extends their vocabulary and its use. Many opportunities are provided in lessons across the curriculum for pupils to speak publicly, to discuss thoughts and ideas with each other and to participate in structured debates. Because teachers value pupils' ideas and never put them down, pupils are confident to speak and to express their ideas. Significant contributions are made to pupils' speaking through the development of personal, social, health and citizenship education and through regular events in Years 3 to 6 where pupils make presentations to others. The pupils' good knowledge of spoken language contributes to their very high standards of writing.
- 36 The quality of handwriting and the use of grammar and punctuation are well above national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Spelling is mostly good. Pupils are very competent in writing for a variety of audiences. Imaginative writing is very well composed. In Year 2, pupils develop a good knowledge of creating stories that have an inviting introduction, a well-developed plot and imaginative character descriptions. Some higher attaining pupils in Year 2 make very good use of conventions such as using speech marks and paragraphs to break up the text. By the end of Year 6, pupils have developed very good skills of writing both fiction and non-fiction pieces of work. There is a particular strength in composing poems in different styles. Pupils show sensitivity and empathy for the use of language. In Year 6, pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of the structure of different poems. This was demonstrated in their explorations of limericks, cinquains and haiku. Standards in reading are high and pupils achieve very well at all ages. Pupils enjoy reading a wide variety of contemporary authors and use books well to locate information in subjects such as history and geography.
- 37 The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the National Literacy Strategy and make very good adaptations to it to cater for the mixed age ranges of each class. Across the school, pupils are engendered with very good attitudes to reading and writing. They enjoy using language in a variety of situations and contexts. Lessons are imaginatively planned so that pupils are

confident to 'have a go' and try out new ideas. Expectations for the presentation of pupils' work are very high. Teachers work very hard to value what pupils do by creating very well organised and presented samples of pupils' work, both as class displays and in anthologies of pupils' work. Good use is made of resources such as overhead projectors and the individual use by pupils of whiteboards to enable pupils to participate in a variety of activities. Teachers make good use of computers for pupils to create a variety of texts. Word processing skills are well developed across the school from Years 1 to 6. During lessons, pupils work very hard and get on very well on their own whilst teachers give support to particular groups. Work is very well planned to meet the needs of all pupils, including higher-attainers. Homework is used effectively to support pupils' learning at home. Marking is prompt and effective in guiding pupils so that they improve. The provision of individual targets for pupils' improvement effectively involves pupils in evaluating how well they are doing and where they could do better.

- 38 Leadership and management are good. The staff team works together effectively to make sure that standards are kept under constant review and plans are created to constantly improve standards and provision. The curriculum is very well managed and many opportunities are taken to enrich what is taught, for example, through visits to theatre groups and buying in poets to work with pupils. Effective systems are established to assess pupils' attainment in comparison with national expectations and teachers know pupils very well. Resources are adequate. There has been a good improvement in the provision for English since the last inspection and standards are much higher.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

- 39 The school has good strategies for promoting the use of language and literacy across the curriculum. Expectations are high for pupils to apply literacy skills to subjects such as history and science. Pupils develop good skills of reporting historical facts, describing sequences in scientific investigations and using technical language associated with different subjects to draw conclusions and to make explanations of events. As part of homework activities, pupils use very good skills of reading for research and writing to produce high quality pieces of personal research, for example, into the life of Anne Frank. Very good use is made of the field trip to Arnside to provide a stimulus for pupils to write for a variety of purposes and to apply skills of both descriptive and narrative writing.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and reach very high standards by the end of Year 6.
- Teachers have very high expectations of pupils.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good.
- The subject is very well managed by the co-ordinator, who is successfully maintaining high standards.
- Assessment successfully guides the teaching.
- Marking is a weaker aspect of the teaching.
- In data handling, not enough focus is placed on pupils drawing conclusions and interpreting information.

