

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **THE CEDARS SCHOOL**

Gateshead

LEA area: Gateshead

Unique reference number: 108422

Headteacher: Mr E Bartley

Lead inspector: Alan Tattersall

Dates of inspection: 28<sup>th</sup> June - 1<sup>st</sup> July 2004

Inspection number: 259006

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

© Crown copyright 2004

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

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	3 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	84

School address:	Ivy Lane Low Fell Gateshead Tyne and Wear
-----------------	--

Postcode:	NE9 6QD
Telephone number:	01914334046
Fax number:	01914820926

Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs D C Hull

Date of previous inspection:	8 <sup>th</sup> June 1998
------------------------------	---------------------------

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is designated to admit pupils with physical disabilities but now caters for a wider range of pupils with special educational needs. Twenty-nine pupils have speech and language difficulties and a few have hearing and visual needs or have school phobia. Many pupils have additional communication or learning needs including a very small number who have autistic spectrum disorders. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs apart from a few children of nursery age who are undergoing assessment. There are currently 56 boys and 28 girls on roll between the ages of three and 16 including four full time children in the foundation stage. The attainment of most pupils is low as a consequence of their special educational needs, although a few on entry have average standards of attainment. Thirty per cent of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals, which is high for a school of this type. All but one pupil are from a white British background and no pupils speak English as an additional language. A few pupils are in public care. The school has achieved many awards in recognition of its work; an Arts Mark Gold and with Distinction and the Healthy Schools Award in 2004, and the Sports Mark Gold Award, Basic skills Quality Mark, Green Flag Award, and Investors in People Award in 2003.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20466	Alan Tattersall	Lead inspector	Foundation stage, physical education, history, modern foreign languages and English as an additional language.
9981	Saleem Hussain	Lay inspector	
29452	Christine Emerson	Team inspector	English, personal, social and health education and citizenship, religious education and special educational needs.
32244	Barbara Mole	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, geography and music.
1769	Michael Holohan	Team inspector	Science, art and design, and design and technology.

The inspection contractor was:

Altecq  
102 Bath Road  
Cheltenham  
GL52 7JX

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

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>8</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>11</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 to 4</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>30</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The Cedars School is a **very good** school with excellent features. The quality of teaching is very good, and as a result, pupils achieve very well. Very effective leadership and management ensures that the school provides very good value for money.

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

- Pupils' have very positive attitudes, behave very well and they have excellent relationships with each other and staff.
- There are excellent arrangements to enrich pupils' learning outside of lessons with particular strengths in sport and the arts.
- The headteacher, senior managers and governors lead and manage the school very well.
- There are excellent arrangements to promote pupils' spiritual and cultural development.
- Pupils receive outstanding opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and give their views.
- The grounds are being developed very well, but the accommodation is unsatisfactory for the school's needs.
- Pupils have insufficient opportunities to learn with pupils from other schools.

Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Leadership and management have improved and many of the other aspects of the school's work have been developed very well. There is an increase in teaching time and pupils' now have very good opportunities to acquire qualifications before they leave school. Leadership of subjects has improved. This ensures that teachers receive very good written guidance on what to teach and how to assess pupils' progress. The school has tried hard to improve accommodation but it is still inadequate, particularly for physical education.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	Personal and social education
<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
<b>Year 6</b>	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
<b>Year 9</b>	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
<b>Year 11</b>	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Very good</b>

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

Pupils' achievements are **very good**. Last year the small number of pupils at the end of Year 11 received very good recognition for achievement through acquiring GCSE, Entry Level and ASDAN accredited qualifications. These achievements compare well with similar schools. The large number of pupils who have additional special educational needs achieve as well as others because of the very effective support they receive. Children achieve very well in the foundation stage. Pupils achieve outstandingly well in music and swimming. They achieve very well in personal, social and health education and citizenship. The personal and moral development of pupils is very good and spiritual and cultural development is **excellent**. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and get on extremely well with one another and adults in school. Behaviour is very good. Attendance is good and pupils arrive at school promptly.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **very good**. Teaching and learning are **very good**. This reflects the way that staff have responded very well to senior managers guidance to improve the quality of the curriculum and teaching and learning. Teachers know pupils very well, assess their achievements rigorously and plan very well for pupils to learn more. Pupils follow a very good range of subjects, many of which lead to qualifications. The school is well staffed with experienced teachers and classroom assistants who work as a very effective team to help pupils to learn. Staff give generously of their time to ensure that pupils' opportunities for learning are enriched exceptionally well by lunchtime clubs, after school games, sports, arts and dance activities and residential trips. It is a tribute to the ingenuity and effort of staff that pupils achieve so well in spite of unsatisfactory and poor aspects of the accommodation. There are very good links with the community, however there is a need for more opportunities for pupils to participate with those from other schools to support their learning and social development. Resources for learning are good and used very effectively by staff to make lessons interesting. There is, however a shortage of space for their storage, which reduces further the space available for movement and teaching in school. The level of care and welfare and the support and guidance pupils receive is very good. The partnership the school has established with parents and carers is good. The school seeks and acts on pupils' views exceptionally well.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher, supported very ably by the deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, department heads and subject leaders leads and manages the school **very well**. They provide a very good example for others to follow. Governance of the school is very good. Governors are active, committed to the aims of the school and very supportive of staff and their work. They have a very good knowledge of the school, are frequent visitors and question what they find. They are very well aware of the shortcomings of the accommodation identified during the inspection. Finance is managed very well.

## PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and carers are very positive about the work of the school. They agree that pupils are taught very well and feel the school is very well managed. They value the very good support that they receive and the guidance pupils have from the school. Pupils are very keen to come to school to work and meet their friends and staff. They enjoy the work, and rate very highly the excellent opportunities they have for games and sport. Pupils value the exceptionally good opportunities to contribute ideas for school improvement particularly through the school council.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

In order to maintain and build upon the current very effective education it provides, the school should endeavour to:

- Improve accommodation for learning. \*
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to learn with mainstream peers.

*\* There is a governors working party established with the local education authority to improve access to better accommodation, particularly for physical education and sport.*

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Pupils throughout the school achieve **very well**. The standards pupils achieve judged against National Curriculum levels and nationally recognised measurements of small steps in learning are very good in relation to pupils' special educational needs. The results that pupils achieve in GCSE and Entry level exceed those of comparable schools.

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

- There has been a very good improvement in pupils' achievement since the last inspection.
- The oldest pupils achieve very well in their courses by the time they leave school.
- Pupils achieve outstandingly well in music and develop excellent skills in swimming.
- All pupils achieve equally very well regardless of their special educational needs.
- Pupils make very good progress towards targets set for them in personal and social development.

#### **Commentary**

1. The school has placed a very strong emphasis upon improving pupils' achievement in all subjects since the last inspection through changes to what pupils learn and how they are taught. Success of the measures it has taken is evident in the very good achievement of children in the foundation stage and throughout the school. Since pupils achieve very well in mathematics and English and ICT, they are well prepared to use these skills in lessons in all subjects.
2. The pupils entered for GCSE and or Entry Level at the end of Year 11 last year achieved very good success in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). They achieved similarly very good results in religious studies, art and design, physical education, expressive arts, history and design and technology. The school has set challenging targets to build upon last year's results when three pupil gained five or more A to G grades and three additional pupils gained more than one A to G grade at GCSE. Pupils are making very good progress towards achieving the predicted levels. Targets for the remainder of the school are similarly challenging, for pupils to improve upon their results in the PIVATs\* assessments in reading, writing, mathematics and science at the end of Years 2, 6 and 9. Pupils are making very good progress towards achieving these targets.
3. In religious education and art and design, pupils' achievement is very good and in line with the quality of teaching in the subjects and the opportunities the school provides to enhance pupils understanding. For instance, through pupils visiting places of worship during religious education lessons. Pupils' achievement in music is exceptionally good. They are inspired to perform at the highest level through following the excellent role model of the teacher. Pupils in all years look forward to music lessons and sing and play instruments with skill and enjoyment. This was evident in a lesson for pupils in Year 11. Although pupils had completed their course work for the year, they threw themselves into a new task to compose and rehearse a song about food to take for a local public performance the following week.
4. Pupils achieve very well in physical education. They are aware of their own performance and that they are achieving very well through the information they receive from staff and strive to improve further. Their interest in the subject is evident in the excellent participation in lunchtime, after school and weekend activities to extend their achievement in an extremely wide range of sports and games. This outstanding commitment leads them to achieve very well in physical education in school and outstandingly well in swimming and games in local and national competitions.



