

INSPECTION REPORT

**St. Mary and St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary
School**

Blaydon-on-Tyne

LEA area: Gateshead

Unique reference number: 108392

Headteacher: Miss E White

Lead inspector: Rajinder Harrison

Dates of inspection: 28th June to 1st July 2004

Inspection number: 257817

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:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	214
School address:	Stella Lane Blaydon-on-Tyne Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	NE21 4DA
Telephone number:	0191 4143116
Fax number:	0191 4145087
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. Bernard Lynch

Date of previous 23rd March 1998 inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's and St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School provides education for pupils aged between three and 11. It is of average size with 214 pupils. The numbers of boys and girls are broadly similar. The school is situated in a semi-rural area on the outskirts of Blaydon, Tyne and Wear. Numbers at the school have steadily increased (by 8.4 per cent) over the last five years. The vast majority of pupils come from the local area, which is a mixture of rented and private housing. Most pupils are of White-British origin and no pupils have English as an additional language. The socio-economic indicators for the areas are broadly average and the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, (5.3 per cent), is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs, (7.0 per cent), and with statements of special needs (0.9 per cent), is also below the national average. The special needs include moderate learning difficulties, speech or communication difficulties and visual impairment. The number of pupils moving in and out of the school is low, with three joining and seven leaving the school at other than at the start and the end of the last school year.

In 2003, the school gained the following awards: Basic Skills Quality Mark, Healthy Schools, Schools Achievement Award, International Schools Award.

The attainment on entry, whilst variable, is broadly average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18059	Rajinder Harrison	Lead inspector	Science History Geography
19365	Gordon Stockley	Lay inspector	
18130	Anthony Ford	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Art and design Physical education
17543	Robert Coupe	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics ICT Design and Technology Music

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an excellent school. Teaching and learning are very good and, as a result, pupils make very good gains in their learning. Standards at the end of Year 6 are very high. Overall achievement is excellent. Relationships throughout the school and pupils' personal development are excellent. Overall leadership and management are excellent. The school gives excellent value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff are excellent.
- Standards in English, mathematics and science are very high at the end of Year 6.
- Standards in history, physical education and ICT and are well above expectations.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good, resulting in their excellent progress.
- Curriculum provision is very good and procedures to monitor pupils' progress are excellent.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour is exemplary.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. The school has addressed the previous key issues very effectively. Planning is very good and detailed schemes of work provide teachers with excellent guidance to ensure new work builds effectively on pupils' prior learning. Because of the excellent assessment procedures now established in every subject, pupils' progress is monitored very accurately and individual targets ensure every pupil works to their full potential. The role of co-ordinators has been developed very successfully. They work very closely with their subject link governors and this ensures any necessary action required to improve provision is taken. Leadership of English, mathematics and science is excellent, and this has led to the high standards pupils achieve in these subjects.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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	C	A*	A*	A
mathematics	A	A*	A	A
science	A	A*	A	C

Key: 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.

As a result of very good teaching, pupils make very good gains in their learning and overall achievement is very high. Standards have improved since the last inspection where standards, at the end of Year 6, were above average for English and mathematics and average for science. From the results of national tests and assessments in 2003, standards were very high, and in the top 5% nationally, in English. Standards in science and mathematics were both well above average. The school exceeded all its targets. In all but science, standards compared very favourably with those of similar schools. The school correctly

identified the weakness in science and has successfully addressed this, by placing greater emphasis on developing pupils' investigative and enquiry skills.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with generally average attainment. Achievement is very good and the majority exceed the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the reception year, and a significant minority work comfortably at Year 1 work. Pupils with special educational needs make excellent progress throughout the school, because planning is very thorough and excellent support is given to individuals who need extra attention. Achievement is very high throughout Years 1 to 6. At the end of Year 2, standards are well above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. At the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are very high, with well over 60 per cent of pupils achieving the higher level 5 in each of these subjects. Standards in ICT have improved considerably since the last inspection and are now above average at the end of Year 2 and well above average at the end of Year 6. This very good improvement is largely due to very good facilities for ICT and excellent training for staff. Standards in history and physical education are well above those expected at the end of Year 6, because overall provision is very good. The work sampled in other subjects is at least above average expectations.

Pupils' personal development is excellent and is supported extremely effectively by the excellent provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy school, form excellent relationships and have very positive attitudes to learning. Their behaviour is exemplary. They are very kind and caring towards each other and many take on responsibilities in a very mature manner. Attendance is good and punctuality satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good. Teaching is very good throughout the school. Learning is very effective because teachers provide interesting and challenging work and pay very close attention to ensure pupils with special educational needs are fully included in all activities. Additional staff are used very effectively to support pupils' learning, and many volunteers help in lessons regularly. Assessment procedures are excellent and information about pupils' progress is very accurately used to match work to their needs in every lesson. Every pupil is made aware of the high expectations placed on them to work hard to achieve their targets, and because teachers make lessons fun, pupils enjoy learning. Higher attaining pupils are very well challenged through additional work and they enjoy the extra responsibility placed on them. The curriculum and opportunities to enrich the provision through visits and visitors to the school are very good. A very well planned programme for personal, social and health education enhances the work planned in many other subjects.

The school takes very good care of its pupils and promotes an extremely positive ethos amongst the entire school community. Partnerships with parents are excellent. Links with the community and with other schools are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management overall are excellent. The work of the governing body is very good. Leadership by the headteacher is excellent. She is inspirational in the way she encourages and supports staff and this has resulted in a highly effective team. The contribution of the acting deputy headteacher and other key staff is excellent. Governors monitor the school's performance very closely in order to set priorities for improvement. They work with the

headteacher and her staff to ensure all statutory requirements are met and that the school continues to improve.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are extremely happy with the school. The information they receive about their children's work is very good, and overall provision to consult with them regarding school matters is excellent. **Pupils** are extremely proud of their school and are particularly positive about the relationships they form. They feel very safe, well looked after and very highly valued.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

There are no significant areas for improvement identified.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is **excellent** and overall standards are very high.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in English, mathematics and, science are very high.
- Standards in history, physical education and ICT are well above average at the end of Year 6.
- Improvements in teaching, assessment and monitoring have had a considerable impact on raising standards throughout the school since the last inspection.
- As a result of very good provision, pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their classmates.
- The overall trend for improvement in 2003 was above the national level in Key Stage 1 and below in Key Stage 2.

Commentary

Foundation Stage

1. Children generally enter the nursery class with average attainment in all areas of learning. The areas of learning that, for a very small minority of children, are occasionally below average are their language and literacy skills and their social development. Because assessment procedures are so thorough, teachers pay high attention to developing all aspects of the curriculum to ensure all children make very good gains in their learning. Teaching is very good and those who require additional support are provided for extremely well. Staff monitor children's achievements and ensure subsequent work matches their needs accurately, and very detailed assessments are recorded to monitor progress. Most children exceed the Early Learning Goals by the end of the end of Foundation Stage in all areas of learning and a significant number work confidently at work levelled at Year 1. Overall achievement is very good.

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	17.8 (18.5)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	16.9 (16.3)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	18.5 (18.7)	16.3 (16.5)

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

2. In the Year 2 national tests and assessments in 2003, standards against schools nationally were well above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. This was also the case when compared against schools with a similar free school meal number. The school's results indicate that it is at the higher levels of attainment (numbers

of pupils achieving the above average levels in the tests and assessments) that the school does particularly well, especially in mathematics. The trend for improvement overall, over the last three years, is above the national average. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls, because the school ensures any differences in achievement are addressed well through very careful planning. However, from these results, the school recognised that science was a relative weakness and placed greater emphasis on monitoring pupils' progress and working more carefully to develop pupils' investigative and enquiry skills. This year's assessments indicate overall standards have improved and are very high in mathematics and science.