Commentary

- 40 Standards have improved since the last inspection. They are currently very high by the end of Year 6 and match the 2003 national tests. Since 2001 pupils have consistently reached these very high standards, making them among the highest five per cent of pupils in the country. However, this data has to be treated with caution given the very small numbers of pupils taking the tests. By the end of Year 2, standards are well above average and also match the national tests in 2003. Pupils are achieving very well and making very good progress from their average starting point.
- 41 A significant reason why pupils achieve so well is the very good quality of the teaching and the demanding work that is planned for them. Teaching is confident and stimulating, and there is a good balance between pupils learning basic computation and focusing on problem solving and investigations. The pace and rigour of lessons keep pupils engaged and keen to learn. Pupils are positively encouraged to explore different approaches in investigations and to explain their working out. In Year 2, for example, pupils became totally engrossed in trying out different methods to arrive at an answer of 45 pence, using only silver coins.
- 42 Because relationships in the school are very supportive and the teaching is interesting, pupils have a strong desire to learn and succeed. They are encouraged to work together and share ideas, and as they nearly always display very good levels of concentration and excellent behaviour in lessons, their hard work impacts very positively on the quality of their learning and achievement. The parents too are very supportive of their children's work at school and provide good levels of help and encouragement with the regular homework that is given. The teachers appreciate the positive contribution made by parents to pupils' learning.
- 43 Leadership and management are very good and have enabled the quality of provision to improve well since the last inspection. As the school is small, the co-ordination of mathematics is jointly led and managed by all staff. Regular meetings have ensured that teamwork is effective. Staff have a clear sense of purpose and high aspirations to maintain the very high standards. Teachers clearly know the strengths and weaknesses in the provision. They have strengthened assessment so that information from tests and the evaluation of lessons clearly identify pupils' strengths and difficulties. This information is used to plan lessons and work that successfully match the needs of different ages and abilities in the class. Although informal targets are set for individual pupils and shared with pupils and parents, the school has recognised the need to set more formal targets and to improve the marking, so that pupils can easily see what they need to do to improve.

Mathematics across the curriculum

- 44 Within the curriculum, the skills of mathematics are taught in a satisfactory way. At the moment they are not planned and developed consistently across the curriculum. Mathematical skills are reinforced well in information and communication technology to practise computational skills and to support data handling. Pupils in Year 6 produce different graphs to show how water is consumed in work in science. However, in this and other examples seen there is not enough focus on interpreting results and drawing conclusions. Measurements too are not always being made accurately enough in science and design and technology.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Across the school pupils reach very high standards and achieve very well.
- Pupils develop very good skills of performing scientific investigations although their measurements are always sufficiently accurate.
- As a result of very good teaching, pupils develop good attitudes to science and the confidence to work on their own.
- Aspects of assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress could be better.
- Very good use is made of the environment to enrich and enhance pupils' learning.

Commentary

- 45 Over the last three years, standards in science at the end of Year 6 have been very high when compared to the national average. Statistical data indicates that between Years 2 and 6, pupils achieved very highly. Standards at the end of Year 2 in 2003 were very high. Teacher assessments indicate that standards were in the top 5 per cent of all schools nationally. The data in the performance and analysis data report (PANDA) has to be treated with caution because of the very small numbers of pupils taking the end of key stage tests. Inspection evidence shows that pupils achieve very well at the end of both Years 2 and 6 and standards are very high. There is no evidence of any significant difference between the performance of boys or girls.
- 46 By the end of Year 2, pupils have developed a very good knowledge and understanding of the processes of performing scientific investigations. They have a good insight into the importance of ensuring that all tests are fair and are familiar with the processes of hypothesising and gathering data to support or refute predictions. By the end of Year 6, pupils have further extended and improved their very good knowledge and understanding of performing scientific investigations. Pupils have a good grasp of how to manage investigations so that possible variations are controlled so that results are reliable. Across the school, pupils effectively use outcomes of tests to draw conclusions based on what they thought would happen. Pupils develop a very good knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas related to each area of science. They have a good knowledge and understanding of scientific terminology, for example, *evaporate*, *condense* and *reversible reactions* and use such terminology to explain events around them. Pupils across the school have a particularly good knowledge and understanding of environmental ideas and the importance of protecting and nurturing the fragility of nature.
- 47 Teaching and learning are very good across the school. The secure subject knowledge of teachers and the setting of high expectations for pupils to think for themselves result in pupils working very well on their own and with others in small groups. Teachers carefully and appropriately prepare resources so that pupils have good access during lessons to what is needed to perform investigations. Teachers make good use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning. During a very good lesson in Years 3 and 4, very effective use was made of a very impressively prepared multimedia presentation to focus pupils' attention on the types of materials used in buildings around Skelton. Across the school, pupils are curious and thrive on the challenges presented by the practical elements of science. Although pupils in Years 3 to 6 are quite capable of gathering data by applying mathematical skills of measurement, the expectations for them to do so are not as

