

# INSPECTION REPORT

## WYLAM FIRST SCHOOL

Wylam

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122237

Acting Headteacher: Mrs H Holliday

Lead inspector: Mr A J Dobell

Dates of inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> July 2004

Inspection number: 258525

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	138
School address:	Bell Road Wylam Northumberland
Postcode:	NE41 8EH
Telephone number:	(01661) 852 771
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E-mail:	admin@wylam.northumberland.sch.uk
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Bird
Date of previous inspection:	11 <sup>th</sup> May 1998

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

This average-sized first school draws its pupils largely from the local area. There is a range of different types of houses in the area but the socio-economic background of the community is above average overall, as are the attainment and learning skills of children when they enter the Nursery. The large majority of pupils are from white, Western European backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language.

The school has 138 pupils on roll with 53 children attending the Nursery on a part-time basis. There are 23 children in the Reception Year, making a full-time equivalent of 49 in the Foundation Stage. There are ten pupils on the school's register of special educational needs and, at 7.2 per cent, this is below average. Five of these pupils have statements of special educational needs and, at 3.6 per cent, this proportion is above average. The nature of special educational needs includes speech and communication difficulties and autism. The number of pupils leaving and joining the school at other than the normal time (12 per cent) is above average, but there is no evidence that this has an adverse effect on standards. In recent years, the school has gained a School Achievement Award and a Healthy Schools Award.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
10373	Mr A J Dobell	Lead inspector	English Mathematics Music Physical education
19374	Mrs W Sheehan	Lay inspector	
21073	Mr R Fry	Team inspector	Special educational needs Science Information and communication technology Design and technology
4350	Mr C Whittington	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage English as an additional language Art and design Geography History Religious education

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a good school** giving good value for money. Children enter the Nursery with standards that are above average overall. They achieve well in the Foundation Stage and continue to make good progress in Years 1 to 4. The quality of teaching is good overall. The school has been through a very turbulent period during recent months, but the acting headteacher is providing very good leadership and is giving the school a stable foundation on which to build for the future.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are well above average, particularly in English and mathematics, at the end of Years 2 and 4 because pupils have very good attitudes to learning.
- The acting headteacher is providing very good leadership so that the school is developing a confident and forward-looking ethos.
- The current arrangements for subject management are temporary and insecure.
- The quality of teaching is good and pupils have a good understanding of how they can improve their work.
- A significant minority of parents have some serious concerns about the school, but they acknowledge that these are being addressed.
- Good provision for pupils' personal, health and social education and citizenship is helping the school to develop into a caring and supportive community for all pupils, including those who have special educational needs.
- The presentation of pupils' work is inconsistent and could be improved.
- Governors are effective and are providing good support and stability.

The school has improved satisfactorily since its previous inspection. Of the two issues for action, the second one concerning pupils' progress has been addressed successfully. However, the role of the subject leaders has not been developed effectively to enable the headteacher to manage the school's development more effectively.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A\* – in the top five per cent; A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average. Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

**Achievement is good throughout the school.** Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and are likely to exceed the standards expected nationally in each area of learning by the end of the Reception Year. Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 1 to 4. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 have consistently been well above average since the previous inspection, and this very good level is likely to be maintained in 2004. Standards in English and mathematics are likely to be well above average in the optional tests

at the end of Year 4 and evidence from the inspection is that standards in English and mathematics are well above average at the end of Years 2 and 4. Standards in science are above average at the end of Years 2 and 4. Pupils' competence in information and communication technology is average at the end of Years 2 and 4, as are standards in religious education. Pupils with special educational needs, those who have particular gifts or talents and the few who speak English as an additional language all achieve well in relation to their previous attainment.

**Pupils' personal qualities are very good.** They have very good attitudes to learning and the large majority behave very well both in and out of class. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.** Attendance is well above average.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good** throughout the school. During this year, there have been a number of staff changes and long-term absences. In spite of this, teachers continue to provide stimulating and imaginative learning activities in many lessons and most pupils put a good level of effort into learning. Support staff contribute well to learning. Assessment is used well to promote progress and pupils have a good understanding of how they can make further progress.

The school's curriculum is of good quality and there are good opportunities for enrichment in activities outside class and for pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well, as are the few who speak English as an additional language. The school provides good levels of care so that pupils feel secure and achieve well. Links with parents are unsatisfactory because a significant number have a range of concerns about the school. However, they acknowledge that the acting headteacher is improving links, and inspectors agree with this.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good.** The acting headteacher is providing very good leadership. She has a very clear vision for how the school can move forward and has created an impressive unity of purpose among all adults in the school. She has a very clear commitment to equality of opportunity for all and is providing a secure basis for the school to move forward. Financial management is efficient and the principles of best value are applied effectively. Governors ensure that the school meets its legal requirements and have a good appreciation of the school's strengths and potential for development. They have provided a needed stability during the school's recent difficulties. Of necessity, the management of subjects is at a temporary and short-term stage and so is insecure.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

The parents' meeting and the responses in the questionnaires made it clear that a substantial minority of parents have a range of serious concerns about the school. Essentially, these stem from what parents see as a history of poor communication and consultation. However, parents feel that the acting headteacher is approachable and she agrees that a key task is to improve links with parents. Inspectors believe that she has clear views as to how this might be achieved. In discussion, pupils were open, sensible and polite and said that they enjoyed their work in the school.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Create a structure for the leadership and management of subjects which will enable the school to improve its provision systematically.
- Establish effective links with parents so that they feel that they are valued partners in their children's education.
- Improve the presentation of pupils' work.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement is good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 4, regardless of gender and level of prior attainment. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, as do the few who speak English as an additional language. Standards are well above average in English and mathematics, above average in science, and average in information and communication technology by the end of Years 2 and 4.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in Years 1 to 4 and attain standards which are well above average in English and mathematics.
- Children in the Foundation Stage generally exceed the standards expected nationally in all six areas of learning by the end of the Reception Year.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
- There is scope for the presentation of pupils' work to be improved.
- The acting headteacher and her colleagues, parents and governors are fully committed to continuing improvement.

