

INSPECTION REPORT

GIBSIDE SCHOOL

Whickham

LEA area: Gateshead

Unique reference number: 131213

Headteacher: Ms Pat Gilbert

Lead inspector: Alastair Younger

Dates of inspection: 20th - 22nd April 2004

Inspection number: 258903

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	89
School address:	Burnthouse Lane Whickham Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	NE16 5AT
Telephone number:	0191 4410123
Fax number:	0191 4410124
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Michelle Chapman
Date of previous inspection:	6/7/1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Gibside is a school for boys and girls with a range of learning difficulties including moderate, severe, profound and multiple. An increasing number of pupils with autism are being admitted to the school and at present these account for about one third of the roll. Numbers of pupils with moderate learning difficulties are falling. All pupils have statements of special educational need reflecting the degree of their learning difficulty and many pupils also require additional physiotherapy and nursing support. There are currently 89 pupils on roll, about a third are girls. Just over a third of pupils are entitled to free school meals and the number is increasing. There are no refugees or traveller children and most pupils are white. Four pupils come from homes where English is not the main language spoken. Many parents choose not to declare the ethnic origin of their children. Five pupils are in public care. Socio economic factors are not a major factor in the learning difficulties exhibited by pupils, who come from a very wide range of home backgrounds, reflecting the make up of the local community.

The school's main aim is to offer pupils challenging situations and educational opportunities which recognise the potential of each pupil, develop from that pupils' needs, and build upon their success in a safe, learning environment.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23587	Alastair Younger	Lead inspector	Science, history, geography
14066	Gill Hoggard	Lay inspector	
16722	Noreen Buckingham	Team inspector	Mathematics, special educational needs, citizenship, personal, social and health education, music, religious education
27429	Margaret Smith	Team inspector	English, information and communication technology
19386	Trevor Watts	Team inspector	Foundation stage, physical education, art and design, design and technology

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very effective school which fulfils its main aims very well. Teaching is very good and, as a result, pupils achieve very well in most subjects of the very good curriculum. A very good balance is maintained between learning and personal development, with the result that pupils grow as valued members of society, exhibiting positive attitudes, behaving very well and increasing their independence. All of this is largely due to the very good leadership and management of the school, which systematically seeks to pursue the best for each pupil whilst maintaining a friendly, open atmosphere which is loved by pupils, parents and staff alike. In meeting its aims so successfully at a realistic cost the school is providing very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- It is led by an excellent headteacher.
- Very good teaching results in pupils achieving very well.
- Pupils thrive in the excellent ethos; their personal development is very good.
- The combination of support, advice and guidance given to pupils and the excellent relationships with parents and other schools and professionals leads to a concerted drive to improve the lives of pupils.
- Pupils receive a rich education, enlivened with many valuable experiences outside the classroom.
- Governance is good overall though governors do not do enough to monitor for themselves the standards being achieved.

There has been **significant improvement** since the last inspection. Leadership and management remain strong and teaching has greatly improved as teachers have gained more expertise and confidence. An approach that encourages any form of communication has been adopted to the benefit of pupils. All subjects are now planned to ensure that new learning builds systematically on what pupils have done before. It is a hallmark of the school that it pursues its own agenda for improvement exceptionally well.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	Very good	Very good
Year 6	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.

Pupils achieve very well. An exceptionally good balance is kept between promoting academic progress and personal development. Achievement in English, science, information and communication technology and personal, social and health education is very good and in mathematics and religious education it is good. Pupils in the foundation stage achieve very well, setting them up for a successful transition to their future education in the subjects of the National Curriculum. In Years 1 and 2 pupils very successfully develop their ability to communicate through their speech, writing and the use of signs and symbols. Their mathematical skills improve well as they learn about essential skills about number and shape. In science they achieve very well through investigating living things and physical and chemical processes. In Years 3 to 6 achievement in English and communication continues its strong upward trend, pupils develop an abiding interest and enthusiasm for science and their understanding of mathematics develops well. Throughout the school, pupils achieve well in most other subjects, giving them a very well rounded overall education.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development develop very well. They love to come to school and do so whenever possible. As a result attendance is good and there is no unauthorised absence. Pupils arrive looking forward to their lessons; they are eager to learn and to enter into the life of the school. In lessons, on outings and at lunch and playtimes their behaviour is very good and this contributes significantly to the very settled atmosphere of the school. When there is any misbehaviour it is nearly always connected to recognised individual difficulties and it is very well managed. There is a strong multi-cultural atmosphere in the school, pupils are regularly taken into the community to socialise, they quickly learn the importance of behaving as well as they can and they experience many moments of uplifting joy which help them to feel good about themselves and valued as members of society.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Pupils receive a very good education. They are very well taught. Teachers plan their lessons meticulously and pupils are normally presented with activities that interest them and make learning fun. As a result, pupils are eager to get into the classroom. Once in the classroom they are very well supported to help them to overcome their individual learning difficulties. They get skilled support from teaching assistants and work is very carefully varied for pupils of different abilities to ensure that each can work with the maximum degree of independence and an equal degree of success. Progress is very carefully monitored, with teachers and teaching assistants carefully checking that what has been taught has also been learned. Many visits and visitors greatly enrich the very good curriculum. The care, welfare, health and safety of pupils are excellent. They are offered very good advice and support and their views are always listened to. The school enjoys an exceptionally high reputation amongst associated professionals and local schools and is welcomed as an important part of the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The school is blessed with an excellent headteacher who stealthily and successfully seeks constant improvement and increasing involvement with other schools and agencies that support pupils and staff. In this she is helped by dedicated and very effective senior members of staff. Governors are very supportive of the school but rely heavily on the headteacher to tell them how good the school is, rather than contributing fully to judging the standards being achieved.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the centre. They feel that it is helping their children to learn and to behave better. Many comment that what they like most is that staff are easily approachable and helpful. Pupils love coming to the school and many are sorry when the end of term comes.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important thing the school should do to improve is to:

- Seek ways to help governors play a greater role in evaluating standards.

This already forms a part of the school's improvement plan as governors themselves had realised that it was an area of weakness that needed addressing.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement is very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The balance kept between academic achievement and personal development is very good.
- Achievement is very good in English, science, information and communication technology and personal, social and health education. It is good in mathematics and religious education.
- Significant, very effective, attention is paid to the needs of individuals.

Commentary

1. The school takes great care to ensure that academic achievement goes hand-in-hand with the promotion of pupils' personal development. In a school such as this, this is crucial and of great service to pupils. It also fully meets the wishes of parents and results in happy, fulfilled pupils. There is a clear drive to promote learning but also an acute awareness that without matching this learning to improving communication and encouraging pupils to be aware of how to take a fuller, more purposeful, part in society there would be a big gap in their lives. In a Year 2 history lesson, for example, as pupils learned about clothing, there was a lovely, excited atmosphere with all pupils paying rapt attention, eager to communicate. Staff skilfully recognised pupils' responses, helped them to make suitable choices and created opportunities for them to work with increasing independence. For a few pupils, the ability to work co-operatively or pupils with autism to adapt to new situations is a significant achievement.