high as they might be. In this area of science, teachers do not demand enough. During lessons, pupils work very hard and enjoy learning. Teachers make good use of homework, and in this area, pupils make good use of research skills involving the use of information and communication technology to locate information.

- 40 The subject is effectively managed and led by the staff team. The curriculum is effectively planned to include each element of science, and very good use is made of the environment to extend learning out of the classroom. Curriculum topics are planned so that work is made relevant to pupils' lives. This adds interest to lessons and motivates pupils to learn. Procedures for assessing standards are satisfactory, but the systems for tracking pupils' progress from year to year are unsatisfactory. At the moment, there is an over-reliance on the teachers' knowledge of pupils. Although this is very accurate, the lack of formality reduces the ability of the school to use data to monitor what is going on across the school. Resources are satisfactory and the outdoor wildlife area is of a very high standard and is a very good resource for supporting learning in environmental science. There has been a good improvement in the provision for science since the last inspection and standards are much higher.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and teachers ensure that pupils make good use of information and communication technology to support learning.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to using computers.
- The subject is effectively managed and led so that the provision is constantly being improved.
- Procedures for recording pupils' attainment over time are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

49. Standards at the end of Year 2 are in line with the national expectations and at the end of Year 6 standards are above national expectations. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 1 and 2 and achieve well in Years 3 to 6. Throughout the school pupils are comfortable in using computers to support learning. Staff work hard to plan time within lessons for pupils to use computers, and recent investments in resources have ensured that each element of the curriculum is taught to pupils across the school.
50. Good quality teaching and learning ensures that pupils frequently use information and communication technology in other subjects. Information and communication technology is used effectively by all staff to create good quality displays for pupils, and at times to enhance presentations to pupils during lessons. Teachers expect pupils to apply their skills in a range of different contexts. In Years 1 and 2, pupils develop secure skills of using the mouse and keyboard to create and edit text and to use simple tools to paint and pictures and create designs. In Years 3 to 6, pupils make good use of computers to support learning in a wide range of subjects. Achievement is better in Years 3 to 6 than Years 1 and 2 because in Years 3 to 6 teachers have more imagination and confidence to try out new ideas. For example, in Years 3 to 4, very good use is made of feedback sensors to enable pupils to gather information. The levels of sound were recorded at different times of the day and in different places as part of a study of the environment. By the end of Year 6, pupils use a wide range of

software and select the most apt tool to suit the purpose of their activity. Some very good pieces of research based on a visit to Arnside demonstrated pupils' good ability to use information and communication technology to communicate with clarity, using language that matches the audience. Pupils have very good skills of using CD-ROMs to locate information associated with various class topics. Spreadsheets are competently used and pupils create their own databases in a variety of situations. The Internet is used with responsibility and pupils obey the school's Internet protection policy. Throughout the school pupils are very enthusiastic to use information and communication technology and show very good levels of attention and concentration.

51. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum is constantly under review and is developed and improved as resources allow. Although some computers are old, the provision of resources is satisfactory and effective in supporting learning. Good initiatives, such as enabling older pupils to use computers during play and lunchtimes, provide many opportunities for pupils to explore and improve their skills. Very good links with a nearby grammar school have enabled pupils in Years 5 and 6 to use high quality resources to develop and improve their ability to create good quality multimedia presentations. Although e-mail facilities exist, opportunities for pupils to communicate with pupils elsewhere have not yet been exploited. Teachers know pupils very well, but an effective formal way of monitoring and recording pupils' standards and levels of achievement are weak. The provision for information and communication technology has improved well since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

52. Provision for using information and communication technology across the curriculum is good. Pupils across the school are turning to information and communication technology as the natural tool to use in a range of tasks. They use computers to create a variety of pieces of imaginative and narrative texts in English and make good use of databases and spreadsheets as part of mathematics. Paint programs are used to enable pupils to explore art and design, and sensors are used to gather data as part of geography and science topics. CD-ROMS and the Internet are regularly used to locate information about a variety of topics for example, history and science.

HUMANITIES

53. The inspection evidence was sufficient to report the quality of provision in **religious education** and **geography**. The limitations of time made it impossible to report **history** in depth as no lessons were seen. However, inspectors spoke to pupils about their work and looked at planning and pupils' work on display. From this information it is clear that the school is providing pupils with relevant experiences in history and covering all the requirements of the curriculum. There is a strength in using the local area and of making good use of educational visits to enhance the history taught in school. Pupils develop good research skills to locate and interpret historical facts and events.

Religious education

Provision in the subject is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is effective and has improved since the previous inspection.
- Good links are made with different Christian churches.
- Lessons promote a strong spiritual, moral and social awareness.
- Effective links are made with other subjects.
- Assessment systems are not established and marking is weak.

Commentary

54. By the end of Years 2 and 6 standards are in line with the expectations in the Locally Agreed Syllabus for Cumbria and achievement is satisfactory. The school has recently reviewed its planning for religious education and made improvements to the curriculum. These have yet to impact on standards and achievement. There is now more emphasis on visits and using resources to make the subject more interesting, and as a result teaching has improved from satisfactory to good since the last inspection.
55. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of Christianity, Judaism and Islam and Year 6 pupils recognise that different faiths share similar features. They have less understanding of how the religious practices of non-Christian faith groups influence their everyday lives. This important aspect will be given more focus later in the year when pupils study Buddhism and visit a nearby Buddhist centre. Local churches and the cathedral are used regularly to enrich the teaching of Christianity. This is helping pupils in Year 2 to know why a place of worship is special to people who use it and to have some understanding of the meaning of the parables that Jesus told and the effect on people's lives today. The school places great emphasis on caring for others and helping pupils to recognise the importance of family and friends.
56. The quality of teaching is good. The outward signs of religion, faith and belief receive a high profile in the teaching and learning and make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social awareness. During the inspection, the teacher in Years 3 and 4 explored Psalm 104 with pupils for its significance in creation. Because of skilled teaching, pupils were able to reflect purposefully on the meaning of the psalm and express their own responses to the natural world very creatively in their poems. The very sensitive approach of the teacher during the lesson helped pupils to discuss their ideas freely, knowing they would be valued.
57. Teachers ensure that pupils make good use of their literacy skills in religious education and effective links are also made with other subjects. When Years 5 and 6 visited a nearby abbey they used their literacy skills particularly well to make their own information booklet about the abbey. Their work was well presented and informative and showed a good understanding of how people lived in the abbey and the religious significance of their work there. History skills were also developed well when pupils wrote to Henry VIII to give their reasons why he should not destroy the abbey.
58. The subject is well managed and led and there have been good improvements since the last inspection. There are no formal systems for assessment yet, although teachers know their pupils well and readily respond to their individual needs. Although

marking does not show how pupils can improve their work, a lot of informal discussion takes place which helps pupils to know how well they are doing.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very good range of activities that extend learning beyond the classroom enriches the curriculum.
- Good teaching values the development of fieldwork skills and makes learning exciting and relevant.
- Although teachers know pupils very well, the procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