3. In English, the standards attained at the end of the current Year 2 are higher than the findings of the previous inspection and in the national tests of 2003. Standards are very high in reading, which is a strength of the school. Speaking and listening, and writing skills are well above average. Very good teaching ensures high achievement of pupils of all abilities.
4. In the current Year 2, standards in mathematics are very high and pupils' overall achievement is excellent. This is an improvement on the standards at the time of the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs are given good individual support to ensure they make good progress. Pupils of higher ability are challenged well and encouraged to work independently to extend confidence in their numeracy skills further.
5. Standards in science are well above average in the present Year 2 and overall achievement is very good. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Because teaching is very good and activities are fun, pupils learn very effectively. There is very good support for pupils with special educational needs and this enables them to participate fully and achieve as well as their classmates.
6. Standards in history are well above average at the end of Year 2, an improvement on the last inspection. In physical education, standards have improved since the last inspection and are above expectations. In ICT, standards are above average expectations. Now that the facilities and hardware have been improved, staff use ICT in lessons in other subjects and teachers are very confident in presenting challenging work to pupils of all abilities. From the work sampled, standards in all other subjects are at least above expectations, at the end of Year 2.

Key Stage 2

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.4 (31.2)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	29.6 (31.0)	26.8 (26.7)
science	30.1 (32.3)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 23 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

7. The results from tests and assessments in 2003 show that pupils were well above the national average in mathematics and science. Standards were very high in English, the school being in the top 5 per cent nationally. Overall standards have improved since the previous inspection when English and mathematics was judged to be above average and science average. When

compared with similar schools, standards in science were average, and English and mathematics were well above average. Because of this dip in science, the overall trend for improvement in 2003 was below the national trend, but there is very strong evidence that the school has improved on its performance last year.

8. In English, standards attained by pupils in the current Year 6 are better than those identified in the previous report and overall achievement is excellent, with very high numbers of pupils working at the higher level 5. Reading is a real strength, and through this, pupils gain a strong desire to explore language and apply it to their work. Standards in writing, and speaking and listening are high and the quality of work produced by some of the higher-attaining pupils is of a very high standard.
9. Standards in mathematics are very high for the current Year 6 and overall achievement is excellent. This is a much-improved picture from that in the previous inspection. There is a very good development of investigation and practical mathematics skills, resulting in this high attainment at the end of Year 6. Because teachers are very aware of the needs of pupils with special educational needs, they ensure work is very carefully matched to their ability. Higher-attaining pupils are provided with very challenging tasks. They respond well to these very high expectations, and a significant number enjoy working in their own time to progress even further.
10. In science, standards are very high at the end of Year 6 and improvement has been excellent since the last inspection. Pupils are encouraged to think and develop very good reasoning skills when working through investigations. The very strong emphasis on working independently results in overall achievement being very high, with pupils making excellent gains throughout Key Stage 2.
11. Standards in history are well above expectations because the subject is taught particularly well. A very good range of visits to places of interest and visitors support learning very effectively. Overall achievement is very good and this is an improved picture since the last inspection. In physical education, standards are well above expectations and a great improvement since the last inspection. Standards in ICT are well above expectations. With the improvement in facilities, teachers make very good use of ICT in other lessons. Achievement is very good and examples of work of a very high standard were seen. From the work sampled, standards in all other subjects are at least above expectations at the end of Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well in all subjects, because support for them is very good and assessment information for all pupils is extremely thorough so everyone works to set targets in all areas of the curriculum.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have very **good** attitudes to work and behaviour is **excellent**. Their attendance is **good** and punctuality is **satisfactory**. Their personal social, moral and cultural development is also **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very caring ethos of the school permeates all activities, and helps to promote pupils' excellent personal development.
- Staff present excellent role models so that pupils quickly know the difference between right and wrong and behave extremely well.

- Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- Pupils form excellent relationships with each other and with adults.
- Pupils are very caring and supportive of each other and the wider community.

Commentary

12. Pupils' personal development is excellent. They have very positive attitudes to learning and are very keen to please and do well. Pupils with special educational needs have the same attitudes and values as their classmates and all the school's activities successfully encourage pupils to be well mannered, trustworthy and honest. Pupils are extremely polite and courteous, and respond well to the excellent caring ethos of the school. They enjoy school, and show considerable pride in being members of the school community. They are interested and involved in the wide range of activities that the school provides, both in lessons and out of school hours. Parents are extremely supportive of the school, and very impressed with the values the school promotes. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. No incidents of bullying or harassment were seen during the inspection, the overarching factor in this being the ethos across the school that successfully encourages high levels of respect, tolerance and care.
13. Pupils' relationships with adults and each other are excellent, and have a positive impact on their learning. Pupils understand their responsibilities as ambassadors for the school and take on the role successfully. Excellent opportunities exist for pupils to develop strong relationships, for example, through the 'special friend' scheme, with older pupils acting as mentors for children in the reception class.
14. The headteacher and all staff have established an ethos that promotes excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Right from the nursery class, they are shown how to act in very caring way towards each other. Values are promoted through the school's well-structured programme for personal, social and health education, where a developing sense of citizenship is encouraged through whole-class discussions and, for example, the involvement of community leaders in the school council elections. Pupils follow the excellent examples set by staff and also have the benefit of a school chaplain/pastoral co-ordinator. There is a very orderly, productive calm across the school that underpins all that the school does. Pupils are mature, and confidently take decisions regarding settling down to their work and show good levels of initiative, as demonstrated by their involvement in the school travel plan and the school council's plans for playground improvements.
15. Pupils have a very good tolerance and understanding of people different from themselves and value the importance of treating others with respect. There is a strong sense of spiritual development through a wide range of experiences the school provides. For example, through work in literacy, art and history, pupils reflect on their feelings and willingly share these with others. The school's excellent international links give pupils a very good awareness of how people's lives differ depending on their social and economic circumstances. Correspondence with their friends in other countries helps them value and appreciate what they should celebrate in their lives. They also gain an excellent understanding of different cultures, experienced through, for example, work in history, music and art. Pupils regularly support local and international charities, often initiating collections for causes they regard as worthy. For example, they undertake collections of sugar and socks to support a homeless shelter in the nearby town.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002-3 (94.1%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	5.9	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.

16. Attendance rates have improved and for this year are above average. However, attendance is still adversely affected by families taking holidays in term-time. Whilst the school's procedures for monitoring attendance are satisfactory, it does not contact parents on the first day to follow up unexplained absence. Most pupils generally arrive punctually for school, but on some special holy days, a significant number arrive after classes have started, and teachers do their best to ensure these pupils catch up on missed work.

Exclusions

17. There have been no exclusions in the last year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **very good**. Teaching, learning, and the curriculum are all **very good**. Assessment is **excellent**. The school takes **very good** care of its pupils and provides them with **excellent** guidance and support. Links with parents are **excellent** and links with local schools and the community are **very good**.

Teaching and learning

Overall, teaching and learning throughout the school are **very good**. Assessment procedures are **excellent** and inform planning very effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assessment procedures are rigorous and ensure teachers plan work to match the needs of every pupil very effectively.
- Overall achievement is excellent because work is interesting and fun.
- Because teachers have very high expectations throughout the school, pupils learn very effectively.
- Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well.
- Teachers make excellent use of support staff and the help from parents is highly appreciated.
- Opportunities for pupils to work independently are promoted well.

Commentary

18. Overall achievement throughout the school is excellent. Achievement in the Foundation Stage is very good. Children make very good gains in their learning because teaching is well structured and teachers present very inviting activities that engage children's interest and enthusiasm for learning and exploring. Because a small minority are initially hesitant in their speaking and general communication skills, and also a few are not always good at interacting with others, staff spend time and energy working hard to involve these children so that they participate fully in all that is available to them. Excellent use is made of all additional support staff and volunteers to ensure children of all abilities, especially those with special educational

needs, make very good progress. Strengths in teaching include the very high expectations that teachers place on pupils to behave well and try hard. Explanations and instructions are made very clear, work is challenging and lessons run at a very energetic pace. Both parents and pupils are extremely appreciative of the teaching and support staff, and pupils say they really 'love' their teachers, because they are kind and do interesting things with them, referring to all adults working in the classrooms.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 40 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5 (13%)	20 (50 %)	13 (32%)	2 (5%)	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.