2. Much of the best achievement is seen in the most important subjects that form the core of the curriculum. In all of these subjects, teaching is nearly always at least good and it is more often very good and occasionally excellent. This is coupled with a very good curriculum for each subject which allows pupils to spread their achievement over a very wide range of topics. In no subject is achievement less than good, ensuring that pupils receive a very high quality, well rounded education. When pupils arrive in the school, many have very little previous learning and their achievements are at a sensory or developmental level. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6 a few of the highest attaining pupils are producing work of a quality that puts them at Level 1 of the National Curriculum, which is unusual in a school such as this. The range of pupils is very wide, however, and achievement for most is more accurately measured using national scales that reflect achievement at a much lower level. All pupils are also set precise individual targets, based upon their previous learning and development and well informed through very good assessment. Last year overall, pupils achieved 72 per cent of their English targets, 70 per cent of their mathematics targets and 76 per cent of their personal, social and health education targets. Inspectors found targets to be very ambitious, reflecting the very high expectations of the school. Across the whole school, achievement has improved significantly since the last inspection.

3. All pupils are helped to achieve to the best of their ability by teachers who recognise their individual strengths and weaknesses, plan lessons to reflect these and offer well-focussed support to those who need it most. Several classes contain pupils with a wide range of abilities, ranging from severe to profound and multiple and also, occasionally, pupils with autism. No pupils are neglected and nor is the degree or complexity of need of any individual allowed to impinge upon the achievement of others in the class. Special strategies are used in classrooms where all pupils have the most extreme autism spectrum disorders. There is no apparent difference in the achievements of girls or boys, pupils of different age or ethnic minority pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

4. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They attend well and turn up in good time for lessons.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils behave very well and display very good attitudes to learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very well provided for.
- Pupils grow in independence and learn how to take increasing responsibility.
- Attendance is good and lessons always start on time.

Commentary

5. High standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. Pupils behave very well almost all the time. At snack and lunch times they eat together in a very friendly way, help each other by passing plates and cutlery round and help to clear away afterwards. The atmosphere of the school is excellent. It is happy and settled, with hard working pupils who concentrate and strive to get on well together. Staff make every effort to ensure that the school is a welcoming, friendly and secure place in which pupils can learn and develop to the very best of their ability. Pupils' very good behaviour also extends to the many trips outside the school, whether to other schools or to local places of interest. On these visits pupils have many opportunities to learn how to behave well and be sociable in public places. There is no evidence of bullying, racism or harassment and there has been no reason to exclude any pupil in recent years.

6. Pupils' personal, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good. Assemblies are joy-filled occasions that inspire pupils and adults alike. Many lessons contribute extremely well to pupils' feeling of wonder, such as a technology and science lesson looking at tiny creatures. Staff have very high expectations that pupils will behave well, and will learn the reasons why they need to do so. They do this by reminding pupils of school and class rules, as well as expected conduct on outings. Pupils are helped to understand that they are all special, and that they are an important part of the school community as well as the wider community in which they have friends and family. Confidence, independence and a sense of enjoyment are strongly promoted. Staff create many opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures, countries and faiths and to understand something of their beliefs and values. Pupils visit many of the sights in the locality, and come to realise that they live in a fascinating area.

7. In the reception unit, children achieve very well in their personal and social development. Their introduction to the school is very positively managed, and parental contacts are maintained very well. Children's behaviour is managed extremely well, as this is a top priority area for staff. Their progress in personal development is very well evaluated. Staff are very good at acting upon the information they gather to help pupils' development further. As pupils grow up, they are strongly encouraged to work as independently as possible and also to assume responsibilities that help staff and other pupils.

8. Pupils are keen to come to school, and their attendance is good. There are no unauthorised absences, and there have been no exclusions for several years. Parents are emphatic that their children love coming to school and that they are very disappointed when weekends and holidays interfere. Lessons always start promptly because pupils are eager to learn. As a result, very little learning time is lost through absence or lateness.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.83
National data	N/A

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0
National data	N/A

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

9. The quality of education is very good. Teaching is very good.

Teaching and learning

10. Teaching is very good as are learning and the assessment of pupils' progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are planned with the individual in mind
- Lessons are made interesting
- Pupils are well supported by teaching assistants
- Progress is carefully monitored and pupils are helped to see how they can improve

Commentary

11. The good practice observed in the previous inspection has been built upon and now extends into all lessons. Unsatisfactory teaching has been eliminated and very little teaching is less than good. The quality of lesson planning is of very high quality. The needs of each individual are very clearly stated and tasks and activities are very closely matched to these to ensure that each pupil is presented with work that challenges them realistically. Thus, in a Year 6 physical education lesson all pupils were fully included and motivated to do their best as they sought to improve their throwing and accuracy skills. No pupils were left unattended, many getting skilled support from teaching and support assistants. Accurate records of what pupils had previously achieved were used to plan the groups that pupils worked in and to set new targets, such as increasing the distance individuals were to throw bean-bags through hoops. More challenging tasks were planned for any pupils meeting their targets and extra support was planned for those judged most likely to need help. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson, equally good planning ensured that a wide range of good resources was made available to different individuals to ensure that each had the best possible chance of achieving success in placing objects in order and naming their position, for instance, as 1st, 4th, or 11th. Planning showed how higher attaining pupils were expected to work in pairs, with as much independence as possible, allowing extra support to be directed towards pupils experiencing most difficulty who were using computers to help them. In classes for pupils with autism, activities are broken down into small, manageable portions, each of them with a strict time limit so that pupils can see how they are progressing towards their targets and what they have to do next. This is a great help to these pupils and aids their concentration.

12. Activities are carefully planned to arouse the curiosity of pupils and to provide them with stimulating learning experiences. Mathematics activities are often of a practical nature with, for instance, Year 1 pupils using scales to help illustrate the difference between heavy and light. Science lessons are always based on simple experiments or demonstration. In English, vividly illustrated 'big books' such as 'The Bear Who Wouldn't Share' are often used to provide visual stimulus and prompts to pupils as they learn how to listen and read. Many lessons, especially geography and history revolve around visits to places of interest, where pupils can experience for themselves what, for instance, it was like to live in Victorian times or how a river changes on its journey to the sea.