59. Pupils across the school achieve well in geography. Standards at the end of both Years 2 and 6 are above national expectations. Across the school pupils are enthusiastic about the subject and gain particular benefit from the way the curriculum is enriched by a very good range of educational visits and visitors to school.
60. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the immediate locality of Skelton. They describe and identify where places are and have a secure knowledge of the basic idea of a simple map of the area. Pupils are knowledgeable about the features of the village such as the community hall and the Methodist Church and can explain routes from the school to places of local significance. Through well-planned activities based on the imaginary Scottish Island of Struay, pupils in Year 2 can compare and contrast where they live with another place. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 develop a good knowledge and understanding of places further away. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a good knowledge of the features of different environments such as savannah, desert and temperate regions. They are aware of similarities and differences between the United Kingdom and a developing country such as Tanzania. Pupils have a good understanding of physical influences on the environment, for example of river erosion and the water cycle, and are aware of how human activity can change places. A wide range of educational visits enables pupils to develop good fieldwork skills in contexts outside the classroom.
61. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers work hard to bring lessons alive by planning activities that directly involve pupils in their learning. Residential visits in Years 5 and 6 to Coniston and Arnside are very effectively used to develop pupils' fieldwork skills such as reading maps, learning about the different forms of land use and the way that water can alter the natural environment through erosion. The concept of environmental sustainability is developed by the very good input from local countryside wardens. A pupils' workshop by a representative of the warden service resulted in pupils developing an acute awareness of the importance of water for life and the difference in circumstances of children in Skelton compared with children living in Tanzania. Teachers make good use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning in geography. As part of a topic about the way that humans can change and improve their environment, pupils made very good use of sensors to gather data about sound levels at different times of day and in different places. Homework activities are effectively used. Pupils create impressive individual projects based on class work. These are well planned and prepared and

combine a broad range of skills from literacy and information and communication technology to locate and represent information.

62. Geography is well led and managed. The curriculum is carefully planned and good use is made of local resources to support what goes on in the classroom. Although links are made between geography and some other subjects, for example information and communication technology and literacy, the links with other subjects such as art and design, design and technology and history are not good enough. Although teachers know pupils very well, there is no manageable way of assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress. The quality of provision in geography has been maintained since the last inspection.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

63. It is not possible to make a firm judgement about provision in art and design, design and technology or physical education, as no lessons were seen. However, inspectors spoke to teachers and pupils about their work in these subjects and looked at planning and pupils' work on display. From this information it is clear that the school is providing pupils with relevant experiences in all subjects and covering all the requirements of the curriculum.
64. From the examination of pupils' work, standards in **art and design** are at an average level by the end of Years 2 and 6 and match the findings of the previous inspection. There is a good range of interesting work, which is often linked well to other subjects. In Years 3 and 4, for example, pupils experiment with different materials to produce some original and well-made sculptures, which reflect different features of the schools' wildlife area. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, after a visit to the local church as part of a religious education lesson, make and decorate clay tiles successfully, by exploring a variety of textures and designs based on the symbols, patterns and textures of the church. Teachers make sure that when subjects are linked together, the skills in art and design are taught well and pupils improve their techniques. Pupils' skills in painting and drawing are improved when Years 5 and 6 study the 'still life' works of different artists to help them develop the use of colour and shading in their own pictures. Good use is made of the work of artists from all over the world and regular workshops are held in school with local artists. These extra opportunities are not only beneficial in helping pupils to improve their ideas and techniques, but they significantly enrich their spiritual and cultural awareness.
65. In **design and technology** pupils' work shows that average standards have been maintained at the end of Years 2 and 6 since the last inspection. It is clear from the articles made by pupils that they have been given enough opportunities to use their own ideas and materials in their designs. At times, more precision is needed in measuring accurately so that the quality of the finished product can be improved further. However, a strong emphasis is given to the evaluation of the articles. After making musical instruments, pupils in Years 5 and 6 reflected well on what they had made and showed in their comments that they were beginning to understand the situation in which their designs would have to function. For example, they suggested improvements to the base of their instrument for durability, choosing better materials that would vibrate more easily and widening the pitch range of the tuned percussion instruments they had made so their accompaniments would be more interesting.
66. It was impossible to observe any lessons in **physical education**. A judgement about the standards and achievement of pupils or the quality of teaching cannot be made.