#### Commentary

1. In the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2003, results were in the top five per cent of all schools nationally in reading and mathematics, and well above average in writing. These highly impressive results are a good improvement on those being attained when the school was inspected previously. Teacher assessments in science placed the school in the top five per cent of all schools. These results represent good achievement. Evidence from the inspection is that standards in information and communication technology and religious education are average at the end of Year 2, while standards in art and design, design and technology, geography and history are above average. In music and physical education, there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
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reading	18.4 (17.8)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	16.6 (15.2)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	19.1 (18.7)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 19 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. Pupils in Year 2 in 2004 are likely to achieve results which are well above average overall in the national tests.
3. Inspectors analysed in detail the results attained by pupils in Year 4 in 2004 in the optional tests in English and mathematics, and compared them with the results that these pupils attained in the national tests in 2002 at the end of Year 2. This analysis shows clearly that these pupils made good progress and achieved well in Years 3 and 4. These pupils are likely to achieve results which are well above average overall in the optional national tests in 2004. This is a good improvement on the standards being achieved when the school was inspected previously. Evidence from the inspection is that standards at the end of Year 4 are well above average in English and mathematics, above average in science, design and technology and history, and average in information and communication technology, religious education and art and design. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement in geography, music and physical education.
4. Children enter the Nursery with levels of knowledge and learning skills which cover a wide range but are above average overall. Good teaching and careful management of learning mean that they achieve well and make good progress in all areas of learning. They join enthusiastically in the wide range of activities planned for them. They are virtually all likely to exceed the standards expected nationally in the early learning goals designed for this age group in all areas of learning by the end of the Reception Year. They have been well prepared to begin their work on the National Curriculum when they enter Year 1.
5. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards their individual targets in English and mathematics because teachers and support assistants provide effective help. Pupils achieve well. Pupils with statements of special educational need are supported effectively and also achieve well. Most pupils on the register of special educational needs reach the standards expected nationally in tests in Year 2, and in teachers' assessments in Year 4.
6. The acting headteacher, supported by all adults in the school, is fully committed to continuing improvement. However, they acknowledge that there is a need to improve the presentation of pupils' work. Discussions with parents and governors indicate that they, too, are ambitious for the school and for raising standards further. With stability of staffing restored, the school is in a good position to build on its current very high standards and to offer its pupils a rounded education of very high quality.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

The school makes good provision for pupils' personal development. Attitudes to learning and behaviour are very good overall. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is well above average and punctuality is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school is highly effective in developing pupils' confidence and their desire to learn.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good overall.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Attendance is well above average and this helps pupils to achieve well.

### **Commentary**

7. The school has a positive ethos and climate for learning in which pupils mature and develop well. In lessons, pupils have a good level of interest in their work and are keen to share their unbridled enthusiasm with other pupils and adults. From an early age, they ask probing questions and are eager to utilise their growing vocabulary and knowledge. Children in the Foundation Stage are likely to exceed the standards expected nationally in the early learning goals for personal, social and emotional development by the end of the Reception Year. The school's good promotion of personal development means that pupils become self-confident and develop a positive self-image. Pupils were keen to talk to inspectors about their work and life in school and described their school as a 'friendly place with lots of opportunities to do different things'.
8. As a result, most pupils have very good attitudes to learning. These very good attitudes are reflected in the school's record of not having excluded any pupils for any reason since the previous inspection. Pupils settle quickly in class and are all very keen to respond to questions and to participate in discussions. They support each other very well in paired and group work. From the Foundation Stage onward, children are keen to help in class and to support each other. For example, when children in the Reception class were exploring colour in the outside environment, they were all keen to offer to carry items and to help the adults working with them. Pupils who have special educational needs are given good support so that they feel confident and have very good attitudes in lessons. The school's clear commitment to including all pupils in all its activities underpins these very good attitudes. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good for most pupils. At lunchtimes, pupils are polite to lunchtime assistants and play together harmoniously. They live in a secure and supportive environment, free from bullying and other forms of harassment, and this also has a positive effect on their personal development. Most parents agree that their children are treated equally and fairly.
9. There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual development is promoted well in some lessons. For example, a Year 1 literacy lesson where pupils had to compose poetic sentences starting with 'In my box I will put', produced some thoughtful and imaginative responses including; 'In my box I will put a beautiful jade necklace from Shanghai that sparkles in the sun'. Pupils have a very secure understanding of the difference between right and wrong and a very clear appreciation of the possible impact that their behaviour might have on others. Social skills are developed very effectively so that relationships between different age groups are good. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good, despite many teachers being relatively new to the school. Pupils have a good appreciation of their own and others' cultural traditions and the school is effective in teaching pupils about the cultural diversity of British society. Pupils' cultural awareness is particularly well developed through art and religious education.
10. Very good attendance has a positive effect on pupils' achievement. Attendance has continued to improve since the previous inspection, and procedures are in place to contact parents on the first day of absences. The majority of pupils arrive on time, lessons start promptly and the school gets optimum value from learning time. This very good attendance illustrates pupils' very good attitudes to learning.

### **Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence	
School data	4.4
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

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

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The school provides an education of good quality. Good teaching throughout the school promotes good achievement and pupils make good progress. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs, those who have particular gifts and talents and the very few pupils who speak English as an additional language. As a result, all these groups achieve well. Pupils are well cared for and there are good systems for tracking and assessing their progress. There are good links with the community and other schools and the acting headteacher is alert to the need to improve links with all parents.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are good overall and the school has good systems for assessing pupils' progress.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching in the Foundation Stage results in good learning and achievement.
- The school includes all pupils very successfully in learning and staff work very hard to encourage and engage pupils.
- In the best lessons, very interesting learning activities provide pupils with a very good level of challenge.
- There is scope for the presentation of pupils' work to be improved.
- The school has succeeded in maintaining a good level of teaching and learning in a year of unusual disruption.
- Assessment is used well to support learning and progress.

### **Commentary**

#### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 28 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	4	16	8	0	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.*

11. The quality of teaching is good overall and, as a result, learning is secure and pupils make good progress and achieve well throughout the school. There was no unsatisfactory teaching during the inspection. In all lessons, pupils' learning was at least satisfactory and was good or very good in about seven lessons out of ten. The good standards found when the school was inspected previously have been maintained.
12. The quality of teaching is good overall in the Foundation Stage and children get a good start to their education. Children listen well and so are clear as to what they are expected

to do. They are articulate and able to describe what they see. For example, when examining different plants outside, they were able to compare their different characteristics using vocabulary effectively. One child was able to say 'that green's got bits of black in it' while another described it as 'frog green'. They were able to compare broccoli and parsley. Sensitive prompting from teachers and support assistants resulted in effective learning, reinforced when children spontaneously discussed their findings with each other and helped each other. Effective teaching means that children are likely to exceed the standards expected nationally by the end of the Reception Year in the six areas of learning. They have been prepared well to begin their work on the National Curriculum in Year 1.

13. Throughout the school, pupils' learning is enhanced because teachers are very successful in promoting equality and ensuring that all pupils are fully included. Questions are directed carefully so that pupils at different stages of learning are able to contribute and feel valued. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and so achieve well. Graded work is planned for pupils at different stages of learning so that they can make progress from their existing levels of attainment. For example, in a very good science lesson in Year 3, all pupils were fully engrossed in learning and worked with sustained interest and concentration because the work presented them with a good level of challenge. The investigative nature of the task meant that they were all involved and the teacher's sensitive questioning enabled all to contribute. Similarly, in a very good history lesson in Year 1, pupils were identifying different objects from the past, studying their characteristics and making inferences about aspects of life in the past. Very good use of questions initiated highly effective discussion. Excellent relationships encouraged all to take part and resulted in very effective learning.
14. Very good lessons are characterised by very interesting learning activities which fully engage pupils' attention. In a very good English lesson in Year 4, stimulating, challenging and enthusiastic teaching provided pupils with very good opportunities for discussion and for formulating reasons to defend a viewpoint. Role-play opportunities enabled a good number of pupils to put their thinking into practice. Pupils' very good speaking skills enabled them to participate very effectively and to build up their knowledge, skills and understanding successfully over a sequence of lessons. This was a very good level of challenge. Similarly, in a good English lesson in Year 2, challenging teaching and a charismatic approach to the different elements of the lesson ensured that pupils worked with interest, and good questioning enabled all to contribute. As a result, pupils achieved well because all groups were well provided for. In satisfactory lessons, teaching is accurate and competent, but more routine and mundane, so that pupils are not challenged to be imaginative and creative in their responses. In these lessons, learning and achievement are satisfactory.
15. The school has had a very difficult year with staff changes and long-term absences. Indeed, during the inspection, one teacher was in her first week in the school and had not met the class before the first day of the inspection. At the time of the inspection, no teachers in Years 1 to 4 were undertaking their full-time, permanent role. In these circumstances, the school has been impressively successful in maintaining a good quality of teaching and learning and enabling pupils to make good progress and achieve well. During the current term, the acting headteacher has been pro-active in ensuring that pupils throughout the school have received an education of good quality. However, these staff changes have not helped the school to maintain a high standard for the presentation of pupils' work. There is no consistent pattern for presenting work, and carelessness in