13. In all lessons, pupils are supported particularly well by teaching assistants. In a Year 6 English lesson about 'nonsense rhymes', for example, all the staff used signing confidently to help include all pupils in the lesson, enabling them to understand what was being taught and helping them to respond. Teaching assistants are very well briefed before each lesson so that all staff know their roles and what the expectation for each pupil is. The very good work of support staff is particularly evident in classes for pupils with autism and in the individual help given to pupils with the most profound difficulties. Here, the quality of relationships between staff and pupils is very strong and contributes very well to helping these pupils achieve as well as other pupils. Often the insight and observations of support staff play a big role in ensuring that tiny, yet significant signs of progress do not go unnoticed.

14. The assessment of pupils' progress is very good. It is helped by the clear statement of individual learning objectives in lesson plans, which enable teachers to quickly judge whether individual targets have been met. Simple questioning of pupils at the end of each lesson contributes to teachers understanding of what pupils have learned and questioning at the start of subsequent lessons prompts teachers to take note of what has been remembered and what needs revisiting. Pupils' work is very carefully marked and nearly always carefully annotated with notes to show what help was needed to complete the piece of work and many pieces of work are also graded to show how that work compares with national standards. Extensive records are kept, showing pupils' progress over long periods of time. Examples of pupils' past work form a large, first-hand record, of this record. Assessment is particularly well used to ensure that pupils learn systematically and with a high degree of challenge. It is also very well used to keep parents informed about their children's progress in end of year reports.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 48 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6 (13%)	29 (60%)	10 (21%)	3 (6%)	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.

The curriculum

15. The curriculum is very effective. It is well tailored to meet individual needs and very well enriched to promote a desire for learning. Accommodation is good overall and resources very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The broad, balanced and very relevant curriculum is very effective in meeting the individual needs of all pupils.
- Very good use is made of local resources to enrich the curriculum.
- Teachers and support assistants are enabled and encouraged to develop their knowledge and expertise.
- Although the accommodation is good overall, the growing number of autistic pupils has placed a strain on the current space available.

Commentary

16. The school meets all statutory requirements for the National Curriculum and provision for religious education. It makes imaginative adaptations to meet the wide range of special needs of its pupils. Older pupils are taught sex education often in collaboration with the nursing service, and outside agencies are frequently involved in the drug awareness programme. Very good planning ensures that all pupils gain equal access to the curriculum. The emphasis on promoting whatever form of communication best suits each pupil means that, whatever their learning difficulty, all can

participate fully. The school plans very well for the smooth transition from one stage of education to the next, again paying careful attention to the particular academic and personal needs of each pupil.

17. A wide range of visits to places of interest is carefully planned to enrich many areas of the curriculum. Members of the community are also invited to visit the school and contribute in their own areas of expertise. An after school club, independent, but run by members of the school staff, provides opportunities for play and social interaction. Every pupil, regardless of the level of physical or behavioural difficulty, is offered at least one residential experience. The school organises four residential trips a year in a variety of locations, including Scarborough and Holy Island. Pupils take part in a number of sporting activities outside school, such as athletics at Fellside, and the 'Geordie Games'.

18. This is a very outward looking school and staff are encouraged and enabled to both contribute their expertise, and to learn from the experience of other schools. They are well briefed on current initiatives, and the curriculum benefits from ongoing monitoring by senior staff, as well as annual review. Staff are confident that their views are heard, and their contributions valued. They support, inspire and encourage each other, and this leads to good links between the different areas of the curriculum.

19. Very good use is made of the purpose built, immaculately maintained, accommodation. Library space has been created on a corridor and several sensory areas have been improvised in classrooms. There is, however, a growing problem with the increasing number of autistic pupils who place greater demands on space for withdrawal areas and workstations. There are currently five autism specific bases and two of them have specially designed, double-roomed classrooms. At present, the school works very effectively with the accommodation it has but inspectors agree that a third double roomed base would benefit pupils, allowing them to learn in an environment that best suits them.

Care, guidance and support

20. Care, welfare, health and safety are excellent. Guidance and support are strong and consistent, giving pupils the best possible mixture of challenge and security. The school listens very carefully to the views of pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very strong culture of care and trust exists, resulting in happy confident children
- Personal development is encouraged throughout the school: each tiny step of progress is recognised and praised.
- Pupils' views and opinions are valued and respected

Commentary

21. Staff work as an exceptionally effective team to help and support pupils, offering them individual attention and encouragement. The care, safety and welfare of pupils is the top priority; their needs and abilities are well known to everyone in the school and it functions as a close, loving community. All pupils are recognised as individuals and their needs carefully addressed. Staff are alert to even the smallest sign of improvement and are quick to praise the pupil concerned. As a result children have tremendous confidence and grow in self-esteem. They take obvious pride in their achievements and those of others, whether academic learning or personal development. In a whole school singing assembly, for example, one class confidently sang karaoke-style in front of a large audience, and were greeted with wild applause and cheering from their peers.

22. Pupils' views and opinions are sought and respected as an integral part of life at school. More able pupils are given simple responsibilities such as returning registers to the office. All pupils are encouraged to express choices, for instance, speaking or signing which fruit they would like for a snack. More profoundly disabled pupils are fully involved in activities, in an art lesson, for example,

expressing which of two fabrics they enjoy touching most. Displays contain lots of evidence of pupils' work and responses to what they have learned. Pupils are fully involved in their own annual reviews; they are encouraged to record their opinions about what they do at school either directly through writing or symbol, or through an advocate. They are routinely invited to attend reviews along with their parents and to contribute as far as practicable. As a result, personal development is very strong and pupils are notably confident and friendly with visitors and other adults.

Partnership with parents and community

23. The school is positive and outward looking. It has developed excellent links with parents, other schools and the local university. Links with the local community are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with parents are excellent
- Links with the community are very good
- The school's links with other schools, colleges and university are exceptionally strong, to their mutual benefit

Commentary

24. The school does everything it can to help, support and involve parents. Pupils are all visited at home before joining the school and are always welcome to visit. All parents report that staff are friendly, open and approachable and this reassures them. Teachers are very keen to discuss pupils' progress either informally, on the phone, or through the daily contact books which parents praise highly. Communications with parents are extensive: there are informative displays around the school, regular newsletters and very detailed and helpful annual reports. These are enlivened by pupils' own contributions, which give a clear picture of exactly what pupils can and cannot do and new targets to work on. Highly regarded 'workshops' are provided for parents, they have included training in Makaton, autism and intensive interaction. In return parents are hugely appreciative and supportive of the school's work. Their views are sought regularly through questionnaires and the responses are followed up; the majority are extremely complimentary about almost everything the school does. They attend annual reviews and performances, raise funds through the school association and a few work regularly as volunteers.