Evidence available, however, indicates that the school has recently improved its provision significantly. The village hall has been hired and pupils across the school now use it to gain experience of the full range of indoor physical education. Until the decision was made to hire the hall, pupils missed out on essential elements of the subject such as dance and gymnastics. Despite this, staff work hard to involve pupils in outdoor sporting events and satisfactory provision is made for pupils to learn water safety and how to swim.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of the skills of playing musical instruments is good but pupils miss out on developing creativity in music.
- Assessment is informally carried out and is unsatisfactory overall.
- The use of information and communication technology is underdeveloped.

Commentary

- 67 Lessons were observed in all classes as well as the teaching of the recorder. Standards are at an average level by the end of Years 2 and 6, and achievement is satisfactory. A part-time teacher teaches music. The teaching of musical instruments is good and pupils in Years 5 and 6 are well supported in learning to play the recorder and tuned percussion. They make good progress and as well as gaining the skills to play these instruments accurately, they are learning notation and the structure of music. However, although they practise hard to improve their playing of the recorder they seldom play together in lessons or assemblies and miss valuable opportunities to play together and present their performances to an audience.
- 68 Other aspects of teaching are satisfactory. The teacher has a secure knowledge of the subject and tasks have sufficient challenge to keep pupils involved and working productively. In Years 5 and 6, for example, pupils practise an accompaniment on the tuned percussion for a fairground rondo by Stravinsky, while pupils in Years 3 and 4 create a song based on the Chinese New Year and add a melody on instruments. The organisation of the lessons, while satisfactory in teaching important skills in playing, does not always allow enough time for pupils to improvise together, explore the relationships between sounds or develop their own musical ideas. On occasions, pupils spend too much time listening to the teacher and following her instructions and miss out on exploring ideas together creatively and making improvements to their compositional skills. Although singing skills are average, apart from hymns and songs learnt for concerts and assemblies, pupils have not built up a sufficiently varied repertoire of songs, and seldom record their own work in lessons to help them make improvements. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of music from different times and places is barely satisfactory as the listening and appraisal of music has not received enough attention in lessons or assemblies. There have been no information and communication technology sessions for pupils to enhance provision.
- 69 The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The quality of provision has been maintained since the last inspection and standards have been maintained. Teachers know each pupil's level of achievement, but the quality of recorded information to gauge individual progress across the school is unsatisfactory. Assessment is not formalised.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL, HEALTH AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

- 70 It was not possible to gather enough information about the quality of provision in personal, social, health and citizenship education to form an overall judgement about provision. Inspection evidence, however, shows that the school has a suitable policy for personal, social, health and citizenship education. Pupils are regularly given time to share their thoughts and emotions with each other and to discuss events that matter to them. The school promotes positive attitudes amongst pupils to healthy eating and has effective procedures to develop their awareness and sensitivity to issues about sex and relationships and to the importance of resisting drugs. Teachers effectively lead many class discussions so that pupils develop a good awareness of the importance of valuing others. Racial awareness is promoted effectively. Pupils are encouraged to judge others by what they do and say rather than by their looks or beliefs. Citizenship is effectively promoted and there is a strength in the way pupils are encouraged to be aware of the importance of nature and the need to protect and care for the natural environment.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