19. Throughout the school, teachers present pupils with very well thought out tasks and activities and use a wide range of 'hands on' approaches so that pupils learn through their experiences. Their subject knowledge is very secure, and they have an excellent understanding of pupils' previous work from the very detailed records that are kept on each pupil's achievement. Teachers ask challenging, open-ended questions and set pupils problems to solve. Because teachers' expectations are consistently high, pupils learn how they need to operate to get the work done successfully. Resources are selected very carefully to ensure they will fulfil the tasks, and support materials are very carefully designed to match individual pupils' needs. Where available, support staff and volunteer helpers are deployed very effectively to support individual or groups of pupils in order to help them meet their targets. Teachers build in very good opportunities to use ICT to support learning, for example, for research in history, science or literacy and numeracy. Pupils have many very good opportunities to work independently and find out for themselves information they can share with others. As a consequence, pupils become very confident in organising their own work and taking greater responsibility for their learning.

20. Pupils confidently settle to written tasks or practical activities. Very occasionally, when tasks are not so clear or the presentation is slightly over-long, a small number lose interest because they have to sit too long. However, these few pupils are quickly drawn back into their work. They are so keen to learn and achieve success, that they are not reluctant to 'have a go' and confidently seek help and guidance when they are stuck. Because relationships are so good, pupils turn to each other for support if no adults are immediately available. Group work is managed extremely well and pupils willingly work with anyone they are partnered with. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are identified very early on and are helped very sensitively in order to participate fully. Their peers watch and learn from the way adults work with these pupils and, when necessary, follow their excellent examples to make sure everyone succeeds. These acts of kindness and mutual respect are modelled wholly on the way staff show high regard for each pupil.

21. At the end of lessons, teachers encourage pupils to share their work with others, being appropriately praised and applauded for their efforts. High emphasis is placed on pupils thinking about what they have been learning and evaluating their success and considering what they might do next to improve. For example, teachers ask pupils, 'What do you think you have found out today?' or 'How do you think you can improve your work?' Teachers question pupils' knowledge and understanding very skilfully, probing and

prompting as necessary to draw explanations from them regarding their views or observations. They continue such questioning when marking pupils' work. Comments are well constructed and carefully guide pupils into making the required improvements to achieve success. Assessment strategies are very thorough and teachers use the information they gather to identify how well each pupil has achieved and what steps they need to take to improve further. They regularly share this information with pupils, and in this way, high achievement is realised. Higher attaining pupils regularly work at targets that are particularly challenging and that often require independent research or additional work in their own time. The school values very highly the help parents give to their children's learning.

The curriculum

The overall quality of the curriculum is **very good**. There is **very good** provision for out-of-class activities that enrich pupils' learning. Accommodation and resources are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all abilities have excellent access to all that the school provides.
- The programme for their personal, social and health education is outstanding.
- The curriculum is very carefully organised so that pupils successfully build on what they already know.
- Literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are used very effectively to support learning across the curriculum.
- A very good range of visitors, visits and other learning opportunities enrich the curriculum.
- The very good accommodation and learning resources are used very effectively to support learning.

Commentary

22. The school provides a very good curriculum that meets all the statutory requirements. Furthermore, the time allocated to lessons is in excess of national recommendations, which allows for the extra time devoted to religious education in accordance with the school's church affiliation. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The key issue identified at that time, the need for better long term planning, has been addressed very effectively and teachers now have excellent guidance as to how to ensure pupils build on previous work successfully in all subjects and areas of learning. The curriculum is very well structured, and close attention is given to ensure the needs of pupils of all abilities are fully met. For example, there is excellent detailed guidance in the science planning to ensure a high level of challenge for the most able pupils, whilst lower attaining pupils are given sufficient support to ensure their high achievement.
23. There is an outstanding programme for the development of pupils' personal, social and health education that includes many international links with other schools. This provision has led to the school successfully gaining recognition for its excellent work promoting international links and raising pupils' awareness of other cultures and traditions. Pupils regularly send their partner schools information about what they do in lessons, working often via the Internet, and in return they receive very interesting information back from their counterparts. Such correspondence has helped pupils gain a rich understanding of what life is like in other parts of the world, and how they can contribute to improving provision for others.
24. A well-planned sex education programme is in place and pupils are made aware of the dangers of drugs. The school actively promotes healthy living and pupils from the Foundation Stage onwards are made very aware of how to look after their health through eating fruit, for example, and taking regular exercise. The school's hard work on these aspects resulted in its

achievement of a healthy schools award. Links to work in science and physical education are very good, and the school's current development of the physical education programme is being managed very effectively.

25. There are many very good enrichment opportunities. Visiting speakers include authors and storytellers, historians, puppet theatres, Peruvian musicians, the local mayor and councillors, as well as regular visits by the school nurse and members of the police and fire services. Regular visits are made to sites of historical and geographical interest, to places of worship, as well as to the theatre. All these enhance pupils' learning, by adding flavour, excitement and by stimulating learning through first hand experiences. Pupils also benefit from a very wide range of after-school activities and clubs, including games, music and dance, which support their personal and social development.
26. The accommodation is very good and well maintained. It is spacious and its facilities, such as the ICT suite, the large hall and bright cheery classrooms, contribute to very effective learning. Teaching resources are of very good quality. They are plentiful and on the whole readily available. Nevertheless, the school has plans to further improve pupils' use of computers in the classrooms, review accessibility of the Key Stage 2 library that is currently located in a corridor, re-model the wildlife area and pond in the school grounds and establish a covered play area for children in the Foundation Stage.

Care, guidance and support

The school has **very good** arrangements for ensuring pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. It provides pupils with **excellent** support and guidance, and involves them **very well** in the work of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils respect all the adults working in the school and trust them to help them and take care of them.
- The school has excellent induction procedures and provides excellent pastoral support to its pupils.
- Pupils have a very effective voice through the school council.

Commentary

27. The school's procedures to ensure the care, welfare, health and safety of its pupils have improved significantly since the time of the previous inspection. At that time, they were judged to be satisfactory. They are now very good overall, and excellent in the Foundation Stage, being particularly mindful of the needs of very young children leaving parents for the first time. The governors' health and safety committee, that includes a professional expert, very effectively supports health and safety procedures. Everyone in the school understands child protection procedures very well. Equipment is regularly checked and tested and the whole site is very well maintained and looked after. The school has effective procedures to safeguard pupils' use of the Internet.
28. All pupils have excellent, trusting relationships with their teachers, support staff and the headteacher. Teachers know their pupils well and this, together with the very good tracking and assessment procedures in use, enables them to provide very well informed support, advice and guidance. Teachers very effectively identify children who have special educational needs and, with appropriate support and guidance, enable them to

achieve as well as their classmates. Similarly, the school identifies those who are gifted and talented and makes very good provision for their needs.

29. The excellent induction procedures ensure that pupils new to the school settle quickly and take a full and active part in all that the school offers. Children in the reception class are partnered with a "special friend" in Year 6 who helps and supports them as necessary during the year. A 'teddy bears' picnic was held during the inspection where the 'special friends' got together for a picnic and then taught each other some playground games. This session was a delight to watch and convincingly demonstrated the high value the school places on pupils' personal development. Excellent support and guidance is available to all pupils from the school's pastoral co-ordinator and the lay chaplain.
30. The school council allows pupils to make a significant contribution to the life and development of the school, as well as improving their knowledge and understanding of citizenship and living in a democracy. For example, the selection process for school councillors follows those of the local council elections, with manifestos, secret ballots, and the local Mayor acting as returning officer. The school invites pupils to complete a simple but effective questionnaire each year so that staff can learn of any concerns and respond to them.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has an **excellent** partnership with parents and **very good** links with other schools and the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school encourages parents to be full partners in their children's education.
- The school provides parents with very good information about school matters.
- There are very good arrangements to support pupils' transfer to secondary school.
- A very small number of parents feel the quality of the annual written reports on their child could be better

Commentary

31. The school values very highly the excellent relationship that it has with parents. It provides them with a significant amount of written and other information to help them to support their children's education. These include curriculum presentations to tell parents about what their children will be learning in the weeks ahead, workshops to show them how to use the range of excellent literacy, numeracy and book bags, and good quality written reports twice each year. There are also three formal opportunities for parents to meet the teacher and times are arranged to accommodate parents' work commitments. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept fully involved and informed as to how their child is progressing and what further help parents can provide to support their learning at home. Teachers are available at the beginning and end of the day and the school encourages parents to talk to teachers or the headteacher at any time if they are concerned about anything.
32. The school consults parents each year to find out what they think about the school and what it provides. The results of this consultation are used to update the school improvement plan. Several members of staff are identified in the current year's plan as having responsibilities for increasing parental involvement. A number of parents help out

regularly in classes, including one parent who is in school for three days each week, and this provides significant extra help for the teachers. A very active parent-teacher association raises considerable additional money for the pupils' benefit.