25. Links with the community are strong and effective. No opportunity is wasted to go out and use the surrounding area to support classroom learning, for example using shops to practise simple maths, or visiting Durham and Newcastle cathedrals as part of religious education. Pupils clearly enjoy these visits and they are often recognised and greeted when out and about, thus adding to their self respect. Local people often visit, for example to support Christmas performances or the summer fund raiser. A good number of local professionals such as physiotherapists, dentists and child psychologists work closely with the school to provide all-embracing care. Pupils also go further afield, for example on residential trips to Holy Island and to the Kielder centre. All these contacts work towards the same ends; producing pupils who are happy, confident and at ease in a wide range of different situations. This is particularly important and effective for those pupils with autism.

26. Integration is considered a top priority and a person with special responsibility for this has been appointed. As a result there are very strong links with other local schools. A recent science week in which an exciting range of activities was offered to all participants, including pupils from other schools was particularly noteworthy and there are plans to extend and widen this next year. As a result pupils achieve very well, are lively, confident and friendly with new people. Placements are offered to many trainee teachers from the local university each year. This adds vitality to the staff and provides these students with invaluable experience in their chosen field. Several classes exchange visits with nearby primary schools for practical sessions such as physical education (PE), music and art and sixth formers from the neighbouring secondary school come in on work placements and

to coach PE. A huge number of partner institutions wrote letters to the inspection team, all of them speaking of the school in glowing terms and stressing that the benefits are mutual.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

27. The leadership and management of the school are very good. The excellent leadership of the headteacher is crucial in the drive to move the school on and in this she is very well supported by an equally dedicated deputy head and senior management team. Governance of the school is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and she is very effectively supported by a knowledgeable and experienced deputy
- The aims and objectives of the school are very successfully met and all pupils are equally valued
- The excellent induction and continuing professional development of staff has a positive impact on classroom practice
- The governors' role as a critical friend is not fully effective in monitoring the work of the school
- Day to day management systems are effective in supporting the smooth running of the school.

Commentary

28. The excellent leadership by the headteacher, recognised at the last inspection, has been maintained. Improvements in the overall achievements of the pupils are down to the determination of the headteacher and all staff, who clearly have the needs of pupils at heart and work with extreme dedication to meet these needs. Senior staff are fully committed to the school and its pupils and continually strive to provide the very best they can to create a lively learning environment. The expertise and skills of the headteacher and deputy head complement each other resulting in a very knowledgeable team who have clear roles and responsibilities. They are highly visible around the school and provide very good role models for the rest of the staff. They embody the drive and direction to move the school forward along with other members of the senior management team and governors.

29. The drive for improvement directs the school's self-evaluation process, resulting in a detailed school development plan indicating the most important areas for improvement. The very good monitoring of planning and teaching identified in the last inspection has been maintained and has led to an improvement in the quality of teaching and also the role of subject leaders, who now monitor planning more effectively and are playing an increasingly effective role in monitoring teaching. The school is good at seeking the views of parents via an annual questionnaire and analysing their comments for inclusion in the school improvement plan.

30. All staff and governors had a hand in formulating the aims and objectives of Gibside. As a result, they are clear and realistic and relate very evidently to this school. They identify the core values of the school and the strong drive to include all pupils in all activities. This results in many pupils being provided with a growing range of opportunities to experience education in local primary schools. In addition some pupils with autism are fully integrated in classes with pupils with different needs. It is a tribute to the leadership and management of the school that every one of its ten main aims has been successfully met.

31. The school has excellent arrangements for the induction of new staff, students and volunteers so that they are all aware of the special needs of the pupils. Training for new teachers is of a very high standard and relates to the very particular needs of the pupils. The deputy head, for example, runs a very successful, six-week course about pupils with the most complex learning needs, and staff find this extremely helpful. This impacts positively on improved classroom practice. All teachers have targets which are carefully linked to aspects identified through the schools' monitoring systems, their own professional development and the priorities of the school

improvement plan. While teaching assistants are not subject to such a formal system they are included in the appraisal system and have very good opportunities for training.

32. The governing body is very supportive and the chairperson, in particular, is a regular visitor. She recognises that the school has a gem of a headteacher and works closely with her. Other governors visit when they can, but many are working and have difficulty seeing the school in operation. At present, governors' visits tend not to focus on issues relating to the school improvement plan, which would give them clear insights into how well the school is doing. Meetings are well organised and informative but rely mainly on the headteacher for information.

33. Day to day management is very effective and administrative staff make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school. Finances are managed effectively and monitored monthly. Subject co-ordinators have to justify their spending bids but the effects of their spending on raising pupils' achievements have yet to be defined. Spending is clearly linked to education priorities. Recommendations from the last LEA audit have been acted upon.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1019509
Total expenditure	988208
Expenditure per pupil	11103

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-38102
Balance carried forward to the next	-6801

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

34. The provision for the six children in the Foundation Stage is **very good**.

Main strengths

- Children's achievements are very good overall, and are excellent in personal and social development, and in language and communication skills.
- The leadership and organisation of the Reception class is very good.
- The teaching is very good, with very good contributions from support staff.
- Staff use the assessment of children's achievements very well in order to further develop the very good curriculum.
- The very good accommodation and resources are used very effectively to support children's learning.
- Relationships with parents are very positive.
- Children are very well prepared for their later move into the main part of the school.

Commentary

35. There were no children of this age at the time of the previous inspection, so there is no judgement on the improvement since then. The permanent teacher is presently on maternity leave. In her absence, a very good replacement is maintaining and developing the unit's best features extremely well.

36. Attainment on entry is usually very low. Children make rapid progress at Gibside and achievement is very good by the time they leave the Reception class. Staff focus their efforts most particularly on children's social and communication development, and children consequently make the best progress in these two vital areas. The very strong links with parents begin before their children are admitted and continue very positively through daily contact books and an "open door" policy for parents to come in or telephone whenever they wish to. The very good curriculum is taught in distinct, clear lessons that also bring in many elements to support the other areas of learning, especially social and communication skills. Excellent planning is at the root of the very good teaching, ensuring that the most and least able children have every opportunity to achieve very well. This is combined with the very good use of resources to motivate and inspire children. Support assistants understand the children very well; they are dedicated and very capable, working particularly well as a team with the teacher in whole-class lessons, working with individuals, or taking groups of children. The insistence on best behaviour at all times is a great help in developing children's personal and social skills, in paying attention, taking turns, and joining in. It allows them to take part fully in all of the activities that are offered. They have many opportunities to join in with selected lessons with children in the main part of school; by the time they are old enough to move up into the next class, they are confident and sociable learners.