presentation results in errors in some lessons. For example, in an otherwise good mathematics lesson in Year 4, carelessness in writing down calculations so that tens and units were not directly underneath each other resulted in some errors, although the pupils were quite capable of doing the calculation correctly.

16. One aspect of this is that the acting headteacher very quickly reviewed the assessment and marking policies to ensure that practice was consistent across the school. Overall, assessment is used well to support learning and progress. The results of national tests are analysed and the information from the analysis is used to identify any areas of weakness so that they can be addressed. Group targets are set for pupils in literacy and numeracy, and those with special educational needs are given individual targets in line with their individual education plans. Progress towards these targets is then monitored so that they can be amended in the light of progress made. The acting headteacher has plans to improve feedback to pupils further so that they can manage their own learning better.
17. The acting headteacher has clear plans for the school to emerge from this turbulent period and to achieve greater stability. When this is achieved, the school will be in a good position to improve teaching and learning further.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is good overall. There is a good range of learning opportunities for pupils and the curriculum is enhanced by a range of good, enriching activities. The accommodation and resources for learning are good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school provides for equal opportunities very well.
- The curriculum has improved and is good in subjects such as English and mathematics.
- Some elements of information and communication technology are not well developed.
- There is a good curriculum for personal, social and health education and citizenship.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The outdoor area for the Foundation Stage is very good.
- There is a good range of visits and sports activities in place.
- The accommodation is good and resources for learning are good overall.

## **Commentary**

18. The quality and range of the curriculum are good and this is a good improvement overall since the previous inspection. There are now schemes of work in place for all subjects. These help teachers to plan lessons which build effectively on pupils' previous learning. The school meets all statutory requirements and satisfactorily implements the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and meets all requirements. The curriculum is kept under review and the school is conscious of the need to ensure that all pupils get as much as they can from lessons. There are a few areas in information and communication technology where pupils have not increased their knowledge since Year 2. For example, pupils have not recently sent messages electronically and their knowledge of decision-making programs is limited.

19. The national strategies for literacy and mathematics are implemented well and, as a result, pupils make good progress in both literacy and numeracy. Pupils' work in English has made a significant contribution to their speaking and listening skills and to pupils' understanding and enjoyment of stories. Their understanding of the different areas of mathematics is secure and most pupils work with a good level of accuracy.
20. The curriculum is interesting and stimulating in Years 1 to 4. In a good science lesson, for example, pupils studied the effects of friction. They experimented with materials to see which gripped the best, amongst other investigations. The focus of the lesson, on developing pupils' understanding of scientific enquiry, contributed significantly to their understanding of collecting evidence through observation and measurement. In the Foundation Stage, children are presented with interesting learning activities which motivate them to put a good deal of effort into their work. However, staff changes have meant that continuity and progression of learning across the Nursery and Reception class are not as secure as they could be.
21. Teachers' planning develops links between subjects effectively. This process successfully motivates pupils and allows several skills to be developed at the same time. Pupils' work shows that they are using information and communication technology adequately in other subjects for word processing, and to draw pictures, find information on the Internet, and to handle data. Information and communication technology is also used satisfactorily to help with writing tasks in English, and to reinforce pupils' mathematical knowledge.
22. The range of activities provided to enhance the curriculum and the quality of learning are good. The school makes good use of visits to places of interest. These visits, for example, to Beamish museum and Stephenson's museum, motivate pupils very well and they talk about them with great interest. The curriculum is further extended through a variety of sports activities led by members of staff and parents.
23. All pupils are included very effectively in what the school provides, in keeping with their ages. Work is very well matched to pupils' abilities in most lessons. The needs of different groups are recognised and met in different ways. Through these methods, all pupils feel valued and able to contribute to the school.
24. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early and appropriate action is taken as needed to help them to learn effectively. The school provides a curriculum for groups of pupils who need extra help with reading and writing skills. Pupils' individual education plans meet the academic needs of pupils and are kept under constant review. Pupils receive good help with their learning from support assistants who know pupils well and, as a result, they achieve well. The co-ordinator for pupils with special educational needs has worked effectively with staff and ensures that all procedures are in place to track and review pupils' progress. The needs of higher attaining pupils are also recognised and they are given work that extends their learning.
25. Personal, social and health education and citizenship is an integral part of the curriculum. The scheme of work gives teachers clear guidance for their lessons in each year group. There is a good programme of activities. Pupils learn to share, to understand how to behave towards each other, and to manage the situations that arise in everyday life.

26. Teachers prepare pupils adequately for the next stages in their education. As a result, pupils make steady progress with their work when they move from one year to the next. Arrangements for the transfer of pupils to the middle school are satisfactory.
27. The school's buildings are modern and have been very well maintained by the caretaker and his colleagues. The accommodation has a good positive effect on pupils' education. The internal space is used effectively to create a stimulating learning environment. The shared areas of the school and individual classrooms have interesting displays of a balance of pupils' work and other information. Outside, the grounds are very well developed and they are a very good resource for subjects such as science. The garden is stimulating and very well kept. There are quiet areas as well as interesting play spaces. The quality of the environment and the care for the school's grounds help the pupils to develop a sense of responsibility for their school. In most subject areas, the quality of learning resources is good.
28. The school has gone through a difficult period with a number of staff changes and long-term absences. However, the quality of the curriculum remains good and has not been adversely affected. With greater stability of staffing, the school has the potential to develop its curriculum further to enable pupils to reach still higher standards.

## Care, guidance and support

The school provides a good level of care for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. The level of support, advice and guidance for pupils is satisfactory, as is the involvement of pupils in the work of the school.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good provision for health and safety, with child protection systems fully in place.
- The school is fully committed to inclusion.
- There are good levels of support for pupils in most lessons, including for those with special educational needs and who speak English as an additional language.
- Most pupils identify an adult within the school who they would go to with any problems.
- The regular 'reward assemblies' boost pupils' confidence and value their efforts.
- The caretaker makes a very good contribution to the high standard of care, health and safety.