5. Although pupils represent a wide range of special educational needs, they all achieve equally well. This is because teachers plan very well to meet pupils' individual needs in lessons and throughout the day. Pupils show very good progress towards the targets set for them in individual education plans in literacy and numeracy. This represents a very good improvement since the last inspection. The few pupils who are admitted, usually beyond Year 7 and who have school phobia improve their attendance and confidence and are able to play a full part in the life of the school. Consequently, they achieve very well in line with other pupils. The few pupils who have hearing or visual special educational needs receive very effective support from the school and visiting specialists to achieve as well as other pupils. Staff ensure that they utilise their specialist equipment in all lessons and take increasing responsibility for its care as they get older. The few pupils who have autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) receive effective support through the use of aids such as the picture exchange communication system and, consequently, they understand instructions and communicate effectively to achieve as well as other pupils.
6. Pupils benefit from the school's strong emphasis on improving their communication and literacy skills to achieve very well. The large proportion of pupils who have speech and language difficulties receive the support they require to achieve very well. This is because there is a strong emphasis in lessons and throughout the school day for all pupils to improve their communication skills. Teachers plan for pupils' specific learning needs effectively and pupils receive the support they require from speech and language therapists.
7. Pupils achieve the targets for personal improvement in their individual education plans very well through staff guidance and support. They also make very good progress in developing skills in lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and developing understanding of their place in the community in citizenship lessons. Pupils' excellent relationships with each other and staff lead to discussions that help pupils develop a good understanding of social issues. The many opportunities throughout the day for pupils to explore health and personal issues for instance, at registration, circle time, break and lunch times serve to reinforce pupils learning and enhance their personal and social development. Parents value pupils achievements in personal development, particularly the way it prepares pupils for life beyond the school.

*ASDAN\*, Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network.*

*PIVATs\*, a system for measuring pupils small steps in learning in subjects.*

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

Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are **very good**. Their spiritual, moral and social development are **very good** overall. Attendance is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have a keen desire to learn and many like school so much that they do not want to leave.
- Their relationships with staff and with other pupils are excellent.
- Pupils are very keen to help others.
- Pupils' spiritual and cultural development are promoted extremely well.

### **Commentary**

8. Pupils are very enthusiastic when talking about their experiences in school. The atmosphere of the school is one of lively curiosity and excitement with pupils engaging in all activities with enthusiasm and good humour. Attitudes in lessons are very positive. Consequently, no time is lost as pupils move quickly from one task to another in lessons and from lesson to lesson.

## Exclusions

### Ethnic background of pupils

### Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	81	2	0

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

9. Staff expectations of pupils' behaviour are very high and pupils respond to the consistent behaviour management strategies in place to behave very well and respect each other. There were only two fixed term exclusions in the previous year. This is low in relation to similar schools. The school is free from any form of harassment. Parents comment upon how their children make enormous progress in social skills in a very short time. Pupils work together extremely well and show strong mutual support for each other. They ensure that each plays a full part in lessons irrespective of their difficulties and contributes to the strength of the school community and have a strong sense of belonging. The school helps pupils to develop their moral awareness very well. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and benefit from the very effective role models of staff.
10. Pupils are encouraged very well to develop both self-confidence and social skills. Independence and a strong sense of community are thoroughly developed through a wide range of experiences such as helping in the classroom and taking part in musical performances and plays. Social skills are further developed through opportunities to help in school and pupils willingly put themselves up for election for the 'buddy system' and the school council. Pupils also have a wider involvement through becoming representatives on the school's 'Eco-school Committee'\* and, consequently, make a very positive contribution to improve the school grounds. By virtue of this, and further opportunities to serve on the pupil council for Gateshead, pupils learn to take responsibility for others and recognise the demands of serving a community. Although there are very good opportunities for pupils to mix with their peers from other local schools at sports and arts events, there are few opportunities for pupils to learn alongside their peers to improve their social development.
11. Pupils develop their cultural and spiritual awareness exceptionally well. They are proud of their local area and when painting and drawing, often choose to depict landmarks such as the Angel of the North and the 'Millennium Bridge' over the river Tyne. In history and geography, pupils explore the rich legacy of their area and past for instance in the famous local park. The display of pupils' work throughout the school, particularly art, is outstanding and reflects a study of many cultures and faiths. Art, music and drama provide pupils with very good opportunities to both experience and perform material from a range of cultures. This is enhanced extremely well through pupils working with artists and writers in residence, and musicians to complement class work and deepen pupils' understanding. Pupils' commitment and achievement in participating in music lessons and events is exceptionally good. Their written work and poems have a very powerful spiritual message. Class assemblies provide excellent opportunities for reflection and work in religious education provides pupils with an understanding of many religions.

### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year, 2002-2003 (91%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	9.2	School data :	0
National data:	11	National data:	0.5

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

12. Pupils are keen to attend and the school has good procedures to check up and encourage pupils to be present. Consequently, attendance is good and is better than in similar schools. Most pupils arrive by organised transport that is usually prompt and so the start and end of the school day are orderly.