37. Children achieve extremely well in their **personal, social and emotional** skills because staff are very consistent in applying the rules of best behaviour. In very kindly, but firm, ways, staff insist that children share things, look after each other, and are friendly to each other. There are separate lessons or "circle times" in which children sitting in a group together are taught about sharing, choosing what to do and sticking to the choice they have made. Children's personal skills are encouraged and reinforced throughout the day in every activity. In snack times and at lunch, for instance, children are encouraged to pass plates of fruit to each other, pour drinks, share crisps, and clear the cups and plates away afterwards. Children enjoy their lessons and behave very well, partly because learning is made interesting and exciting, and also because they are taught what good behaviour means. They are given frequent opportunities to show how well they can join in, behave and be nice to each other. The other area in which children make excellent progress is in their

language and communication skills. This is the joint top priority with staff. Every lesson has targets for children to improve their sitting and listening skills; or to extend the words, signs and symbols they understand and try to use. Children's speaking and understanding develop extremely well because staff give them every encouragement to answer questions, and join in little discussions together, perhaps about the latest book they are sharing, or what they have been doing over the weekend.

38. In **mathematical development**, children achieve very well because the lessons are planned and organised to include many opportunities to count, recognise numbers, to say counting rhymes and sing number songs. The activities are very well supported by many opportunities each day to count, or to learn about wider mathematical ideas such as "heavy and light", "on top and underneath", and "full and empty". Often, this learning is developed through other activities, such as children's **knowledge and understanding of the world**. Children learn to use computers, and also learn, for instance, the names of different animals, buildings, people's jobs, shops and foods. They learn some stories about Jesus and people from the Bible, such as Joseph and his coat of many colours, as well as knowing a little about other religions. Visits to many places outside school are an extremely important part of learning in this area. All of the visits are used very well to reinforce children's social skills, and their language and mathematical development, just as much as they are to learn about, for example, windmills, the flowers in a garden centre, or where the ferry goes.

39. Children's very good achievements in **physical development** are across a wide range of activities, including water confidence in hydrotherapy sessions, and letting off steam in the soft play-room. Staff are very good at encouraging children to play together and follow rules and instructions in team games. Children learn to use large and small equipment in the hall or in the outside play area, and move to music in dance lessons. Whilst achieving very well in **creative activities** such as painting, printing, modelling with salt-dough, singing and playing musical instruments, children are also given a lot of encouragement to practice their speaking, listening and sharing skills, just as they do in their physical activities. Similarly, staff encourage children to play together in the sand and water trays in imaginative ways, so helping all areas of their development.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

40. Provision for English is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High expectations, very good teaching strategies and rigorous monitoring of individual progress lead to very good achievement for pupils of all abilities.
- Support staff make a significant contribution to pupils' learning.
- Management of the subject is sound and improving, but formal monitoring of planning and teaching is underdeveloped
- The emphasis on communication is very good and promotes literacy across the curriculum

Commentary

41. Pupils of all ages and abilities achieve very well in English. This is a very good improvement on the previous inspection when it was judged to be satisfactory. Speaking and listening are very well promoted at all levels. Very good use of symbols and signing help pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and those with autism, to understand and communicate more effectively. Picture Exchange Communication (PEC) is used where appropriate, and objects of reference are available for pupils not yet ready for symbols. Higher attaining pupils are encouraged to speak in sentences, and much attention is paid to articulation. Pupils' contributions are encouraged and valued. At snack time one Year 2 pupil insisted that the teacher "ask properly" and rewarded her with "good talking!" The high expectations of teachers, teaching assistants, and speech therapists, have resulted in the

majority of pupils becoming confident communicators. In Year 4, the level of conversation, as two pupils planned and booked an imaginary holiday, was very impressive. Pupils listen well in class because lessons are interesting and often exciting, they respond well to each other, and celebrate achievements together. More able pupils in Years 5 and 6 recall and retell stories, anticipate what will happen next and imagine what would happen if something changed. They describe events and take part in discussions. Correct terminology is used consistently across the curriculum, and pupils' vocabulary expanded well in most lessons.

42. Pupils very good progress in reading is carefully recorded. Literacy lessons with 'Big Books' are very effective and encourage a love of stories. For younger, less able pupils, sensory resources support understanding, while higher attaining pupils with autism in Year 2, make their own puppets and act out stories. Reading with expression is promoted very well. In a literacy lesson in Year 2, three out of four pupils with autism read with expression, one giving a very dramatic reading as the granny in the story. By Year 6, the most able pupils are evaluating their reading in terms of expression. In Year 2, lower attaining pupils show understanding and anticipation, and join in with repeated phrases. The higher attaining pupils in Year 6 have completed the reading scheme and are reading for information from a variety of sources, including the Internet.

43. Writing is strongly encouraged, whenever pupils are able, and pupils achieve very well. There is a strong emphasis on control and formation of letters. Classes have a tradition of recording everything they do in some form, ranging from writing hand over hand, overwriting, underwriting, copying, free writing, sequenced symbols or photographs. Displays around school are impressive for the quantity and quality of pupils' work. The careful monitoring of progress leads to accurate target setting and the right level of challenge for each individual.

44. Teaching is very good overall, occasionally excellent. Teamwork is impressive and support staff are fully briefed and involved, show very good understanding of pupils' needs, and make a significant contribution to the success of lessons. Planning, pace, challenge, enthusiasm and monitoring were, at least, very good in all the English lessons seen, and pupils responded with interest and attention. The combination of exciting lessons, very good relationships, and the use of praise and encouragement has resulted in pupils who are keen to learn and to achieve. Resources are very good and frequently used to enhance teaching and learning. Use of information technology is good, especially in the production of symbol resources, but expressive writing, for some pupils, could be improved by the introduction of on-screen symbol or word banks.

45. The subject co-ordinator is new to the post, is tackling it with enthusiasm and building up her subject expertise. Some areas, such as the monitoring of planning and teaching are not yet formalised. However, the skills of the current staff, and the support from senior management mean that teaching and learning are not adversely affected during the settling in period.

Language and Literacy across the curriculum

46. The strong emphasis on communication promotes literacy in all subjects. Pupils are encouraged to listen carefully, join in discussions, make choices, read and record, in most lessons. Teachers and support staff are consistent in their demand for the clearest communication which the pupil can achieve, and very good at providing the right resources to enable this. Speech therapists, and the multi-disciplinary assessment team, make a significant contribution in this area.

MATHEMATICS

47. Provision for mathematics is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall with some which is very good and as a result pupils make good progress

- A good range of materials and activities is used which match pupils' ages and abilities and which support learning
- Assessment procedures are very good. As a result pupils' achievements are carefully recorded and clear targets on individual education plans ensure that learning is seamless
- Mathematics is used very well across the curriculum

Commentary

48. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and pupils achieve well. Teachers have adapted the National Numeracy Strategy well to meet the wide-ranging needs and abilities of the pupils and they achieve well. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in using more structured and sensory approaches with pupils with autism and the most complex learning needs. Teachers explain the lesson objectives clearly and use subject vocabulary well, helping pupils improve their understanding of mathematical ideas and the use the correct language when answering questions. By building skills in small steps and using familiar objects to support learning, pupils consolidate what they have learned and grow in confidence. Very good use is made of number rhymes and counting songs to make learning enjoyable as pupils sing along with enthusiasm.