## Commentary

29. The school has all the necessary health and safety procedures in place and they are regularly reviewed. Children in the Foundation Stage are cared for well. Risk assessments are carried out as required throughout the school, including those for school trips. A team, including both staff and governors, carries out regular health and safety checks to ensure that the school is safe and secure. The school has good medical facilities and records of accidents and treatments are kept very efficiently. Child protection procedures are good and there is good liaison with other agencies.
30. Personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught well as a result of an effectively planned programme of work, and through assemblies, such as a regular reward assembly. They ensure that pupils have a good understanding of the need to care for each other and for the school environment. This contributes positively to the quality of care throughout the school. Relationships are generally good between staff and pupils. This helps to ensure that all achieve well.
31. The school has a clear commitment to meeting the individual needs of every pupil and uses outside agencies well to clarify needs, refine programmes and provide additional support for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those

speak English as an additional language. This has a positive effect on pupils' achievement. Induction arrangements are sound for children joining the Nursery and for leaving and joining the middle school.

32. Although there is no school council at present, notices are displayed around the school announcing plans to create one in the near future. All pupils will be involved in the process of selection of their representatives, as it is rightly felt that all pupils will benefit from increased opportunities for greater responsibility. Teachers are alert to the need to reinforce care wherever necessary. For example, the teacher in Year 1 has discussed perceived playtime problems openly with her class, listening to pupils' views and, where appropriate, following them through. This is a very positive model for developing pupils' caring attitudes.
33. A few parents expressed concern at an occasional lack of care within the school, but those spoken to during the inspection felt that this has improved recently.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school's partnership with parents has been difficult over recent times and is currently unsatisfactory. Partnerships with other schools and the community are good overall.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A significant minority of parents have concerns about various aspects of the school.
- The school has yet to develop structures to consult parents and pupils regularly and systematically.
- Parents are keen to be involved in school life.
- Links with the local community and local schools are good.

#### **Commentary**

34. Evidence from the parents' questionnaires and parents' meeting is that a significant minority of parents have had serious concerns about a range of issues within the school. An analysis of the returns of parents' questionnaires show that over 20 per cent of parents **disagreed** with the following:
  - That they were well informed about progress.
  - That they were comfortable approaching the school.
  - That the school was well led and managed.
  - That the school seeks parents' views and takes notice.
  - That staff explain how parents can help with homework.
  - That the school has a range of interesting activities.
35. However, many parents emphasised that, since the acting headteacher took up her post at Easter, the situation has become much more positive. The school development plan includes action plans to improve many of the above issues. In spite of all these concerns, the majority of parents felt that their children liked school. Parents of children in the Foundation Stage feel that, in the past, they have not been consulted with sufficiently and inspectors accept that this is so. The school has plans in place to address this.
36. Parents feel that they have not been sufficiently consulted about their views of the school. However, the acting headteacher has plans to introduce formal consultation procedures. Through her presence in the playground before and after school, through meetings with the parent-teachers' association, and through coffee mornings she is beginning to build positive



relationships with parents. In discussion, parents told inspectors that they now feel more comfortable approaching the school with concerns or suggestions. Parents' concerns about information about their children's progress are already being addressed. The recently published pupils' annual reports are of a good standard and state clearly what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve further. In addition, termly opportunities to meet with teachers are offered, which is in line with most schools. Newsletters are satisfactory, and include some information about the curriculum. However, they are not always clear about helping parents to understand the school's policies, for example, on homework.

37. Parents are very willing to be involved in helping the school. During the last two years, for example, they have helped to raise substantial funds for the addition of a Reception classroom and to equip the information and communication technology suite. These contributions have helped pupils to learn in a well-resourced and spacious environment. Many parents are keen to help in school, for example, to support reading, and teachers appreciate this help.
38. The school is developing good links with the community. For example, the local church's youth worker has recently started taking assemblies, and the local football team takes football coaching sessions. Visits in the community help pupils to understand their local environment. The school works very closely with its local middle school with visits for parents and pupils as well as curricular and pastoral links. There is currently limited use of the school's facilities by the community.
39. The previous inspection reported that the school had good links with parents. These appear to have worsened markedly so that many parents had wide-ranging concerns. Inspectors cannot make judgements about situations which existed before the inspection took place. However, inspectors support the parents' views that the acting headteacher is working very effectively to create positive links with parents. Greater stability in the school will put it in a good position to harness the parents' goodwill and so to raise standards further.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are good overall. The acting headteacher is providing very good leadership, but the leadership of most subjects is temporary because of staff changes and so is insecure. Governance is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The acting headteacher is providing very good leadership.
- Governors have provided needed stability in the school's recent difficulties.
- Management systems are effective.
- The leadership and management of subjects are mostly temporary and insecure.
- Special educational needs is led and managed well.

### **Commentary**

40. The school has experienced considerable disruption in recent months as a result of long-term absences, including that of the headteacher, and staff changes. Further, during the week before the inspection, the deputy headteacher was taken ill and was not in school for the inspection. As a result, all the teachers in Years 1 to 4 were in temporary or acting roles. The deputy headteacher had acted as headteacher for most of the spring term while continuing to teach Year 2 for 2.5 days per week. She had given up this unrealistic

burden at Easter and an acting headteacher had been appointed to the school on a part-time basis from Easter onwards.

41. The acting headteacher is providing very good leadership. She is a frequent and cheerful presence around the school so that, because she routinely spends time with them, all adults and pupils feel valued and included. She quickly addressed a number of issues to put the school on a stable footing. After a short period of consultation, she prepared a school development plan to run from April 2004 to September 2005. This is giving the school a good basis on which to move forward systematically. The acting headteacher also reviewed the assessment and marking policies and tightened up practice so that it became consistent across the school. She has plans to develop assessment further by involving pupils more. She began to develop the roles of the deputy headteacher and subject leaders. She has also involved parents more by consulting with them and planning to use their specialist skills. For example, the possibility of a parent with a background in librarianship to provide support in the library is being explored. As a result of the acting headteacher's astute and sensitive leadership, the school is now becoming more confident and forward looking and is planning, for example, to pursue the Basic Skills Quality Mark.
42. During this period of considerable turbulence, the governing body provided much-needed stability and was pro-active in making arrangements for the school to be led and managed effectively. Governors have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and potential for development. The governing body plays an appropriate role in the school's strategic development and ensures that the school meets its legal obligations. The chair of the governing body sees the recent turbulence as an opportunity to move the school forward. He believes that the school has the potential to seize this opportunity and inspectors support this view. Parents acknowledge that governors are committed to the school's future development and to the successful education of their children.
43. Management structures are secure and effective. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and its routines are straightforward and understood by all. The acting headteacher rightly sees her teachers and support assistants as her major resource. Her concern to consult with them and value their contributions has created a good unity of purpose in the school. All are concerned to give pupils an education of quality so that they achieve their potential and develop into confident and caring young citizens. With a view to achieving this, the school analyses its performance well and uses the information gained to plan for its future progress.
44. Because of the high number of recent staff changes, the leadership and management of many subjects are temporary and as such, insecure. At the time of the inspection, eight curriculum areas including English, mathematics and science, were being managed by teachers who were new to these roles, some having taken them over only a few days previously. In these circumstances, which are not of the school's making, the leadership and management of most subjects is inevitably insecure. The acting headteacher recognises that this situation needs to be stabilised as soon as possible. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory.
45. In spite of this transient situation, some secure systems are in place. For example, special educational needs is led and managed well and is well resourced. The proportion of pupils having statements of special educational needs is above average. Their needs have been identified early and good provision is made for them so that they

are achieving well and making good progress. The policy for special educational needs is up-to-date and has a good section to help staff to identify pupils with special educational needs. Once identified, the progress of these pupils is tracked carefully and targets for future progress are set. Support assistants manage the learning of these pupils effectively and help to raise their standards of work. Parents are involved well as partners in the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Support for the very few pupils who speak English as an additional language is managed very effectively. As a result, they make progress at the same rate as other pupils and achieve well.