*'Eco-school Committee' \*, a committee of pupils, staff, parents, officials and members of the community that meets in school regularly and oversees improvements to the school grounds.*

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **very high** quality of education for its pupils. Teaching and learning and the curriculum are very good and enriched extremely well through lunchtime and after school activities. The quality of teaching is very good. Learning resources are good but accommodation is unsatisfactory. Pupils receive very good care, guidance and support and pupils' views are taken into account extremely well. The school has established a good partnership with parents, links with other schools and outstanding links with the community.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan lessons very well.
- Teachers make lessons interesting.
- Staff work together as an effective team to ensure that pupils make very good progress.
- Teachers plan very well to ensure that lessons provide equal opportunities for pupils to learn.
- The procedures to assess pupils' progress are very good.
- Teachers make the most of unsatisfactory accommodation for learning.

### Commentary

13. The very high quality of teaching represents a very good improvement which senior managers have ensured since the last inspection. There has been particularly good improvement in the way that teachers plan lessons. Lessons in English and mathematics are consistently well planned. The successful introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have had a particularly positive effect and teachers usually use the format of a clear introduction at the beginning of the lesson and check what has been learnt at the end in nearly all lessons in other subjects. Teachers usually explain to pupils what they will learn at the beginning of a lesson. This is generally done effectively and contributes to very good teaching and learning. For example, in a lesson for pupils in Year 11, the teacher explained very well so that pupils were clear from the start of the lesson what they would be learning in mathematics. This enabled the class to reflect on what they had learnt at the end of the lesson and enabled the teacher to determine what each had understood. Occasionally, this is done less successfully, for instance, in a mathematics lesson for pupils in Years 7 and 8 to work in hundreds, tens and units, pupils lacked a clear understanding of why they were completing the tasks. This made it difficult for them to judge how well they had achieved.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 50 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (6%)	28 (56%)	13 (26%)	6 (12%)	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. Care should be exercised when interpreting percentages since one lesson represents 2%.

14. Teachers often plan to make lessons stimulating through utilising interesting resources and exciting activities such as visits out of school. For example, there are an extensive range of maps, illustrations and models, including a large-scale model of 'Katie Morag Island' to accompany the reading books for pupils in the primary department. As pupils participate in making models such as flocks of sheep and illustrating characters and events in the book, they are reinforcing learning. When pupils read books together in English lessons, the stories come alive and they refer to the artefacts to have a very clear idea about the characters and setting. Pupils were highly motivated by the activity in a lesson in PHSE to develop planning skills to organise a class visit to a local forest. The teacher ensured that all pupils were clear about the location and route through a very good selection of maps and photographs. These heightened pupils' interest and contributed to pupils making very good progress in working with each other and taking responsibility for planning their part of the visit.
15. Teachers make very effective arrangements in lessons for teaching assistants to help pupils to learn. Teaching assistants lead significant aspects of the work in school such as leading sports clubs and providing expert support to pupils in information and communication technology (ICT) lessons. They share teachers' very good knowledge of the wide range of pupils' special educational needs, and are alert to pupils' needs to give them support according to pupils' individual targets for learning. Although teaching assistants are often assigned to support individuals or groups of pupils during lessons, they are particularly good at stepping back on occasions, to encourage pupils to solve problems independently. They challenge pupils regularly to think by careful use of questions, providing guidance and advice for pupils and this often leads to pupils solving problems for themselves.
16. All lessons are planned very effectively to meet pupils' wide range of special educational needs. There is effective planning for pupils who have physical needs to participate in the same activities, and pupils who have communication needs receive the support they require. Pupils who have visual, hearing or ASD receive carefully planned support. For instance, during an English lesson for pupils in Years 10 and 11, the teaching assistant checks that a pupil with visual impairment can use the dictionary. This enabled the pupil to locate words as part of the assignment to contribute to a quiz for the school magazine, and promoted the pupil's independence. The few pupils who attend because of school phobia receive sympathetic support and develop confidence through the positive comments they receive about their achievements and, consequently, they make very good progress towards achieving their individual targets for learning and participating with others.
17. Teachers and support staff are very skilled at noting pupils' progress during lessons and checking how well they have understood new concepts. This enables teachers to set work very well to match pupils' increasing level of understanding. Teachers keep very detailed records of pupils' progress in all subjects which are checked termly. Pupils are assessed regularly using PIVATs. This is supplemented by a range of suitable tests for literacy and through nationally recognised accreditation in Year 11. Very good use is made of the results obtained from the assessment of pupils' progress in subjects. For example, they are used to place Year 10 and 11 pupils in teaching groups, which are very well matched to their attainment levels, and to set pupils' individual targets. Pupils are involved informally in evaluating their progress and setting targets, but there are no formal established procedures to involve pupils in their own assessment.
18. The classrooms set limitations of how lessons can be planned. Their size, layout and lack of storage space for the good learning resources means that it is often difficult to plan for pupils to move to work in groups. For instance, pupils in wheelchairs may need to sit where it is convenient rather than in a specific place. However, staff ensure that they make up for this by moving to help the pupils. Teachers are very skilled at making the best use of the limited space to make classrooms attractive and exciting places for pupils to learn. It is significant that when