33. Parents' views of the school, as expressed in questionnaires and at the parents' meeting, are exceedingly positive with no significant concerns. A very small number of parents feel that the written reports do not always state clearly how well the child is doing but merely what areas of work the class had covered. Inspectors found some evidence to support this view, but overall judged the reports to be of good quality.
34. The children's education is significantly enhanced by the very good links that the school has developed, both with local schools and with schools in other parts of the world, including Romania and Norway. These links have enabled pupils to develop a good understanding and appreciation of the very different way of life in other countries and cultures.
35. The transfer of pupils to the next stage of their education is very well planned to ensure a smooth transition. Pupils in Year 6 have several opportunities to take part in activities at the high school, together with a full day visit in the summer term. They also exchange letters with pupils in the first year of the high school, and sixth formers pair up with Year 6 pupils as their "special friends". They also start special units of work in literacy and numeracy in Year 6, which they continue in their new school.
36. Very good links with the local community enhance pupils' learning in lessons and enrich their experiences outside the classroom. These include skills coaching from a range of local sporting organisations, training from a local professional artist who is also a parent, and visits from local councillors and the Mayor. The quality of the school's links with parents, links with other schools and the community have all improved since the previous inspection.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall leadership and management of the school are **excellent**. The leadership and management by the headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher and other key staff are **excellent**. The governance of the school is **very good** and all statutory requirements are met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision and purpose with a very strong focus on raising standards.
- Excellent management structures and procedures underpin the every day work of the school and have contributed significantly to the impressively high standards.
- Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are excellent.
- The headteacher has created an effective team of staff and provides excellent opportunities for their professional development.
- The expertise and contribution of key governors are very good.
- Financial management is excellent.

Commentary

37. The visionary and innovative leadership of the headteacher is excellent. She provides clear and highly effective leadership, and conveys a strong desire to secure the very best for her pupils, her staff and the school. She is very ably assisted by an excellent acting deputy headteacher and senior management team. As a consequence, the headteacher has very successfully

established a united and very supportive staff team that shares her vision. Everyone is committed to making excellent provision for the academic and personal development of pupils. There is a clear focus on raising standards, shared by both staff and governors, underpinned by high expectations. The school fosters a real passion to learn and promotes a strong caring ethos in a school community where everyone is highly valued. Pupils are held in high regard and every effort is made to meet their individual needs. All pupils are very well supported in their learning and personal development.

38. The senior management team is particularly effective in identifying innovative approaches to school and curriculum development. For example, excellent documents produced by co-ordinators show teachers how work across subjects can be linked together to maximise teaching and learning time. All staff have a very good understanding of their roles and those with subject responsibilities monitor and evaluate provision and standards in their particular areas extremely well. Staff provide very good role models for each other and the pupils. There are very clear programmes for the rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's performance through the analysis and interpretation of a range of performance data. From these processes, plans and objectives are established and through close consultation with all parties, a very detailed school improvement plan is drawn up which effectively secures further improvement. Agreed timescales and responsibilities, together with identified targets for improvement, effectively involve all staff in the process of raising standards.
39. The management of the school is excellent. There are very well defined procedures in place to enable the school to run smoothly on a day-to-day basis, thanks to very effective administrative and financial support. Arrangements for professional development of all staff are excellent. Performance management is used well to guide and inform staff developments required within the school. Very effective self-evaluation procedures are instrumental in identifying which initiatives are the most effective and where resources need to be deployed to have the maximum impact. These procedures have been particularly successful in implementing strategies that have raised standards in English, mathematics and science to very high levels. As a result of the school's hard work, it received the Basic Skills Quality Mark and School Achievement Awards in 2003. The headteacher and her staff have developed links with a number of outside bodies and these connections have enabled many curriculum developments to take place especially in relation to sports activities and links with schools in other countries. The management of special educational needs provision throughout the school is very good. The deployment of support staff is particularly effective in meeting the needs of all pupils, but particularly those who need additional support and guidance, thus ensuring their high achievement.
40. The governance of the school is very good, with some excellent features. The most significant include the contributions made by individual governors with particular expertise who work tirelessly for the school. The governing body has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and ensures that statutory requirements are met in full. The governors support the headteacher and her staff very well and provide appropriate levels of challenge and accountability. Governors have addressed all the issues relating to governance raised in the previous inspection. Through a programme of regular and detailed reports on all aspects of the school's performance and continuous school self-evaluation, the governing body is kept very well informed about the school's activities and the steps being taken to facilitate continuous improvement. Governors question and evaluate progress against identifiable success criteria and are fully involved in all aspects of the school's strategic planning. Some

governors visit the school during the school day, and procedures for them to monitor what is happening in school are well developed and effectively implemented.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	480,269	Balance from previous year	32,981
Total expenditure	496,282	Balance carried forward to the next	16,968
Expenditure per pupil	2,215		

41. The management of the school's finances is excellent and the funds available are used well to secure additional resources and to initiate significant improvements to the buildings and the grounds. The headteacher has been very successful in attracting funding and support from the wider community, to promote continuing improvements to the accommodation, such as the building of the new classrooms and the planned developments to the playground areas. The current small carry forward figure is earmarked for agreed priorities identified in the school improvement plan. All recommendations of the most recent audit report have been addressed. The school has appropriate procedures in place to ensure that it successfully applies the principles of best value to all aspects of its work. In light of the relatively low spend per pupil and the high standards they attain, their excellent personal development and pupils' overall high achievement, the school gives excellent value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

42. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **excellent**. This is a considerable improvement on the previous inspection, when provision was judged to be satisfactory. Excellent leadership and management have largely brought this about.
43. Children enter the nursery at the age of three and attend either in the mornings or afternoons and move to the reception class to begin their full time education in the term after they are four. Attainment on entry to nursery is broadly average in all areas of learning. The quality of teaching in both classes is very good and the quality of assessment and the use that is made of this to plan for the next stage of learning and to match work to the individual needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are excellent. As a result, learning and progress are very good for all pupils and overall achievement is very good. Assessments at the end of Foundation Stage show that all children exceed all the learning goals expected of them and a significant minority are working comfortably at Year 1 level work.
44. The leadership and management are excellent. Teamwork between teaching and support staff is outstanding and children benefit from a very rich learning environment. Children are held in high regard by all those who work with them. The curriculum is very rich and teachers' planning is very good. Meticulous preparation, excellent use of time and very good use of resources are all reflected in very well organised lessons. Children of all abilities are suitably challenged, and those who experience learning difficulties are gently drawn into tasks so that they too achieve high success. The accommodation and learning resources are very good, and teachers regularly review provision in order to continue to meet the needs of every child successfully. All staff display very effective classroom management skills and insist upon high standards of behaviour from all children. The standards of care for pupils are excellent as are the induction arrangements for children entering the nursery. Some very good initiatives are in place, not only to inform parents of their children's progress, but also to further involve them in supporting learning at home. For example, the excellent 'literacy bag' initiative has been so well received by all parents that there are plans to extend this to other subjects and other classes.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for pupils' personal, social and emotional development is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are encouraged to develop their independence and teaching and learning are very good.
 - Children develop very positive relationships with each other and with adults.
 - Parents are encouraged to share in their children's learning and development.
45. The nursery is a very inviting environment when children first start school. From the outset, parents are encouraged to help their children in learning, both in school and at home. For example, regular meetings are organised to show parents how they can use the 'literacy bags' to engage children in activities that support their work in lessons. Because teaching is very good, children quickly gain the confidence to participate fully and enjoy all that they are asked to