46. Finances are managed effectively and the school has an above-average surplus to carry forward. This is partly because temporary staff have been less costly than those they are replacing. The school plans to use its surplus to stabilise its staffing and to improve its facilities further, for example, by buying more computer-driven whiteboards.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003*

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	387,690	Balance from previous year	47,525
Total expenditure	388,912	Balance carried forward to the next year	46,303
Expenditure per pupil	2,274		

47. The acting headteacher has clear ideas for the school's future. She believes that the school has the potential to develop further and inspectors and parents support this view. It is a measure of the school's considerable strengths that, in spite of the turbulence of the last few months, the quality of teaching and learning has remained good. Given this, pupils' good achievement, the very high standards reached, the good quality of the care that pupils receive and the low cost per pupil, the school gives good value for money.

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

The overall provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **good** and all children achieve well. This is because of the children's very good attitudes to learning, the generally good standard of teaching, particularly in the Nursery class, and because of the good relationships created between adults, who make each child feel valued. Children's standards on entry to the Nursery cover a wide range but are above average overall. The curriculum is well balanced and planned to provide a wide range of interesting and relevant activities, which are carefully matched to children's needs. The two classes generally work separately, so that the benefits of a more integrated approach to the learning of children in the Foundation Stage are missed. Children in the Reception class play in the main school playground, rather than the specially designed area for the Foundation Stage and so do not benefit from the excellent facilities. Assessment is continuous and thorough and is used effectively to plan the next learning tasks. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is sound and the good provision found when the school was inspected previously has been maintained. Children with special educational needs are identified early and very good levels of adult support enable them to achieve well.

The environment within the Foundation Stage lacks sparkle. Although the classrooms, particularly the Reception class, are attractive and there are suitable areas designated for various activities, for example, reading, construction and creative activities, these are not used systematically to provide continuity of learning. The outdoor area is excellent and provides an imaginative environment for a wide range of activities, which has a positive impact on learning. Parents make a positive contribution to learning by helping in both classes.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children are encouraged to work and play together.
- Children make good progress in developing their personal and social skills.
- Children have positive attitudes and behave very well.

### **Commentary**

48. Most children enter the Nursery with well-developed personal, social and emotional skills; some are already independent and able to organise and manage themselves, and most relate easily to others. The quality of teaching is good and good opportunities are provided by all adults in the Nursery and Reception class to ensure that the children continue to develop these skills, so that, by the time they reach Year 1, the vast majority of children work and play happily together. Most are able to co-operate and take turns, behaving in a socially acceptable way. Resources are used effectively to promote children's personal and social skills, and they continue to develop their independence and responsibility through the tasks provided. Children are given ample opportunities to choose their own activities and resources. Because of these strengths, indications are that the children make good progress and achieve well, and all are likely to achieve the early learning goals by the time they are ready to enter Year 1, with many exceeding these. Standards are above average in this area of learning.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve well because the quality of teaching is good overall.
- Books are taken home regularly.
- Children have very positive attitudes and often show great enthusiasm.
- Assessment is good, being continuous and thorough, and this is used effectively to plan the next tasks.

### **Commentary**

49. Speaking and listening skills on entry to the Nursery are generally above average for children of this age. Good progress is made as children continue to work and play with others, talking well about what they are doing. Children enjoy listening to stories and respond eagerly. A wide range of opportunities is provided for speaking and listening. By the time that children are ready to enter Year 1, good progress has been made and their speaking skills are generally above the national average, and are well above for some.

50. When they start school, many children already have a good knowledge of books. They improve this knowledge in the Foundation Stage and all recognise how books 'work', knowing that print carries meaning. Some want to tell the stories themselves, often with great enjoyment. They join in readily with songs. Books are taken home regularly in both classes and, in the Reception class, children take a book home for an adult to read to them as well as one to read themselves. Both classes have book areas where the children go to read. Letter recognition and sounds are taught and reinforced effectively. Throughout the Foundation Stage, children are given numerous tasks which develop writing appropriately, including, for example, messages to go in bottles from the children's 'desert islands'. A wide range of early writing is encouraged.
51. Elements of the national literacy framework are used well, and letter sounds and letter formation are taught effectively. Teachers and support assistants have high expectations, and, by the time children leave the Reception class, most exceed the expectations of the early learning goals for communication, language and literacy and standards overall remain above average, with those for many children being well above. This reflects good teaching and good achievement.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve well because of the generally good quality of teaching by all adults.
- Assessment is excellent and is used very effectively to plan the next stages of learning.

### **Commentary**

52. Most children have a good early understanding of numbers when they begin school. By the time they reach the age of five, most count well beyond ten, their number recognition is good and the majority attain the early learning goals for mathematical development. Well-planned activities in both classes ensure good quality learning. Children count upwards and back, gaining greater confidence and understanding of numbers. They continue to develop an understanding of shape, size and position – using words such as 'symmetry', 'smaller'/'larger' and 'more'/'less' with understanding. As they become more confident with number, many children show early signs of developing mathematical ideas, and of developing methods to solve practical problems.
53. Once more, good teaching by all adults and well-focused activities ensure that each child makes good progress and achieves well. Effective day-to-day assessment helps to plan suitable activities for the following sessions. By the time the children enter Year 1, their mathematical skills are above the national average.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve well because of the good quality of teaching which covers a wide range of carefully planned activities.

- Children's attitudes are very positive and most are developing independence.
- Parent helpers make a positive contribution to children's learning.
- The outdoor area is excellent and provides an environment which is used for a wide range of activities.

## Commentary

54. Most children enter the Nursery class with some knowledge of their local area and of the world at large. A number of activities foster learning in this area. Children select resources on their own, and most use them with care. The overall quality of teaching by all adults is good, and the range of activities provided for children is fully focused to ensure learning. Children are introduced to a wide range of experiences to widen their understanding. In the Nursery class, children showed great interest in their topic on caterpillars, and in the hatching out of butterflies. In the Reception class they have looked at similarities and differences through their topic on 'Old and New', linked to their visit to Beamish museum.
55. They explore the environment through visits within the local area. Children use computers and programmable toys effectively to develop a wide range of skills such as using the mouse and saving their work. The outdoor environment is excellent and includes a willow tunnel within a superb garden area where flowers, herbs and vegetables are grown. This is an area of great interest and is used effectively by both classes, making a positive impact on learning. By the time children enter Year 1, good progress has been made, and their knowledge and understanding of the world remains above the national average.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very good range of activities is provided to develop children's physical skills.
- Staff focus well on tasks which encourage and support learning.
- Very good relationships help to develop children's self-confidence.