teachers have access to superior accommodation as in music and off-site swimming, they ensure that pupils' achievement is excellent.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is **very good** with **excellent** opportunities for enrichment. Resources for learning are good but accommodation is unsatisfactory.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school provides a very good range of subjects and courses.
- The curriculum meets the wide range of special educational needs presented by the pupils.
- The school provides an excellent range of interesting activities beyond lessons.
- Few pupils are given the opportunity to attend lessons with mainstream pupils.
- The building restricts the development of several subjects.

## **Commentary**

19. The school provides a very rich curriculum, There has been a very good improvement since the last inspection to increase the length of the teaching day and to provide very good opportunities for pupils to improve their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. To compliment this, staff have received very effective training to improve substantially their skills in the teaching of those subjects. The curriculum for children in the foundation stage provides very well for children, preparing them to move into the main school. The written planning provided for teachers to follow in lessons has improved significantly for all subjects and ensures that there is consistency in what pupils are learning so that they learn systematically as they move through the school.
20. The range of courses leading to qualifications in Years 10 and 11 has been improved significantly to include GCSE, Entry Level and ASDAN. These provide for the wide range of ability and special educational needs of pupils and enable all pupils, including those who are school phobic to achieve very well. The curriculum has been very well adapted to meet the needs of individual pupils. For example, pupils with visual or hearing impairment are very well supported to participate in all lessons. Staff are well versed in ensuring the best use of pupils specialist equipment and ensure that it is always available. There is very effective planning for pupils with physical needs to participate, for instance, through special seating or suitably modified activities. The speech therapist monitors pupils who have speech and language difficulties and, when required pupils follow language programmes in lessons under her guidance. The few pupils, who have ASD, follow the same tasks as other members of the class but suitably modified to meet their needs.
21. There is an excellent range of stimulating activities provided beyond lessons. At lunchtimes and after lessons, the school is buzzing with many clubs such as gardening and magazine groups. Pupils really enjoy the activities and are keen to attend. In an after school dance club, pupils of all ages came together to practice their performance for the 'summer extravaganza'. The group included two pupils with significant physical disabilities who gave their all and produced a really lively performance. Pupils take part in many sporting competitions and challenges. The line dance team recently entered the Gateshead Line Dancing Festival. Additional activities are very effective in developing pupils' skills and raising self-esteem. The school provides excellent residential experiences, which have included opportunities to go skiing, camping in the Lake District and sailing as crew on a tall ship.
22. The school has developed links with mainstream schools and colleges and pupils from mainstream schools participate in the after school clubs and events such as a Book Day. Pupils from a local primary school join pupils in The Cedars for occasional lessons. A few pupils have also been integrated back into mainstream schools. However, at the present time, individual pupils do not benefit from opportunities to attend classes or activities at mainstream schools. This restricts their capacity to develop independence and life skills.

23. The school has a highly effective group of staff who have created a pleasant and stimulating environment in the school. The grounds have been developed imaginatively to provide very good play and social areas. Despite the best efforts of staff, the building is unsatisfactory and, in some cases, poor. There is a lack of storage space, which further restricts small classrooms and makes pupil movement difficult around the school. The hall is unsatisfactory for physical education and it is very poor that there are no changing facilities. The classroom for art and design technology is poor. The library in the multipurpose dining room does not provide a suitable place for private study and there are few suitable areas for staff to provide pupils with small group or individual support. Although the school manages it well, the entrance area is very cramped for the arrival and departure of pupils. The fabric of the building shows signs of significant deterioration. There is difficulty in regulating the heat of the building in south facing classrooms and arranging ventilation and this has a detrimental effect upon providing an effective learning environment.
24. Resources for learning are good although there is too little storage space for them. The school has a good range of reference books for pupils of all ages and a very good range of books to teach reading. Although there are sufficient computers, the lack of interactive computer whiteboards does not reflect current developments. However, several rooms present difficulties in their installation because of their unsuitable design.

### Care, guidance and support

The school ensures that pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **very good**. It provides them with **very good** support and guidance and involves them **exceptionally well** in aspects of the school's work and development.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are welcomed and introduced to school life very well.
- Pupils receive a very high standard of care.
- The school provides very good advice, support and guidance about their personal development.
- There is an outstanding school council to channel pupils' ideas and views.