do. Throughout the Foundation Stage, children are encouraged to be aware of the needs of others, and are shown how to respond, for example, when someone is upset or worried. Excellent modelling by the adults results in children's very good personal development. Routines are established very quickly, and expectations are very high that children interact with each other very sensitively, learning to share, take turns and organise themselves sensibly when left to explore and learn independently. They develop very good attitudes to learning and school life, and respond enthusiastically at all times. Children learn to adapt their social skills when meeting visiting speakers, such as policemen and firemen or when making educational trips, for example, to Thornley Wood. Children from the reception class take immense delight in the special friendships they form with pupils from Year 6 and this very successful arrangement benefits both age groups in their personal development. By the end of the Foundation Stage, all children exceed the learning goals expected and overall achievement is high.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision for communication, language and literacy is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities to develop language and literacy skills are excellent.
 - Parents are given excellent support to reinforce and extend their children's literacy skills at home.
 - Teaching and learning are very good.
46. Children achieve very well in this area of learning and make very good progress. Those who have limited literacy skills and are hesitant in their speaking skills when they first start school are sensitively guided and supported so that they make very good progress and participate fully in all activities. Teachers prepare a rich range of activities that reinforce new work successfully and opportunities for role-play and interactions with others are strongly promoted. A real keenness to explore language is fostered very successfully. Social conversation is developed through the encouragement of purposeful chatter with each other during independent play.
47. By the end of nursery, children have progressed from making marks to writing legible letter shapes, their names and simple three and four letter words. In the reception class, many children successfully write their own books. They write short sentences about themselves, using full stops and upper and lower case letters accurately. Development of phonic skills is very good and children identify first, last and often middle sounds of words, so that spelling skills are good. Regular access to high quality, appealing books provides further encouragement and helps to advance children's development of reading skills. Children also benefit from the school's excellent arrangements that enable parents to support, reinforce and extend their children's reading skills at home. At the end of the reception year, almost all children exceed the Early Learning Goals and a high number are successfully working at Year 1 levels and overall achievement is high.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for mathematical development is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High emphasis is given to teaching correct mathematical vocabulary.
 - Very good teaching results in children's' high achievement.
 - Resources are used very effectively to promote learning.
48. Children make very good progress in mathematical development. Counting skills are well advanced because, throughout the nursery, teachers take every opportunity, not only to

develop counting, but also to match numbers to objects. By the end of the reception year, most children add and subtract accurately, and explain the strategies they apply confidently. Children have a good knowledge of shape and measures. They name regular flat shapes, such as circles and triangles, as well as a number of three-dimensional objects, and around the classrooms there are many opportunities to measure and weigh things. Mathematical vocabulary is introduced very successfully, and teachers insist children use these words in their explanations. For example, children confidently use comparative words correctly, such as bigger, longer, heavier and tallest. Wherever appropriate, teachers extend children's numeracy skills through other activities. For example, when growing sunflowers, children measure and plot the plant's weekly growth, looking at and accounting for the patterns in their findings. Almost all children exceed the Early Learning Goals as a result of the very good teaching and children's keenness to learn, and overall achievement is very good.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision for knowledge and understanding of the world is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision of stimulating, exciting activities promotes very good learning.
- Parents and other visitors support teaching and learning very effectively.
- Resources are used very effectively and children learn from a very rich range of experiences.

49. Children find this aspect of their learning very exciting and, because of the stimulating choice of activities provided by teachers, achievement is high. For example, in the nursery class, they show tremendous enthusiasm and amazement when studying and handling sea creatures, such as mussels, crabs, codling and prawns and learn how these creatures are part of the food chain, as they bake seafood pizzas. In a similarly exciting lesson in the reception class, the food theme is further extended through a study of the 'Three Bears', when children learn how food, such as porridge, eggs and bread, changes when cooked. Visits by parents, babies and grandparents help children understand how people and things change with the passage of time.

50. Children use equipment well. Construction kits enable them to create imaginative buildings, such as the airport terminal. Children use computers excitedly to produce, for example, pictures of a play area they design and to develop mouse control when using literacy and numeracy programs. They explore their ability to manage remote control toys and programme these toys to follow directions successfully. Through play activities, teachers provide very good opportunities for children to consider the clothes they might need to wear in a hot climate when they go on holiday. Children's innate curiosity to explore and seek answers is promoted very effectively through skilful questioning and the use of very good resources to support teaching and learning. As a result, all children exceed the Early Learning Goals and are very well prepared for work in Year 1.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

The provision for physical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have access to very good resources.
- Teachers promote a very keen interest in physical activities.
- There is no covered area for children to play outside in all weathers.

51. The outside play facilities are very good and are extremely well used. Activities are very carefully planned to ensure all children participate fully, and nice touches, such as children teaching each other how to pedal, and showing others how to cross the 'roads', carefully indicate very good modelling by the adults as to how to behave in these situations. Because children have to take turns to share the equipment, they soon learn to play fairly, and willingly give up items to each other, because other more interesting activities are always available. The soft play surface is thoughtfully marked out with games and tracks that are effectively used to pedal, push, climb, jump and skip, and children develop good sense of control and balance. Consequently, their overall co-ordination develops successfully. Outside play is restricted in adverse weather because there is as yet no covered play area. Children are encouraged to use the many small tools provided and, as a result, they develop very good control when cutting shapes and using brushes and spreaders. Children display a keen enthusiasm in these well-planned activities and subsequently achievement is high. They all exceed the Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception class.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision for creative development is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of exciting, challenging activities promotes very good learning.
 - Children's work is valued through colourful displays that celebrate success and this helps raise their self-esteem.
52. Many exciting opportunities for creative development are provided and children learn to explore and experiment with a wide range of materials. The level of challenge is high but children respond well and blend their excitement and enthusiasm with care and control so that progress and achievement are very high. A strong feature of teaching is the way children's work is displayed. It is very effectively used to enhance the classrooms, to celebrate success and to raise their children's self esteem.
53. Children have free access to musical instruments with which they experiment and practise, often playing these independently, but behaving very sensibly so as not to disturb others around them. They enjoy singing their favourite rhymes and ditties, especially when they have actions to rehearse and often these tasks are well linked to their work in mathematics. They are happy to perform and sing for others and have a good knowledge of the names of instruments. This aspect of learning often provides very good opportunities for children's spiritual development. For example, when children see the effects of their tie dying or when identifying the extent of a long sound on a chime bar, they are delighted by their observations. They are given very good opportunities to review their work and consider what they could do to improve it. Overall achievement is very good and all pupils confidently exceed the Early Learning Goals at the end of the reception year.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in writing have improved significantly and are now very high.
- Because lessons are very well planned, learning is very good.

- Pupils are made aware of their targets and this helps raise their overall achievement.
- Marking gives pupils a clear picture of how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve.
- Subject leadership is excellent.