## Commentary

56. Good teaching in this area of learning ensures that achievement is good. Children enter the Nursery with above-average skills in physical development. Throughout their time in the Nursery and Reception class, they improve their awareness of the needs of others and of the space around them. Children climb and balance with confidence. Good opportunities are provided for the development of small movement skills through the use of writing implements, brushes, scissors and tools. Children are interested in what they do, and many show good levels of concentration. For example, a good lesson was observed where children in the Nursery developed dance movements to music. Here every child was fully included and they showed good co-ordination for their age. Praise reinforces learning effectively and boosts children's confidence, and most children exceed the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve well because of the good quality of teaching by all adults.
- Children have very positive attitudes to learning.

## **Commentary**

57. Many children have begun to develop their creative skills and imagination well prior to starting school. Throughout their time in the Nursery and Reception class, they continue to make good progress in their learning. Here again, good opportunities are provided for children to take part in an extensive range of creative activities. Children sing with great enthusiasm. They develop confidence through numerous opportunities for role-play, some self-initiated. They paint, weave and make collages, build and 'ride on' trains. Most lessons have pace and enthusiasm, and children enjoy their learning. As a result, all children achieve well and leave the Reception class with above-average standards in this area. For example, a display in the Reception class of flower painting, 'from Monet', is of very high quality and demonstrates the high standards that are achieved and the good quality of teaching and learning.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results in the national tests are generally well above average at the end of Year 2 and in the optional tests at the end of Year 4.
- Teachers provide pupils with interesting and challenging learning experiences so that they achieve well.
- Standards of speaking and listening are well above average.
- Most pupils read fluently and with good expression.
- The quality of the content of pupils' writing is generally well above average, but handwriting and the presentation of pupils' work are variable.

## **Commentary**

58. Results in the national tests have generally been well above average at the end of Year 2 and these high levels were evident in lessons observed and in the analysis of completed work. Similar results are attained in the optional tests at the end of Year 4. This is a good improvement on the results being achieved when the school was last inspected. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Care is taken to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and the few who speak English as an additional language, cover a wide range of work and so build up their knowledge and understanding of different aspects of English systematically.

59. Teachers plan interesting and stimulating activities which motivate pupils to put a good deal of effort into their work. The quality of teaching is good overall, but there are examples of very good lessons. For example, in an imaginative lesson in Year 1, pupils



worked with clear interest and enthusiasm and were capable of impressively creative responses. These included, 'in my box I would put the first cry of a baby' and 'in my box I would put a planet which nobody knows'. These highly imaginative responses were possible because all pupils felt confident to offer ideas because of the excellent relationships in the classroom, and because of the teacher's very effective use of praise. Similarly in a very good lesson in Year 4, pupils were presented with challenging opportunities to prepare and justify an explanation for an improbable situation. In both these lessons, higher-attaining pupils were extended by increased challenge. At the same time, lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, were valued and sensitively supported so that they contributed and achieved well.

60. All teaching in English was at least satisfactory during the inspection, and the one satisfactory lesson was prevented from being good by being too ambitious so that pupils were not able to take in all that the teacher was asking them to do. Even so, their standards were above average and their attitudes to learning were very good.
61. Because pupils are presented with a wide range of opportunities to express themselves, standards in speaking and listening are well above average throughout the school. In Year 1, pupils speak confidently in complete sentences and have a very good feel for language. For example, they were able to explain why 'a' went in front of 'flashing' as opposed to 'an'. By the end of Year 2, pupils discuss their reading intelligently and are able to compare books and characters and explain why they like particular kinds of books, for example, history books. By the end of Year 4, pupils discuss issues fluently and are well able to marshal an argument to defend a point of view. They are able to project themselves into a role-play situation and take on different characters, creating a dialogue to explore different scenarios. In doing so, they are able to express themselves cogently using a good range of vocabulary. Throughout the school, pupils listen to each other very well and respect different viewpoints.
62. Pupils read fluently and mostly with good expression. Higher-attaining pupils read challenging books with understanding and without hesitation at the end of Years 2 and 4. They clearly understand and appreciate what they are reading. Average pupils have good phonic skills to read unfamiliar words. For example, an average pupil in Year 2 was able to work out the pronunciation of 'mumbled', 'disappointed' and 'daughter' after initial hesitation. Lower-attaining pupils have reasonable phonic skills to read unfamiliar words, but, in discussion, explained that they did not really enjoy reading and preferred to avoid it if possible. Class reading sessions are well managed. For example, in Year 3, the teacher worked with a group of three pupils, testing and extending their understanding by searching questions, while the rest of the class read quietly and with good concentration. Overall, reading standards are above average at the end of Years 2 and 4.
63. By the end of Year 2, higher-attaining pupils write extended pieces with accurate spelling and good use of grammar. There is some use of mature language, for example, 'finally, we reached my house'. There are examples of writing for different purposes, for example, letters, descriptions and some early preparations for poetry. Average and lower-attaining pupils have covered a similar range of work but spelling is less secure and writing is more prone to error. Handwriting has improved well over the year, but the presentation of work is variable. In particular, spelling and accuracy are less secure for average and lower-attaining pupils. There are frequent cases of drawing of illustrations and colouring of pictures, which does not improve the quality of pupils' writing. Work is

regularly and thoroughly marked with good suggestions for further improvement. However, there is insufficient emphasis on good standards of presentation.

64. By the end of Year 4, the writing of higher attaining pupils is well above-average. It covers a wide range, is impressively accurate grammatically, and well paragraphed. Vocabulary is expressive and varied and there are very good examples of imaginative writing, including poetry. Average pupils have covered a similar range of work and show a good level of flair. Lower-attaining pupils tend to produce shorter pieces of work which are considerably less mature and less secure with regard to spelling and grammatical accuracy. Handwriting, although improving, is immature and this adversely affects the quality of presentation. Again, work is marked thoroughly and constructively with clear suggestions for further improvement.
65. The subject leader was not in school during the inspection and the subject was being temporarily managed by the acting headteacher. In these circumstances, it is not possible to make a judgement about the quality of subject management.
66. However, the good standards identified in the report from the school's previous inspection have been improved upon and there has been good improvement since then. The school has the potential to build on these and to raise standards further.

## **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

67. Pupils have very good opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills and reading skills in other subjects. Writing skills are developed well in subjects such as geography, history and religious education. There are good examples of information and communication technology being used to word process some examples of writing, but these are not extensive. Overall, other subjects are used well to support learning in English.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are generally well above average at the end of Years 2 and 4.
- Teaching is secure and accurate so that pupils develop good levels of secure understanding.
- Pupils' progress is monitored carefully and they have a good awareness of how to improve further.
- Numeracy skills are developed well in other subjects.

### **Commentary**

68. Since the school was inspected previously, standards have generally been well above average at the end of Years 2 and 4. This represents good achievement throughout the school. The good standards found when the school was inspected previously have been improved further. In the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2003, the results achieved placed this school in the top five per cent of all schools which draw their pupils from similar backgrounds. This represented very good achievement. Evidence from the

inspection is that pupils are achieving well and that standards are well above average at the end of Years 2 and 4. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection.