### Commentary

25. The school has made very good improvements in the provision of care, guidance and support since the last inspection and addressed the weaknesses very well. Children who are new to the school receive very good opportunities to experience the learning routines in sessions at school prior to entry. The school ensures well that the support provided meets individual needs and that parents have the opportunity to meet representatives from the appropriate support agencies. The careers guidance and advice on college opportunities provided to the older pupils are good. They ensure that pupils are well prepared to attend local colleges when they leave school.
26. The school works very well with other agencies to promote health and safety and ensure that pupils are very well cared for. Arrangements for child protection are good. The designated officer is well trained. The school has effective arrangements for pupils in public care. Health and safety risk assessments are undertaken as required and governors are well involved. Risk assessments for individual pupils are effective and staff receive good training in lifting and moving pupils. The community police officer is a frequent visitor and gives talks to pupils on 'stranger danger', road safety and drugs education. A full-time community health care worker is based at the school and supports pupils well.
27. Teachers know pupils very well and provide them with a very high level of pastoral support. They are caring and sensitive to their needs. Parents confirm that their children enjoy coming to school and value the support, advice and guidance they receive very much. There are very good procedures to assess pupils' personal development. Information is used very well to set targets

and provide appropriate support and guidance. Pupils enjoy very good and trusting relationships with staff. They feel that they are valued, teachers are fair and they can turn to an adult in school if they have any concerns.

28. Pupils are exceptionally well involved in the school and its work through the senior pupils' council. Pupils are developing their confidence and independence exceedingly well. They identify issues and debate them with vigour and maturity, showing leadership as they represent the best interests of their peers. For example, at one meeting an issue of potential reductions in transport services was discussed. All members were unanimous in their commitment to try and influence the authorities and an action plan was established. The council's standing and credibility is highly evident as it often writes to parents and others on very important issues. Other distinct features of the council include a comprehensive annual review of its work.

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

There is a **good** partnership between the school and parents, other schools and colleges. Links with the community are **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents have good opportunities to express their views and make suggestions to the school.
- They are well informed about the school and their children's standards and progress.
- Parents' involvement in their children's learning at school and at home, is good.
- Links in the community help to enrich the curriculum and support learning very well.
- There are few links with mainstream schools for pupils to share lessons.

### **Commentary**

29. The school has made good improvements to links with parents, the community and other schools overall since the last inspection. Parents enjoy very good relations with staff and this is reflected in their very high regard for the school. Staff are always happy to meet with parents to discuss concerns or problems. The school regularly sends out broad-ranging questionnaires and also consults parents on particular matters. For example, currently parents are being asked about the school timetable, duration of lunch periods and the timing of the end of the school day.
30. Parents and carers have many chances to find out about the school and how their children are doing. They value highly the regular newsletters and opportunities to discuss their children's progress with staff each term. Parents also have a high regard for pupil reports and the courses arranged for parents for example, the recent programme concerning autistic spectrum disorders. Pupils' end of year reports and annual reviews give parents a good pen picture of their children's standards and progress.
31. Parents are fully involved in pupils' annual reviews and target setting, coffee mornings and assemblies. They help with their children's learning, for example, with homework tasks. The 'League of Friends' works hard in organizing social and fundraising events for the school and a few parent helpers also give their time generously by helping in classrooms and with school trips.
32. Links in the community make a very strong contribution to pupils' personal development. For example, church representatives regularly lead assemblies in school. Pupils visit many places of worship as part of their religious education and this makes a very good contribution to their awareness of the multicultural nature of society. Pupils visit art galleries, theatres and museums. Artists, authors and musicians regularly work with pupils in school. For example, three community artists have been heavily involved in the school grounds project and this provided the opportunity for pupils to learn about sculpture. The school puts much back into the community. For instance, it often fundraises for charities and good causes. The subject leader for physical education is very active in supporting local schools with their pupils who have special educational needs through her role as Schools Sports Co-ordinator.

33. There is a good link with a local primary school for several pupils to visit The Cedars School to share occasional lessons. There is a strong link with local schools to share a 'book day.' The school has a good link with Gateshead College to enable senior pupils to sample the further education courses on offer. A few pupils transfer back into mainstream schools. However, opportunities for pupils to share lessons with pupils in local schools are insufficient. The school acknowledges this and is trying to improve links and opportunities for all pupils.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the headteacher and other senior staff is **very good**. Governance of the school is also **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher has a clear long-term vision for the future of the school.
- Senior managers carry out their responsibilities effectively.
- Plans are clearly stated for the continuing improvement of the school.
- Governors are well informed about all aspects of the school's work.
- The school rigorously evaluates its work.
- Finances are managed very efficiently.