Commentary

54. Standards in English at the end of Year 2 are well above average and they are very high at the end of Year 6, as was the situation in the national tests and assessments in 2003. Standards have risen significantly since the last inspection, because of the school's focus on improvement in this subject and, in particular, its attention to writing. This is evident from national test results over the last few years and particularly the latest results the school has available which are very high. Higher attaining pupils are doing exceptionally well by the end of Year 6. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well supported and every effort is made by staff to raise their attainment through carefully planned work and excellent guidance and support. Pupils identified as gifted and talented are given additional challenging work that they often complete independently and to a very high standard.
55. Standards in speaking and listening are well above average at the end of Year 2 and very high at the end of Year 6. Teachers provide pupils with many excellent opportunities to share ideas with partners or in groups, as well as presenting to other audiences. As a result, they gain confidence and are keen to participate. There is a very high emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary, and pupils are encouraged to explore language so that they communicate in an articulate and mature manner.
56. Pupils attain very high standards in reading throughout the school, with the development of their knowledge and enjoyment of books going hand in hand with the development of their reading skills. Through excellent modelling by teachers, pupils learn to read confidently, using very good expression and interpreting what they read, so that they follow ideas through successfully. Older pupils develop very good skills in scanning books and text on the Internet quickly to find information they require for particular tasks. Pupils work through books from several published schemes, which provide them with a variety of genres and styles, and in this way they discern their likes and dislikes of different styles of writing. All pupils are encouraged to read with parents and carers at home and this helps them to make very good progress. For example, the exciting and tantalising 'book bags' in the infant classes are very popular and they successfully engage pupils' interest in reading and allied activities at home. Because of their overall interest in exploring and finding out new things, pupils of all ages dip into reference materials just as enthusiastically as they delight in listening to stories and poems.
57. Staff have been very successful in raising standards in writing. Attainment is well above average at the end of Year 2 and very high at the end of Year 6. Achievement is high because teachers explain what is required of pupils to produce high quality work and expectations are very high. Pupils have personal targets to work at and recognise when they have been successful in meeting these. Pupils with special educational needs are given very careful guidance and support and they make excellent gains in their learning. Pupils have the confidence to be inventive and creative in their use of language, especially interesting vocabulary to emphasise their thoughts and ideas. For example, they write very persuasive slogans based on fashion footwear and about waste and recycling issues. Links to other subjects are excellent, and, as a result, pupils are

confident in writing for a range of purposes and audiences. Well-focused curriculum workshops provide parents with the skills to guide, support and encourage their child's learning at home.

58. Teaching is very good overall, but there are excellent features, such as the development of a rich vocabulary and a real enthusiasm for reading and writing. Marking is very good, offering clear explanations, for example, of why work is good and what pupils might do to improve it further. Because individual targets are reviewed regularly, pupils are very clear about how well they have achieved and what steps they need to take to improve further. Very effective use is made of ICT to model high standards and, as a result, pupils understand what they need to do to produce similar work. Pupils concentrate well in lessons and work hard individually and when working in groups. They listen to each other's point of view and make critical suggestions on how particular pieces of writing can be further improved. In Years 1 and 2, pupils are provided with well structured writing frames to help them organise their work successfully, and a few still need this help as they move further up the school. Where it is not available, one or two initially struggle to set their ideas out logically.
59. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. The co-ordinator has worked very hard to ensure high standards, by making sure staff are fully supported in their planning and teaching. There is a systematic monitoring of teaching and learning in place and the sharing of good practice prevails across the school. The co-ordinator is aware that some elements of handwriting and the presentation of work from a few pupils are not consistent and is taking steps to address these minor shortcomings. While resources are very good, and the library area for Key Stage 1 is excellent, the accessibility and ease of use of the Key Stage 2 library, currently located in the main corridor, while satisfactory, is identified as a focus for future attention.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

60. Pupils use their language and literacy skills very well in other subjects. Teachers plan activities very effectively to promote, for example, report writing and interpreting data in history and science. Wherever possible, time for independent research, using reference books and the Internet, is built into the teaching, so pupils move between subjects effortlessly. For example, in Year 6, pupils' work on John Lennon involved historical research and their written accounts were presented using books as well as ICT.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Teachers have very secure subject knowledge and, as a result, learning is very good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are excellent.
- Excellent use is made of assessment information in order to ensure high achievement.
- Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Commentary

61. The national test results in 2003 show that attainment for pupils at the end of Year 2 was very high, being in the top 5 per cent at both the expected level 2 and the higher level 3. At the end of Year 6, pupils were also in the top 5 per cent at the expected level 4 and just below this at the higher level 5. The preliminary results for 2004, although not yet verified, suggest that the standards remain very high. Inspection findings confirm these very high standards. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress throughout school and overall achievement is very high.
62. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers plan their lessons very carefully so that the needs of individual pupils are met very successfully. In lessons, pupils quickly become involved in their learning and enjoy what they are asked to do. At the start of lessons, teachers ensure pupils are clear about what they are to learn and lessons are drawn to a close with pupils having very good opportunities to evaluate how well they have achieved. Teachers' expectations are very high and lessons are conducted at a lively pace, with clear presentations of skills and strategies, for example, to solve problems, or work at mental starters which pupils enjoy thoroughly. Higher attaining pupils have extension tasks that ensure they work to their full potential. The computerised whiteboards are used extensively and very effectively to support teaching and learning, and pupils regularly practise skills, such as data handling and graph work in their ICT lessons. Pupils sustain concentration, work hard and co-operate very well. In such a positive set-up, learning is made to be fun, exciting and relevant and this results in the high achievement seen throughout the school.
63. Leadership and management are excellent. There has been very good improvement in provision and standards since the last inspection. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and their skills have improved as a result of very good training and support and guidance offered following the monitoring of their classroom practice. The successful introduction of the numeracy strategy has also enhanced overall provision, and the curriculum is rich and varied, with very high focus on practical application of the mathematical skills pupils acquire. The co-ordinator reviews teachers' planning to ensure lessons successfully build on pupils' prior learning. Pupils' work is monitored regularly, and any issues that are identified are quickly addressed in order to improve the teaching and learning. Through careful marking and the very detailed assessment information they gather, teachers identify targets for individual pupils and share these with them, so that they take responsibility for their learning. The introduction of 'numeracy bags', to encourage greater involvement by parents in supporting their children's learning at home, has received favourable response, in that all parents of pupils in Year 2 participate in the scheme. There are plans to extend this provision further. The quality, quantity and range of teaching resources are very good and they are well used. In the enthusiasm generated by the use of the new electronic whiteboards, however, teachers occasionally overlook how computers in the classroom can be used to support learning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

64. Teachers regularly develop numeracy skills in many lessons. In physical education, they record times; in science, they produce graphs and in humanities, they regularly use timelines and co-ordinates to plot positions.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the subject are excellent.
- There has been excellent improvement in the subject since the last inspection.
- Teaching is very well planned and, as a result, overall achievement is very high.
- Assessment procedures are very good and inform planning very effectively.
- Occasionally, too much emphasis on structured recording limits pupils' independence.

Commentary

65. The school has made excellent improvement since the last inspection where standards were average at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. Standards are now well above average at the end of Year 2 and very high at the end of Year 6. Pupils do particularly well at the higher level 3 at the end of Year 2 and level 5 at the end of Year 6. Challenge for the higher attainers was an area that was identified as a relative weakness in the national tests and assessments in 2003. The improvements put into place since the last inspection, with regard to greater emphasis on investigative and enquiry skills, and more challenge for the higher attaining pupils, have been very successfully addressed. Pupils achieve very well in Years 1 and 2, and achievement in Years 3 to 6 is excellent because the school instils into all its pupils a real desire to learn. This is the case for pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. Very good help is provided for these pupils from teachers and additional support staff and, as these pupils gain in confidence, their progress improves dramatically through Years 3 to 6.
66. The leadership and management of the subject are excellent. The curriculum has been developed very carefully to take into account the diverse needs of all the pupils in the school and is very good. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and many links are made to aspects of the school's very well planned PHSE programme, for example, healthy living, sex education, and environmental issues. There is a very good mix of classroom based work alongside exploring the habitats around the school and going further afield to science fairs in the area. The work scheme, which focuses heavily on 'learning by doing,' provides staff with excellent guidance as to the skills to be developed and how these can be best tackled. Excellent attention is paid to challenging the higher attaining pupils, especially as they progress through the school. The transition work with secondary schools is being developed well, to ensure pupils in Year 6 are well prepared for the move into Key Stage 3. The very detailed assessment procedures are applied rigorously to track every pupil's achievement in order to ensure their very good progress. The test results are monitored very closely in order to identify areas that need further improvement and information is shared across the school very effectively.
67. Teaching is very good. Because teachers make learning fun, deliver lessons at a lively pace, and offer pupils all the support and guidance they need to succeed, learning is very good. Teachers plan work that builds on pupils' prior learning very effectively, and use materials and resources effectively to enhance teaching. Opportunities to use ICT to support teaching and learning are planned for very effectively, and pupils are encouraged to conduct research in their own time. For example, one pupil in Year 6 talked with great seriousness about the need to explore space in order to replenish the earth's resources, and his interest had been sparked off, following work on energy sources running low and the need to conserve supplies. Very detailed assessment information is used to set targets for all pupils, and teachers identify any specific help particular pupils might need with their practical or written tasks. The quality of marking is very good so that pupils are clear about how to improve their work further. Staff use skilful questioning to test and challenge pupils' understanding. Their expectations are high, not only in insisting pupils offer answers, but also giving their reasons.