69. Standards are maintained at a level which is well above average because teaching is good. Teachers have a clear appreciation of the purpose of the National Numeracy Strategy and use it well to improve pupils' progress. At its best, teaching is imaginative and challenging and engages pupils' interest so that they achieve well. Where teaching is satisfactory, there is less challenge and learning is more routine. However, overall, pupils have good levels of understanding. By the end of Year 2, pupils have above-average skills in tackling problems that are expressed in words. Higher-attaining pupils successfully deal with concepts that they are not expected to meet for at least another year, for example, the concept of negative numbers in temperature scales, and below-average pupils understand concepts such as fractions and the properties of two-dimensional shapes, which means that they are working at an above-average level.
70. By the end of Year 4, pupils have a secure understanding of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division and are able to use them in different circumstances. For pupils of all abilities, there is an impressive level of understanding of number, shape and space, and how to interpret and represent data in different forms of graphs and diagrams. However, accuracy in working can be adversely affected by occasional careless presentation, for example, by not writing out sums with the hundreds, tens and units in the correct columns. Lower-attaining pupils tend to complete less work and it tends to be less tidy. Even so, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well.
71. Systems for assessing pupils' progress are effective. Progress is tracked carefully and pupils are aware of targets to raise their standards further. Work is marked regularly and thoroughly and there is clear evidence that, where understanding is insecure, teachers have discussed the difficulty with individuals to resolve the problem. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and support assistants to enable them to reach the targets written into their individual education plans. As a result, they make good progress and achieve well.
72. The subject leader had taken up her role three weeks before the inspection started and this means that it is not possible to make a judgement about the leadership and management of the subject. Even in this short time, she has begun to audit resources and has created an action plan for the autumn term. She agrees that there is much that she needs to find out, but she can see opportunities for moving the subject forward.

## **Mathematics across the curriculum**

73. Numeracy is developed well in subjects such as science and geography where pupils get opportunities to collect and manage data and to represent it in graphical and pictorial form. In design and technology, pupils are able to practise accurate measuring. There is scope for information and communication technology to be used more widely to support learning in mathematics, although there are satisfactory examples of it being used in some classes.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' standards of work are above average in Years 2 and 4.
- Teaching, learning and the systems for recording pupils' progress are good.
- Pupils write good answers to questions in their own words, but often their work is untidy.
- The subject leader is new to the role and as yet does not have an overview of science.

## Commentary

74. Evidence from the inspection is that pupils' achievement is good in Years 1 to 4. Standards are slightly lower than in English and mathematics because science has not yet received the same close attention as these subjects. This year and last, all pupils in Year 2 reached the national standard for their age (Level 2 in the National Curriculum). In 2003, teachers' assessments placed the school in the top five per cent of all schools. This represented very good achievement. In 2004, around a third of pupils gained the higher Level 3.
75. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. There is a scheme of work for teachers to follow and this helps them to plan lessons effectively and is based on national guidance. Pupils learn new knowledge and skills thoroughly and build well on their previous experiences in science, year on year. There is a good system that enables teachers to assess how well pupils are learning and whether they are making enough progress.
76. Some parents feel that the curriculum generally lacks 'creativity.' This is not so in science. Pupils enjoy science because they find it interesting. Work is interesting and stimulating because teachers allow pupils to explore ideas at first-hand through investigations and experiments. For example, work completed recently by pupils in Years 3 and 4 shows that they have a good understanding of 'fair' testing, think of sensible predictions and write clear conclusions. Pupils in Year 2 have learned about the safe use of medicines. This work links very well with other subjects, such as personal, health and social education.
77. In lessons, teachers provide the right balance between direct teaching and opportunities for pupils to explore ideas. They question and inform pupils skilfully so that pupils' understanding of new ideas is based on their existing knowledge. Consequently, in a good lesson in Year 4, pupils successfully extended their knowledge of how to test 'fairly'. All pupils know that only one variable can be allowed to change at one time. In this lesson, pupils tested how well different types of shoe gripped different surfaces. They did this accurately and mostly on their own.
78. Teachers do not spend enough time teaching pupils to set out their work neatly. Worksheets are often stuck into books untidily. Pupils are proud of their work, but some have difficulty understanding what they have done when they look back at previous work. Some teachers do not always write in pupils' books and on white- or blackboards in the school's style. As a result, pupils do not have a good example to follow. Good presentation of work is not reinforced enough in some classes.
79. The recently appointed subject leader has had too little time to make any major differences to the provision for science. However, there are good plans in place to develop the subject. For

example, the subject leader intends to analyse samples of the work that pupils have completed. This will enable her to identify appropriate priorities for raising standards further.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The computer suite has good features.
- The subject leader is new to the role and does not have an overview of the subject.
- Several aspects of the curriculum are not taught frequently enough.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to ICT.
- ICT is not used fully to support learning in other subjects.

### **Commentary**

80. In Years 2 and 4, pupils' ICT skills meet the standards expected nationally. The teaching ensures that pupils make steady progress and achieve adequately. By the end of Year 4, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of virtually all aspects of the subject. Since the previous inspection, there has been good improvement in some aspects of the subject. For example, teachers now use national guidance as the basis for lesson planning. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.
81. The curriculum in ICT is satisfactory. However, in Year 4, pupils have not increased their knowledge of controlling things when using ICT since Year 2. Pupils across the school have not recently sent messages electronically and their knowledge of decision-making programs is limited. There are three main reasons why pupils' work is not more advanced generally: changes in teaching staff have interrupted teaching and learning; ICT has not had a high enough priority in teachers' planning until now because of a lack of resources in the past; and each class has a timetabled slot to use the suite only once per week. Teachers do not make enough use of the suite at other times and parents are right to raise this concern.
82. Since the previous inspection, the school has received funding from the government's National Grid for Learning. Parents have also raised a substantial sum of money to improve the ICT facilities. This has meant that resources for the subject have improved considerably. There is now a good range of programs for pupils to use. The suite is well equipped, but is too small for most whole classes to use. There are enough modern computers to teach half classes, or whole classes with one computer between two pupils. The computers and other equipment are reliable. Teachers' confidence and expertise have developed adequately through training provided by the New Opportunities Fund and through the school's own response to teachers' needs. Teachers' improved knowledge has improved the quality of pupils' work.
83. Teaching in ICT is satisfactory. In the one lesson seen, the teacher used her subject knowledge well to give pupils clear explanations and demonstrations of how to do things. She used questions effectively to confirm pupils' understanding of how to find sites on the Internet. As a result, pupils developed a greater understanding and appreciation of art by using the National Gallery website. In discussion with pupils, it is clear that they have a

great interest in the subject. Teachers keep good summary records of the work that pupils have covered.

84. Teachers keep too few examples of pupils' work in pupils' workbooks. There is little evidence of what pupils have done in some classes because there is a limited system for retaining pupils' work electronically. Classrooms have exciting displays about various subjects, but there are few dedicated to ICT itself.
85. The subject leader only took over this responsibility recently and it is too early to judge the effectiveness of leadership and management. The new subject leader has a good personal knowledge of ICT. Her plans for the future are appropriate. The school, for example, plans to increase the number of computers in the suite so that all pupils can work on the same lesson together. She plans to reorganise the room so that it is easier to use and to lower the height of the interactive whiteboard so that pupils can use it. The school does not have an arrangement for routine technical support, which means that the subject leader spends time away from her other duties fixing minor problems.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

86. Pupils' work shows that they are using ICT adequately in other subjects for word processing, to draw pictures, to find information on the Internet and to handle data. Some teachers use computers in class lessons more than others, for example, for writing tasks in English, or to reinforce pupils' mathematical knowledge. The use of ICT to support work in other subjects is growing. The computers for pupils to use in classrooms are not used as often as they might be and this is an area for the school to develop.