### **Commentary**

34. The headteacher's leadership and management is very good. It provides the decisiveness and the sense of direction for the work of the school which has had a significant effect upon ensuring that the school has improved very well since the last inspection. Nearly all the weaknesses apparent at that time have been resolved. The improvements to the accommodation for learning that are still required are largely beyond the school's control. The headteacher and governors are well aware that the limitations of the present school building, which is in need of substantial repair and upgrading to bring it in line with current expectations, is their greatest challenge. However, the school has been taking very effective action to explore alternatives with the LEA to find a solution, looking, in particular, at how other schools have resolved similar difficulties.
35. Senior managers provide very effective support to the leadership and management of the school. This is underpinned by a good level of investment in training to ensure that staff have the necessary skills to carry out their jobs well. This is particularly apparent in the improvement in teaching brought about through the advice and support of senior managers since the last inspection. Procedures to manage the performance of staff are well established and senior managers appropriately include non-teaching staff in career development strategies and discussions. This has led to teaching assistants undertaking significant responsibility within the school and an enthusiasm to gain further qualifications.
36. The school development plan is a wide-ranging document that sets out the school's intentions for improvements very clearly. By involving all staff in its construction the headteacher ensures that ownership and responsibilities are shared. This has led for instance, to improvements in the quality of teaching through senior managers visiting lessons and providing advice to improve. The plan is reviewed termly with the governors. The deputy and assistant headteachers provide good very good support to the headteacher and fully share views of how the school should develop.
37. Governance of the school is very good. Governors keep abreast of the school's work and priorities with a link governor associated with every subject, visit the school regularly and a few help in lessons. Subject leaders regularly make presentations to governors about what pupils are learning and any developments in their subject. This ensures that decisions they take are well informed.



38. The school reviews its performance very well. When pupils are not making the progress expected in a subject area it is picked up quickly and strategies are put in place. When assessment showed that pupils in Years 7 to 11 were not making as much progress as teachers felt they could in personal skills, the amount of taught time for PSHE and citizenship was increased through more support in tutorial groups. Subject leaders check teachers' planning and samples of pupils' work very well to ensure that teachers consistently grade pupils' work accurately. This ensures that pupils make steady progress as they move through the school. The school is responding well to make changes in line with the need for workforce reform to provide time for teachers' planning, preparation and liaison with teaching assistants. For instance, consultation with parents and carers about the reorganisation of the school week is intended to provide more time for subject leaders to undertake their roles.

## Financial information

### Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	821598	Balance from previous year	36786
Total expenditure	784604	Balance carried forward to the next	36715
Expenditure per pupil	9686		

39. The headteacher and governors, in partnership with finance officers from the local education authority, manage finances very well. Priorities for spending are agreed appropriately in consultation with subject leaders and other staff. The headteacher has been proactive in raising funds to pay for major school improvements such as developing the grounds and providing an attractive outdoor environment. The balance carried forward has been facilitated through prudent financial management and is suitably earmarked to support an important range of improvements in the school development plan.

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

### AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

*There are only four children attending full time, therefore judgements are made about their overall achievement rather than in each of the areas of learning. The foundation stage teacher has been absent for several months and the regular teaching assistant was absent during the inspection week. Seven sessions and part sessions were observed in the foundation stage class.*

The provision for children in the foundation stage is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses across the areas of learning

- Children achieve very well.
- Staff work very well together to support pupils' learning.
- Children quickly develop confidence.
- Systems to assess children's progress are thorough.

#### Commentary

40. Children make very good progress during their time in the foundation stage and this is very effective preparation to move on to the next stage of education. It is an indication of the very good leadership and management of the headteacher and head of department that the school has responded effectively to ensure that teaching and learning is very good. This ensures that children's education has not been adversely affected due to staff absence. Through advice and support from the school and specialists from the local education authority, temporary arrangements have maintained the very good improvement since the last inspection.
41. When teachers plan for children to make progress towards the required early learning goals in each learning area, there is a strong emphasis in all activities to encourage children to improve their **communication, language and literacy**. The staff team work very effectively together. They ask questions and encourage children to reply, praising them when they do so. In lessons when there is a particular focus on communication, language and literacy and in other lessons during the day, staff record constantly pupils' significant moments in learning. They take notes of children's first attempt at words or instructions they have understood or a reaction when they hear a sound. This information is used very effectively for to plan for pupils to improve skills further.
42. Children are making small steps towards reading through very good use of resources, including opportunities to look at 'big books'. For example, when they follow the story of 'The three bears' this includes using toys and models to bring the story to life. The teacher provides a good link with numeracy for children to match a breakfast to each bear. There are good opportunities for children to begin to develop writing skills by making marks on paper in response to the story. Through systematic planning, children begin to understand numbers and make progress in **mathematical development**. There are frequent opportunities for children to count and staff know children very well in order to match the task to their needs such as counting to five when they had earlier indicated that they could count to four. Following a numeracy lesson to consolidate counting and subtraction through singing about ducks on a pond, staff encouraged children to count collections of toys and objects placed strategically throughout the room.
43. Children develop confidence when they start school through gradually spending more time in class. Consequently, they settle in very well. The few who are attending during a period of assessment make progress in line with other children because they receive the support they require to learn that is carefully matched to their needs. Very effective classroom routines make a strong contribution to promoting children's **personal, social and emotional development**.