68. Pupils of all abilities are encouraged to participate fully in written and practical activities and sensitive interventions ensure all contribute confidently when working in mixed ability groups. Because relationships throughout the school are excellent, pupils are very quick to settle to work. They organise themselves extremely sensibly, both during practical tasks and during class discussions. Planning ensures there is a good balance between independent activities and whole class discussions. The presentations at the start of the lessons are well designed to set pupils challenges, and the summing up of activities ensures pupils explain what they have learned and whether their predictions and hypotheses were accurate or not and why. There is a good emphasis on recording information and pupils' work is generally well presented, although, occasionally, some recording is untidy and incomplete, and a small number of pupils pay insufficient attention to accurate scientific diagrams. The co-ordinator has devised an excellent format for developing and recording investigations, which is used extensively throughout the school. However, this sometimes leads to older or higher attaining pupils not always exploring their own ideas to record their findings in a way they see fit for the purpose, and thus gain some independence in their written activities.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for information and communication technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very well organised and pupils are very eager to learn.
- Leadership and management and improvement since the last inspection are very good.
- Teachers make very good use of computers across the curriculum.
- Pupils' independent learning skills in classrooms are constrained occasionally by the lack of access to computers.

Commentary

69. The school has made very good progress in developing the subject since the last inspection. There is a large and well-equipped suite in which there are sufficient computers, supported by a good range of software for the effective teaching of full classes. Each classroom has a computerised whiteboard, that is used extensively to support teaching and learning, and pupils enjoy exploring their skills using this facility. However, there are only one or two computers available in the classrooms and these are not always used efficiently to support pupils' independent use of ICT, for example, to process their work. Furthermore, because they are not linked up to the computer suite, pupils are not able to retrieve work they carry out in the ICT suite in order to work on it independently.
70. Standards at the end of Year 2 are above expectations and overall achievement is good. At the end of Year 6, standards improve further so that they are well above expectations. In Year 2, pupils demonstrate skills in changing font, colour size and print. Typing skills, however, are generally still restricted to one hand. Pupils use various programs successfully to produce graphics and they confidently apply three-dimensional graphs to their mathematics. By the end of Year 6, pupils' communication skills are well developed and they very successfully present information suitable for various audiences. Pupils are adept at producing multimedia presentations, using an extensive range of tools and software very effectively to produce work of a high standard. They know how to complete spreadsheets and log data so that it can be retrieved in many formats and they have

started to use computerised equipment for controlled procedures. For example, they are currently developing a system of co-ordinated lights for a robot they have built.

71. Teaching throughout the school is very good. Teachers are very competent in their skills and ICT has a high profile in the school. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and teachers provide work for pupils at different levels of attainment, so that all succeed in their tasks. Work is well matched to each pupil's needs because teachers have a very good understanding of prior attainment gathered from the very good assessment procedures. As a result of all these good features in the teaching, learning is very good and overall achievement is very high. Pupils demonstrate their enjoyment of ICT lessons by working very hard and collaborating well with each other on joint projects.
72. The subject leader's enthusiasm and expertise stimulate staff to learn new skills and develop professionally. There is a clear plan for further improvement and new initiatives are regularly sought to improve standards. For example, the school is aware that slow typing is a barrier to efficient learning. The school has, therefore, been exploring, with some success, a new programme for improving touch-typing skills with pupils in Year 4. The very good leadership and management skills of the subject leaders have been instrumental in the very good improvements made since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. Teachers make good use of ICT across the curriculum. It is particularly well used to enhance learning in literacy, numeracy and science. For example, pupils throughout the school often produce good stories, using word processing techniques or through "Desktop." Graphs and pie charts are regularly used to record data in science, and pupils in Year 6 shared some good information about scales in a mathematics lesson. When planning topics, teachers are very good at delivering work in other subjects through ICT so that increasingly pupils use it to carry out independent research while consolidating their computer skills.

HUMANITIES

No lessons were observed in **geography**, and four were observed in **history**.

History

Provision for history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning of teaching is very good, resulting in pupils' very good achievement.
- A very high emphasis is given to developing pupils' understanding of historical enquiry and investigative skills.
- Pupils enjoy the subject and have excellent opportunities for independent research.
- Leadership and management are very good and the subject enjoys a high profile in the school.
- Assessments are very detailed and pupils know what they have to do to improve their work.
- Resources, visits and visitors are used very effectively to enrich learning.

Commentary

74. Achievement is very good throughout the school and overall attainment is well above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This is because the subject is taught very skilfully across the school and teachers make very effective use of a wide range of good quality resources to engage pupils' interest in the topics covered. There is a very high emphasis on developing pupils' historical enquiry skills through exploring artefacts and source materials, and forming their views and ideas based on what they have discovered. With excellent access to independent research, using computers or exploring the good range of reference materials the school acquires for each topic studied, pupils develop a real passion for history, modelled well on the same enthusiasm teachers demonstrate. Standards have improved throughout the school since the last inspection because very good attention has been paid to developing the subject.
75. Teaching and learning are very good. The best teaching is characterised by detailed planning and very clear organisation. Because teachers have very secure subject knowledge and present work in a lively, interactive way, learning is very good. Higher attaining pupils are encouraged to research ideas independently, and lower attaining pupils are supported very sensitively so that they too make very good gains in their learning. Teachers give pupils very good opportunities to talk about what they are learning and many frequently ask questions in order to deepen their understanding. For example, in a very good lesson in Year 4, pupils considered why Hitler persecuted the Jews, and why Anna Frank's family went into hiding during World War 2. Most pupils demonstrated a high level of maturity in their thinking, and, although disturbed by some of their thoughts, they saw many virtues in reflecting on the past in order to learn from it. In a very good lesson in Year 2, exploring how holidays by the seaside have evolved, pupils listened avidly and questioned their visiting senior citizens very articulately. For example, they asked how people had travelled to the seaside in those days and what they wore to bathe in.
76. Planning is very good, with regular visits built in to support teaching and learning. For example, when studying World War 2, very good use is made of visits to 'Eden Camp'. Because the locality has a very rich history, visits to Beamish Museum, Hadrian's Wall and other places are exploited fully so that history is brought alive. The school also brings in skilful dramatists who enact specific topics, such as invaders and settlers and the Tudors. There are frequent events, such a Greek or a Roman day, so that pupils gain a more visual image of what life was like in those times. Pupils in Year 6, looking at the life and times of John Lennon, were very struck by how quickly things change. A few said that even in their short lives, the mobile phone had evolved dramatically from being the size of a 'brick' to one that is so tiny you can barely punch in the numbers. Very good use is made of literacy skills to encourage pupils to express their thoughts in discussions and written work is consistently of a very good standard. The best work shows a high degree of maturity in pupils' enquiry skills and in their very clearly reasoned findings.
77. Leadership and management are very good, and the subject leader is keen to develop provision further. For example, the overuse of worksheets restricts pupils' thinking and expression of ideas. Assessments ensure topics are covered in great depth and pupils' achievements at the end of each topic are recorded and further targets set. Higher attaining pupils are given very clear guidance of what they can do to extend their learning, and marking is very constructive to ensure pupils understand how well they have achieved.

Geography

78. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about provision, standards or teaching and learning. From the documents presented, the curriculum is very well planned and there is very good continuity in the way pupils learn new skills and acquire knowledge. This is confirmed by the displays of good quality work in the classrooms and around the school. The educational opportunities are enriched well by visits, such as to the local area, Hadrian's Wall, the city centre and other places where pupils can compare and contrast features of different environments and landscapes. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' knowledge and understanding of other cultures, for example, through the very exciting links the school has formed with countries, including Norway, Romania, and Poland. These excellent international links encourage pupils to look at how people live in other countries and how lifestyles vary depending on climate, terrain and social conditions. Regular exchange visits and dialogue via e-mail and other correspondence allow pupils to foster very good relationships with pupils in these countries and form friendships some pursue in their own time. For example, pupils regularly produce booklets about their home areas and their school life and exchange this information with their counterparts in these countries.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

No lessons were observed in **art and design**, and only one in each in **design and technology** and in **music** so it is not possible to make firm judgements about overall provision in these subjects. Four lessons were observed in **physical education**.