## **HUMANITIES**

**History** and **religious education** were inspected in full. **Geography** was sampled.

Only one lesson in **geography** was observed, so no judgement is made on provision, standards, or the quality of teaching and learning. Displays around the school and pupils' work show that the National Curriculum is fully covered, with a suitable emphasis on the acquisition of geographical skills. The subject leader has not been given the opportunity to see planning, observe lessons or pupils' work, and this adversely affects her role as subject manager.

### **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The standard of teaching is good, ensuring that pupils achieve well.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning.
- Very good use is made of resources in some lessons and there is a good range of visits.
- The role of the subject leader is underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

87. Although only two lessons were observed during the inspection, the quality of these, displays in classrooms and samples of pupils' work show that, overall, standards at the end of Years 2 and 4 are above average, with pupils achieving highly in some classes. Overall, achievement is good. Standards have improved well since the previous inspection.
88. In the lessons seen, the quality of teaching was very good overall. Both lessons were imaginative and pupils were engrossed in research and evaluating evidence. For example, in a very good lesson in Year 1, artefacts from Killhope Mining Museum were used prior to a visit. Pupils looked at these and tried to work out who would have used them and for what, justifying their opinions. This produced considerable enthusiasm and a high standard of discussion so that pupils achieved well.
89. The subject leader is in the process of developing her role, but, as she has not been given the opportunity to see planning, observe lessons or analyse pupils' work, this adversely affects her role as subject manager and also the overall development of the subject.

### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The criticism made in the report from the previous inspection has been addressed effectively.
- High quality displays enhance pupils' knowledge of different religions.
- Good use is made of opportunities to improve pupils' literacy skills.

### **Commentary**

90. No lessons were taught in this subject during the inspection, so judgements are made from displays, talking to pupils and looking at samples of their work. The requirements of the locally agreed syllabus are fully met. Achievement throughout the school is sound. Pupils in Year 2 spoke knowledgeably about Christianity and Judaism, but those in Year 4 remembered little of what they had learned about Islam. However, their knowledge of other work was satisfactory. Standards are satisfactory at the end of Years 2 and 4.
91. Displays of pupils' work show that good opportunities are created to develop aspects of pupils' literacy skills. Examples of this are seen in Year 2, where pupils have written letters to God and have described him in pictures and writing. There are interesting displays in the school hall on the church as a place of worship, and on Judaism and Islam describing prayer mats. These high quality displays show that the subject has a high priority in the school.
92. The leadership of the subject is generally sound, although the policy (dated 1997) is not due for review until 2006. The quality of resources has improved, meeting the criticism of the subject from the previous inspection effectively. There is a good range of visits to enrich the curriculum and extend pupils' appreciation of other religions, particularly Judaism. Pupils spoke confidently about their visit to a synagogue, for example.

### **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

**Art and design, design and technology, music and physical education** were sampled and no judgement is made on provision or the quality of teaching.

## **Art and design**

93. Pupils speak enthusiastically about art and design, and Year 2 pupils in particular spoke knowledgeably about different artists, such as Piet Mondrian. Most classrooms have attractive and interesting displays of pupils' work, which show that they have had a good range of learning experiences. These include weaving, a large picture inspired by the work of Lowry, and 'nonsense animals', with a useful mathematics link in Year 1, fabric collage in Year 2, and studies of light and shadow in Year 3.

## **Design and technology**

94. Evidence of design and technology work over the year shows that pupils in all year groups have completed a good range of projects. Pupils' good literacy skills enable them to record their work in detail. Pupils in Year 1 have designed puppets and animal shelters with considerable skill. In Year 3, pupils have a good knowledge of pneumatics and have made some parts of their models, such as jaws, move remotely. Some of pupils' drawings at the design stage are outstandingly clear and well conceived. At the time of the previous inspection, there was no scheme of work. A new scheme of work based on national guidance is now in place and provides a good framework for teaching and learning.

## **Music**

95. Whole-school singing is good. Pupils sing tunefully and enthusiastically in assemblies and have opportunities to sing in local churches, to the elderly and in the locality at festivals such as Christmas and harvest. A specialist music teacher works with each class on a rota basis, and ensures that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met. She runs recorder groups and there are also opportunities for pupils to learn the guitar, piano and keyboard. A number of pupils played a range of solos, duets and trios on their recorders at the start of a whole-school assembly, and acquitted themselves well. In a short lesson observation, pupils in Year 4 showed a good understanding of a range of aspects of music. For example, they successfully sang melodies as a round, used word patterns to build up sound layers and created tunes to accompany words. Pupils have occasional opportunities to hear live music, including some African drumming.

## **Physical education**

96. Pupils experience the full National Curriculum in physical education and have good opportunities for swimming in Years 3 and 4. There are some opportunities for experiences in competitive activities including mini soccer and rugby, and recent activities have included a dance festival and orienteering. Pupils benefit from soccer coaching from Newcastle United, and the school acknowledges its debt to parents who run games activities. Resources for small apparatus work are good and the school benefits from a good field and hard play area.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**



Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The programme makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development.
- The subject leader does not have an overview of the subject.
- Pupils learn to think about important environmental issues.
- Teachers involve pupils in school life informally.

## **Commentary**

97. Personal, social and health education and citizenship is seen as an integral part of the curriculum. The scheme of work gives teachers clear guidance for their lessons in each year group. Topics discussed in lessons help pupils' personal development by enabling them to understand that others have views which need to be valued and respected. However, the subject leader does not have a full overview of the school's work yet because she has not been asked to monitor the subject. Nevertheless, there is a good programme of activities. Pupils learn to share, to understand how to behave towards each other and to manage the difficult situations that arise in everyday life.
98. The school gained the Healthy Schools Award recently. Lunches include healthy options such as fruit and salad every day. Fruit is available cheaply each day and pupils drink water when they need it. Working for the award has lifted the profile of the subject and pupils now have a good awareness of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Appropriate sex and drug education policies are in place for pupils of this age range.
99. In a good lesson observed, the teacher in Year 4 read a story that pupils already knew. Pupils asked questions about the story, specifically seeking to 'think about the environment and other people.' Pupils showed that they have very good speaking skills and developed a series of interesting ideas. As a result of the discussion, pupils gained further insights into why it is important to care for and appreciate the environment. The teacher set a good homework task. For the next lesson, pupils needed to bring in an article from a newspaper or magazine about an environmental issue, to discuss with everyone.
100. Pupils have a record of achievement. The records show that pupils have gained many awards for good work and activities. They have thought about themselves and set targets for self-improvement, such as, 'I will tidy up better.' Teachers ensure that the youngest children learn their names and addresses just in case they get lost. Teachers consult pupils about aspects of school life informally. The school does not yet have a mechanism for finding out pupils' views more systematically, but plans are in place to create a school council next term.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### *Grade*

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	5
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3

The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	3

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