49. The highest attaining pupils add and subtract numbers to 20, add coins to 10p and have a good understanding of a range of mathematical concepts by the time they reach Year 6. Many use money confidently, know the names of familiar shapes, measure in metres and centimetres and learn to tell the time. Lower attaining pupils consolidate their knowledge of numbers to 10, increase their knowledge mathematical language and use it appropriately. Pupils with the most complex needs enjoy sessions in the sensory room, which involve tactile activities using shapes and counting rhymes along with visual stimuli. In the classroom they explore objects and make choices. Pupils with autism make good progress over time from a low starting point of manipulating inset jigsaws, printing activities involving shaped to knowing number bonds to 10, sequencing numbers, developing mathematical language and simple addition. Counting games in the hydrotherapy pool make learning fun. By the time they reach Year 6 they have built substantially on their previous skills and understand a wide range of simple mathematics. Teachers have a good understanding of how the pupils learn, they use a wide range of strategies and this helps pupils of all abilities to make good progress.

50. Teachers use questioning effectively during starter activities and this helps pupils to develop their thinking as well as their speaking and listening skills. Signing and symbols are used well to include all pupils. Pupils enjoy this part of the lesson because teachers are usually quite imaginative. They use a good range of resources and activities to motivate pupils, such as a bean bag game to consolidate counting, ten green bottles, weighing fruit to learn about heavy and light, and very large coins to support coin recognition.

51. Teachers know their pupils very well and the tasks set have an appropriate degree of challenge. Lesson planning clearly demonstrates how the abilities of individual pupils are going to be met and assessed and group work is well organised. This is because assessment procedures are thorough and teachers know the level at which to pitch the work. Pupils' targets are monitored termly, progress is recorded and the next step in learning is identified. This is an improvement since the last inspection

Mathematics across the curriculum

52. The opportunities for pupils to use and consolidate their numeracy skills in other subjects across the curriculum are very good. Pupils are encouraged to use their numeracy skills in science when measuring how far cars roll during an investigation about forces and they measure materials in design and technology. They produce tally charts in geography and show a good understanding of mathematical language in physical education lessons, such as, big, small, long short etc. In food technology, pupils in Years 1 and 2 weighed flour to make scones and could name the shapes of the cutters, circle and square. In assembly when "number" is the theme all pupils join in counting very

enthusiastically. To encourage speaking and listening, number games are often used to motivate pupils to participate and respond.

SCIENCE

53. Provision in science is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good, leading to pupils learning and achieving very well.
- A strong focus on experimental work and investigation motivates and interests pupils
- There is a very good curriculum and the subject is very well led.

Commentary

54. Pupils make very good progress because they are very well taught. They learn in a delightful environment, richly enlivened by vibrant informative displays, most of which include much of their own work. This helps them to realise that their work is valued and helps to motivate them and take pride in their work. Teaching is lively and enthusiastic and lessons proceed at a very good pace, making the best possible use of the time available. A Year 4 lesson captured the interest of pupils by using toy cars to demonstrate the fundamental principles of forces, whilst a Year 2 lesson approached the topic by getting pupils to push and pull a support assistant through a gap in furniture. In each instance, the activity was very well matched to the interests and abilities of pupils, involved all of them in the lesson and made learning fun. Lessons are immaculately planned with very clear learning objectives for each pupil. In a Year 5 autism group, these objectives are written on the board, alongside precise timing for activities so that pupils can see where they are in the lesson and what is left to achieve. This is a very effective strategy for helping these pupils. At the time of the last inspection, progress in science was satisfactory and described as 'a growing strength'. This potential has been fulfilled particularly well and there has been very good improvement.

55. By involving pupils in doing things, rather than just expecting them to listen, teachers are very successful in arousing pupils' curiosity and getting them to ask questions. These questions are not simply answered by staff, but form the basis for encouraging conversation and getting pupils to make suggestions as to why certain things happen. This is a very good introduction to the idea of 'prediction'. When experiments are being done, pupils are encouraged to record what they have done and what they have found out, using methods best matched to their ability. Thus, more able pupils write down, with varying degrees of help, the results of their investigations, whilst less able pupils communicate with staff who record their responses and degree of independence. When a Year 5 autism group investigated the idea of gravity, all pupils recorded their findings using a variety of prompts and tables carefully matched to their individual ability.

56. Great care is taken to ensure that pupils study all aspects of science, not just the ones that are easy to teach or which are visually spectacular. By focussing all work on practical activities teachers ensure that learning is memorable and pupils get many, very good opportunities to handle simple apparatus, giving them a very well rounded science education. The curriculum is very well planned to ensure that learning builds systematically as pupils move through the school and each pupil's progress is very carefully checked and recorded. A very successful 'Science Week' was organised recently, allowing pupils to mix with pupils from mainstream schools, and involving them in 'workshops' such as Zoo Lab and Star Lab. Visiting specialists helped teach during the week and pupils visited several places of scientific interest. At the end of this, parents were invited in to celebrate their children's achievements and the whole was captured in great detail, using digital cameras and computers to enhance the record. These examples demonstrate very well the dedicated and very good leadership of the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information and communication technology

57. Provision for information technology (ICT) is **very good**

Main Strengths and Weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress through the structured scheme of work
- Planning at all levels is very good, and has inbuilt provision for assessment and recording
- Teaching is imaginative and challenging
- The subject is well managed
- ICT is used well across the curriculum

Commentary

58. Achievement in ICT is very good. This shows very good improvement on the previous inspection. Pupils come into the school with little, if any, knowledge of computers but by Year 6, the most able have reached National Curriculum Level 1. Others make very good progress through the P Levels, achieving Levels 5 to 8 by the time they leave. Most teaching is individual or in small-groups because this best meets the needs of the wide range of ability in each class. The scheme of work covers all aspects of information technology, and is not restricted to computer work. Pupils in Year 1 are learning to collect and display data in the form of a graph. In Year 2, PMLD pupils learn to use switches to operate bubble tubes, simple computer programmes, or toys, and to view photographs, often linked to recent educational visits. More able pupils create on-screen, talking books. They take and insert digital photographs, type in the text, and record voices. Two pupils demonstrated their books and could explain how they made them. Another pupil showed how he could access the Internet independently. Older pupils learn to use a range of equipment including cassette, and video recorders, CD players, and digital cameras. Cameras are used very effectively to record activities and visits, and pupils insert these into word processing programmes, adding captions. They change the type, size and colour of fonts, use drop down menus and dialogue boxes, save and retrieve their work, and use the printer confidently. Plans are very comprehensive and individual planning includes clear, specific, and achievable targets. Assessment is effective and rigorously recorded, so that pupils are always building upon previous learning.

59. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers and support staff have developed good skills and so are confident in working with pupils on the computer. Imaginative activities, such as the creating of talking books, enable pupils to consolidate previously learned skills and acquire new ones. Pupils are challenged at an appropriate level and show pride in their achievements.

60. Management of the subject is good and has the potential to be very good once the recently appointed co-ordinator achieves her development plans. She has already reorganised to create a more reliable and user friendly range of resources and has the services of a part time technician to maintain the hardware. Resources are good, and future planned purchases are clearly linked to curriculum development and pupil need.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

61. Information technology is used effectively in all subjects across the curriculum and especially well in literacy, and numeracy. The Internet is used for research in a range of subjects, for example, in art, pupils found information and printed out pictures of the work of a well known artist.

HUMANITIES

62. Insufficient lessons were observed to make secure judgement on provision in geography and history but a large amount of pupils' work and teachers' records were analysed. This analysis, and the few lessons observed, confirm that there are no concerns about the two subjects and that both occupy a suitably prominent place in the curriculum.

Geography

63. There is a good focus on getting pupils to see for themselves how geography impacts on peoples lives. There are frequent visits into the community, for instance for pupils to compare the features of local villages with those of the neighbouring city of Newcastle. Looking at the school environment, the oldest pupils have been involved in researching how it could be improved, recording their survey results in bar charts and thus contributing to their learning in mathematics. Many pupils have discussed different holiday locations, identifying whether they were hot or cold and creating displays to show the attractions of these places. Older pupils have traced the course of the River Tyne as it flows between Newcastle and Gateshead and seen how it changes as it nears the sea. Pupils' progress is particularly well recorded and reported on, providing teachers and parents with an accurate picture of children's achievements.

History

64. The one lesson observed was very well taught. It shared close links with science and geography, as Year 2 pupils looked at different forms of clothing and how well each fulfilled its function. The teaching assistant offered sensitive, skilled support to individual pupils who had the greatest degree of difficulty, helping them to create a collage of different materials. Lively, mischievous behaviour was well managed, carefully balancing admonishment with praise for earlier work, so as not to discourage the pupil. At the end of the lesson, pupils were brought together to discuss their achievements, leaving none in any doubt that their efforts had been worthwhile. Many lessons revolve around outings to local places of historical interest, including the museum village of Beamish, where pupils have learnt about Victorian life in an environment which captures much of the atmosphere of life in those times. Visits such as these are always followed up by classroom work and pupils have produced work which records and illustrates their experiences very well. In addition, on the topic of Victorians, a whole day was set aside for the school to re-enact those days, with pupils writing with chalk on slates, lining up for drill, dressing in clothes from the period and playing traditional games. The curriculum is very well planned to match the abilities of pupils with activities that stimulate learning and help pupils to learn in a methodical fashion.

Religious education

65. Provision for religious education is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is closely linked to the Agreed Syllabus and is monitored well
- A good range of resources are used to support teaching and learning
- The subject contributes very well to pupils' personal development

Commentary

66. The subject is well led and managed and there has been good improvement in provision since the last inspection. The curriculum is well planned and covers appropriate elements of other world religions. There is a good balance between topics about the traditions and festivals of different faiths and those that promote the personal feelings and understanding of living together in harmony which fits in well with the PHSE curriculum. Opportunities to visit places of worship, such as the

local church and a mosque enrich the curriculum. The subject leader monitors planning, ensuring that the scheme of work is covered. As a result, pupils are given a relevant range of information, backed up by good resources which help to bring meaning to each topic. Very lively assemblies contribute significantly to religious education in terms of celebrating achievement and the sheer feeling of spirituality when pupils sing and pray together. The subject supports pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development very well.

67. In the two lessons seen in Years 3-6, a good range of relevant artefacts was used to emphasise the focus of lessons. For example, most could identify pictures of a church, a mosque and a synagogue and could also identify important symbols such as a cross, a crescent and the Star of David. One pupil was delighted to demonstrate to the others the proper use of a prayer mat and this helped the class to develop a basic understanding of its importance to people of his religion. Instances like this enrich lessons and add to pupils' enjoyment. Pupils with the most complex needs listened to Christian and Islamic music, which appealed to them. Others heard the story of Lourdes; which focused on the importance of pilgrimages, special places and people. Teachers use resources well to illustrate the lesson objectives and pitch the content at a level they know the pupils will understand. Some sessions at the end of the day are used to reflect on the day and to say a prayer, sing a hymn or to listen to a story such as "The Creation" and this results in a positive end to the day. Analysis of work shows that pupils have learned about symbols of other religions such as Judaism and Hinduism and also the Christian festivals of Christmas, Easter and Harvest as well as Mothers Day traditions.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

68. Insufficient music was observed to allow secure judgements to be made on provision. Teachers' records were looked at and several pupils were questioned about their progress.

Art and Design

69. The provision for art and design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils throughout the school are achieving very well.
- The teaching is very good.
- The curriculum is very varied and well organised
- Art lessons are often very well linked with other subjects, and contribute greatly to the beautiful displays around the school in all areas of learning.

Commentary

70. Very good achievement results from extremely well planned teaching. This ensures that all pupils are presented with work that they find very enjoyable, as well as challenging. Staff are very good at adapting activities for the most or least able pupils; giving extra support without doing too much for the pupils; or giving additional, more difficult work for the early finishers. Support assistants are very good when helping and guiding pupils, whether individually, or in small groups, using a very good range of materials and equipment. Pupils are very well helped to use paints, crayons, and collage materials of all kinds, in making pictures, patterns and prints. The variety of art methods is very good, whether pupils are working individually or cooperating together to make a large joint display. The subject is very well organised by a very capable coordinator who has overseen a good improvement since the previous inspection, when the subject was already good. Very often, the art topic supports learning in other subjects, especially English when it is used for illustrating the "Big Book" that pupils are reading together and history, where pupils have created huge pictures of Victorian and Tudor life. The displays brighten up the whole school and make this a very attractive learning environment. Many visits into the community support pupils' learning very well, including going to museums, art galleries and local sculptures. Pupils also visit other schools and places of

interest; joining in with a “sculpture day” with other schools; and entering a painting competition in which a few pupils did extremely well.

Design and Technology

71. The provision for design and technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well.
- The teaching is very good.
- The curriculum and overall organisation are very good.