79. The work seen in **art and design** was well above expectations, an improvement since the last inspection. There is evidence of very good work, for example, in pupils' colour blending and observational skills, which they apply very carefully to colour or paint their work. Pupils use a wide range of materials, tools and techniques successfully, and wherever possible, links to other subjects are maximised. For example, pupils in Year 1 have used a very good range of materials to illustrate symmetry, including collage, paint, and pastels. The displays in Year 3 of silhouettes and sunsets show a very good eye for contrasting colours to highlight features. There is evidence of three-dimensional models and clay work. In all classes, pupils explore the use of ICT in their designs and splashes of bold colours and designs. For example, pupils' work on Muslim designs in Year 5 shows good use of a range of tools and techniques. Teachers introduce ICT programs to help pupils explore design, using computers, and also research the work of a range of artists, including Van Gogh, Monet and Lowery. Pupils learn to appreciate art from different cultures and talk with interest about the work they produce. Their work is celebrated and displayed attractively around the school. Features, such as the stained glass window produced by pupils in Year 2 in partnership with a visiting artist, and the cloth wall hangings created by a range of age groups, are particularly striking, adding an air of awe and spirituality to the overall effect in the entrance.
80. In **design and technology**, the standard of work seen was well above expectations. The lesson seen was very well planned, and very effectively enhanced by the use of the ICT and the inter-active whiteboard. Because teaching in this lesson was very good, pupils' computerised robot designs were of a high standard. Clear explanations and very high challenge were strong features of teaching, enabling pupils to achieve very well and to

make good progress. Throughout the school, there are very many good examples of pupils' work often linked to other subjects of the curriculum.

81. In the **music** lesson observed, pupils played recorders enthusiastically, learning to read music and keep in time with each other. The very skilful teaching was emphasised by the very high expectations of the teacher. There was a good choice of music and a successful interaction between teacher and pupils. Pupils were quick to pick up new tunes and notes, and were keen to perform either individually or collectively. The school offers pupils many very good opportunities to play musical instruments, including guitars and violins, and there are regular opportunities for them to perform in school events and outside in the community. Teachers often link music to other areas of the curriculum, for example, music from the Second World War and from Victorian times. Pupils have been involved in workshops, including a Peruvian day, and through such occasions they develop a very good awareness of different cultures and styles of music. The range of activities offered is very good and the subject greatly enriches pupils' social, cultural and spiritual development. Leadership and management are very good

Physical Education

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent use is made of specialist instructors from local sports organisations
- Lessons are very well planned and offer a very good challenge for pupils of all ages and abilities.
- Pupils make very good progress throughout the school.
- The school is involved in a wide range of sporting activities within and beyond the school day.
- The playground has not yet been marked out for games and the sloping grassed areas hamper activities, such as football.

Commentary

82. Overall achievement is very good. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2, and very well in Years 3 to 6. Standards at the end of Year 2 are above national expectations and well above at the end of Year 6. There has been very good improvement in the subject since the last inspection, and this has been largely as a result of improved teaching and leadership and management.
83. The overall quality of teaching is very good and, as a consequence, learning is very good. Individual lessons are well planned to take account of pupils' prior learning. There is a good balance between warm up activities, direct instruction and the development of skills. Expectations are made very clear to pupils and, as a result, they work hard to produce very good levels of performance across a range of sporting opportunities. For example, pupils in Year 1 show a good grasp of the basics of controlling a tennis ball with a racquet and use the correct vocabulary of volley and forehand when describing their shots. In Year 6, all pupils work through a series of athletic-based activities and their overall skills are above expectations. They use their feet well to control a football round obstacles. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their skills and consider how they might improve further. Lessons are very carefully planned and structured so that pupils are challenged but at the same time enjoy what they do. Tasks develop at a very good pace

and pupils of all abilities are actively engaged in all lessons. Expectations are high and teachers set challenging tasks, and, because learning is conducted in a very positive environment, where excellent relationships prevail, pupils work very hard and are keen to do well. This was particularly noticeable in a Year 6 lesson in which pupils undertook a range of sprinting and timed challenges.

84. During lessons, pupils work collaboratively and co-operate well on paired and group tasks. Not only are pupils involved in evaluating their own performances, but they also evaluate each other's successes in order to learn from them and improve their own skills. The school provides a very good range of sporting opportunities within and beyond the school day. These activities are hugely popular and highly appreciated by those that participate. The school's very popular group of Irish Dancers has given demonstrations and competed in local festivals. Older pupils visit an outdoors centre where they take part in a range of adventurous activities. Physical education makes a strong contribution to the pupils' understanding of fairness, making allowances for the abilities of others, and citizenship.
85. The school has established excellent links with a range of providers of sports coaching, and links with nationally recognised sporting organisations have enabled pupils to enhance their skills in rugby, and football. Pupils have gained significantly through coaching opportunities provided by the local tennis, judo and cricket clubs. An Athletics Award scheme is used successfully to set challenges for pupils and this increases their self-esteem as they succeed at one level and move on to the next.
86. The subject is very well led and managed. A new scheme of work has been introduced and the subject leader provides very good support and guidance to colleagues, and uses the time made available for the monitoring of teaching and learning very effectively. This is an improvement from the last inspection when monitoring the curriculum was identified as a weakness. It is now a significant strength.
87. The hard surface playground areas lack lines and the grassed area is limited in use, due to the steep slope. However, an alternative venue for some out-of-school activities has been located and the school council has identified the playground areas as having the potential for further development; drawing up the necessary plans in the process. No swimming lessons were seen during the inspection, but discussions with pupils and staff confirm that swimming sessions are successfully developed and pupils compete in local galas.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

No lessons were observed, so judgements regarding overall provision cannot be given.

88. The excellent ethos the school promotes and the very good care it takes of every pupil support pupils' personal development well. There is a very well-planned programme of activities that includes work on healthy eating, general health awareness, sex, drugs, bullying and personal safety. Teachers make excellent use of discussions and reflection, for example, during class assemblies, to help pupils learn to explore and share their feelings and to discuss a wide range of different topics. There are regular opportunities to talk to each other and to a range of visitors from the community. Such experiences give pupils a very good awareness of themselves in relation to others. For example, pupils in Year 2 were awe-struck by some of the stories the senior citizens shared with them

regarding their childhood, and listened avidly to what they were told. Although discrete lessons do take place, the programme is very skilfully woven into other subjects. For example, in geography, pupils consider traditions and cultures in other countries, gaining a very good understanding of the wider world.

89. Throughout the school, pupils gain confidence in speaking in front of others. They enjoy being listened to and listening to each other's ideas. As pupils get older, they are given a range of responsibilities in order to help them prepare for their role in the wider world. For example, Year 6 pupils are partnered with their 'special friends' in the reception class, and both year groups gain mutual benefit from the time they spend together, playing, reading, and having lunch. Pupils from every year group, other than nursery, are elected to the school council and have a responsibility to the rest of their classmates. A chairperson, secretary and treasurer are appointed from amongst the Year 6 councillors and the council has a modest budget at its disposal to fund its initiatives. The council has been very involved in designing improved outdoor facilities and has had meetings with suppliers as part of this initiative. Pupils take their role on the council seriously and the road safety committee has conducted surveys and meetings regarding the improvement of access around the school entrance. Because the council is so well organised and influential, it has been invited to make a presentation to another school as to how it carries out its function. The school shows high regard for all its pupils, and this results in their excellent personal development. They act in a very sensible, mature manner from an early age, because this is what is expected of them. Information about pupils' contribution to school life is carefully recorded and shared with them regularly, in order to motivate them further.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	1
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	1
Overall standards achieved	1
Pupils' achievement	1
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	1
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2

Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	1
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	1
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
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	1
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	1
The effectiveness of management	1

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