Commentary

72. Pupils’ very good achievements are seen in all aspects of the subject. These include their own planning when they are beginning to work on a design for a new project, such as a bag to carry something specific like swimming gear or lunch. It also includes the making aspect, and using a range of materials such as cloth, wool, plastic, paper, construction kits and card. The more able pupils use tools such as saws, hammers, scissors and glue spreaders with confidence. The less able pupils need a lot of help from staff. Food technology is an important part of the subject, with pupils’ achievements being equally very good. Teachers’ very good planning helps to ensure that all pupils have the chance to achieve highly, with lessons very well adapted for the most or least able pupils. The expertise of the support assistants, the use of very good resources, and access to the specialist cookery room all help pupils to get the most from lessons. As well as gaining skills in preparing a selection of simple meals, pupils also learn about the need to be clean, and the value of exercise and diet. Sometimes, pupils learn to cooperate very well together in a major project such as designing and making a model bridge across a river. In some projects, learning is helped by clear links with other subjects, including geography, as in the case of the bridge over the River Tyne. One excellent lesson saw a wonderful mixture of design and technology with science: pupils were studying different live tiny creatures, with one group making models of some of them, another group making a large collage of giant insects, and others trying to identify a large selection of toy minibeasts.

73. There has been a good improvement since the previous inspection, when the subject was judged to be good. The teaching has improved and is now very good. Pupils are making better progress, and the various aspects of design and technology are now very well organised, with very good resources and accommodation. Pupils’ progress is now assessed very carefully, and the information that is gained is used very well when deciding what needs to be taught next, and how it should be taught.

Music

74. No music lessons were observed but analysis of teachers planning and observations of other activities, such as assemblies, shows how well musical activities are promoted across the curriculum, for example, in number rhymes such as “ten green bottles”. The curriculum is well planned and gives pupils opportunities to develop their performance and playing skills which often culminate in whole school productions. In one assembly pupils performed enthusiastically, singing, playing bells, drums and tambourines. Others listen well when not joining in the singing. All pupils are very eager to participate and volunteer whenever they are asked. In another assembly, some pupils used the microphone very professionally when singing solo, much to the enjoyment of others. The school buys in sessions from the local peripatetic music service to enhance the curriculum and in addition works with other outside professional musicians to engage pupils in activities such as ‘Music Live’ and to work with an Irish folk band. The local high school band gives concerts from time to time and an Indian Dancer particularly fascinated the pupils. Whilst assessment is not fully

established the subject leader keeps photographs of pupils' performances etc and checks them carefully against national data.

Physical Education

75. The provision for physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very good progress, and they achieve very well.
- The teaching is very good.
- The curriculum is very broad, well integrated and organised very well.
- Very good links with other schools support some pupils' learning very well.

Commentary

76. Pupils of all ability levels achieve very well throughout the school because the teaching is extremely well planned to take their individual needs into account. Teachers and support staff are especially good at involving all pupils in well paced lessons. They do this with alterations to the whole-class activities, or with extra support to the least able pupils, or using different equipment, such as using bean bags instead of balls. Often, the least able pupils, or the autistic pupils, will have individual lessons, perhaps in the soft play room, or in the hydrotherapy pool, or on the trampoline for a particular system of exercises and movements known as "rebound therapy". Staff, including the support assistants, are very well qualified to teach the various physical activities, and they do so in ways that challenge and motivate pupils very well. Pupils respond very positively, trying very hard to do well, whether they are playing team games, dancing and moving freely to music, doing athletics races, learning to swim, or using large climbing apparatus or small bats, balls and hoops. The great range and variety of activities is very well organised by the enthusiastic and well-qualified coordinator, ably supported by advice and assistance from the physiotherapist when necessary. Very good links with other schools involve some pupils going to local mainstream schools for lessons, and some older pupils from a nearby comprehensive school coming into Gibside to run activities as part of their own sports awards. All of the pupils who are involved find these joint occasions very exciting. Pupils' progress is very well charted, and future lessons are very well based on what staff observe, and how they decide to change their long term plans, as well as plans for the next few lessons.

77. There has been a good improvement since the previous inspection, when the subject was already good. The teaching is better, and the assessment is much improved. The number and range of out-of-school activities has increased greatly. The resources are extremely good. There is no grassy area for outdoor activities in summer, but the school uses facilities at other schools very well, and also uses the local swimming pool for pupils throughout the school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

78. Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strong community spirit is very effective in developing pupils' self confidence and esteem
- The very good links with other schools and the community support the development of pupils' personal and social skills very well
- Throughout the day opportunities are created to encourage independence and pupils are given as many responsibilities as they can successfully manage
- Citizenship and healthy living are developing well giving pupils an awareness of everyday matters

Commentary

79. A strong community spirit is fostered in assemblies when classes take turns to lead the activities. Pupils participate with great enthusiasm and perform with confidence. They show great pleasure when it is their turn and the spontaneous applause from others is a credit to the way everyone is valued no matter how large or small their contribution. This community support is also seen in classes where pupils recognise each other's achievements developing feelings of self-worth.

80. The school has very good links with local primary schools. A number of Gibside pupils attend selected lessons in these schools and this supports the development of their social skills, boosts their self-confidence and helps them to develop relationships outside their usual environment. They are always happy to talk about what they have done and obviously gain much by going. Teachers ensure that pupils learn how to cope in everyday social situations by making regular visits into the local community to shop, to visit parks or other places of interest. Pupils learn how to behave in public places and with their friends. In this way they become friends with the local shopkeepers and more confident in themselves. They also practice skills learned in the classroom, for example, spending money. These activities also help to prepare them for the move to secondary school.

81. The school places great emphasis on pupils' personal development. This permeates most aspects of the school day. The sessions at the beginning of the day give pupils a positive start. Teaching in these sessions is always good and sometimes excellent. Pupils are welcomed each morning by staff and are given a choice of activities before moving into a whole group activity once everyone has arrived. Pupils interact and co-operate with each other and adults making very good, trusting relationships. This is a delightful start to the day and all pupils participate enthusiastically. Symbols, signs, visual timetables are all used so that everybody is included as they exchange news, for example, a photograph of a Mum meeting Ant and Dec caused great excitement. These special times are important to the pupils and are never hurried allowing time for pupils to express themselves to others.

82. The subject is very well planned and includes a wide range of different topics which are relevant to the different needs of the pupils. Pupils benefit from very well planned lessons in which tasks are set with a level of challenge that is appropriate to their individual abilities. In addition to the taught elements of the PHSE programme, informal opportunities to develop their personal skills are used very effectively during the day, for example at lunchtimes and when undertaking class responsibilities. Pupils are familiar with their class rules and understand why they have them. In physical education lessons pupils are encouraged to change as independently as they can and be responsible for their belongings. In one lesson, pupils identified people who were special to them, showing photographs and explaining the special place they had in their lives. Pupils' progress is tracked via individual targets which are set termly and progress is recorded in detail backed up by photographic evidence. This helps to keep a close check on their progress.

83. Part of the PHSE and citizenship programme includes working towards the Healthy Schools Award and pupils are encouraged to develop an awareness for personal hygiene in their daily routines and in subjects like food technology. The school takes part in the Fruit for Schools scheme and pupils can choose which sort of fruit they like which encouraging healthy eating. Knowing how to keep themselves safe and about the world around them are important elements within the programme.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
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	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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