When children arrive in the morning they confidently greet staff. They are growing more familiar with the routines of the day as a result of the teacher setting out what they will learn at the start of a session and they have progressed well to making choices of activities. They co-operate and work together through staff encouragement. This was evident when one child was at the 'class shop' with a teaching assistant and the tasks seemed so exciting that other children chose to join the activity and they developed good skills in playing together and sharing.

44. In **creative development**, children experience working with a variety of media. Children make models and paint. In one session they explored patterns choosing different colours of paint that was mixed with powder and created patterns with their hands. They regularly sing familiar songs with the teacher accompanying them on the guitar. They benefit from lessons from visiting musicians and have the opportunity to use percussion instruments. There are very effective links for children to make progress in different areas of learning through imaginative play, particularly their **knowledge and understanding of the world**. On several occasions, children were observed role playing being on holiday. They have visited a local travel agent and there is a 'travel agent's shop' in the class. Children plan where they are going to go on holiday. They enjoy getting prepared by selecting and packing recognisable items in bags and choose hats and sunglasses to wear. Staff are alert to build upon the drama by encouraging pupils to count by matching sunglasses to each other and develop children's language by asking where they are going and what and who they will see. Consequently children find learning fun.
45. There is a very good partnership with therapists to support children with physical and communication needs. Children benefit very well from lessons with the specialist teacher of physical education to further their **physical development**. They are becoming confident in using the large apparatus in the small space in the hall to improve their balance by walking along a beam. The school has improved accommodation by providing a good outdoor play area and this, together with the school grounds enables children to play on large apparatus and to take part in regular physical activities.
46. The informal collection of information on children's progress is enhanced very well by the comprehensive systems of assessment. Records of the class progress are appropriately based on nationally recognised steps in learning to check against how well children are progressing towards the required early learning goals of the foundation stage curriculum. This has been supplemented well by further systems to collect more detailed information for those children with more complex needs. The school has developed thorough systems to keep records of the few children who are undergoing assessment. This enables the school, in consultation with others, to guide decisions about the best future placement for the child.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 to 4

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

*One lesson was observed in French, pupils' work was scrutinised and discussions held. Judgements are not made regarding achievement, progress, teaching and learning or provision in the subject.*

#### French

47. Although the French teacher is absent, the school has made very effective arrangements with a local language college for a specialist teacher to continue taking lessons. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 build up skills in speaking and listening to French. They consolidate simple vocabulary and listen well to return the teacher's greeting and say how they feel in French. When they answer questions about dates, the teacher uses very good methods to help them to remember the month order and in particular the month of their birthday. This includes using signs for the months and humorous mnemonics. Their books show they are making progress in writing French and well as in speaking the language. Although the room used for French is small for such a large group, staff circulate well to include everyone in the lesson.

48. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 develop an understanding of French as part of the ASDAN course of international study. They learn important facts about life in countries including France and useful words and phrases. They learn about French life and culture and have reviewed a French film they watched. Pupils have developed a greater understanding of the European Community. No pupils achieved GCSEs last year, but several pupils have completed their study of French for GCSE and await the results. This includes an oral assignment. Pupils have built up a suitable range of vocabulary and useful expressions. This has enabled them to write a passage about a holiday in French.

## English

*Seven lessons were seen in English, work scrutinised, discussions held with pupils and staff and information gathered regarding literacy in other subjects.*

Provision in English is **very good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan very well to meet pupils' individual needs. Consequently, all achieve equally well.
- Teachers assess pupils' progress very well.
- Pupils follow a very high quality curriculum throughout the school.
- There are very good strategies in place to help pupils to acquire skills in literacy.
- Subject leaders support colleagues well.
- Pupils' literacy skills are promoted very well in all subjects of the curriculum.

## Commentary

49. Teachers are very skilled at adapting work to meet pupils' requirements. This includes the large number of pupils who have additional special educational needs. Pupils make very good progress in lessons and achieve very well in developing skills in reading, writing and speaking and listening. This was evident in a very good lesson where pupils in Years 2 and 3 studied the story of 'Katie Morag'. A higher attaining pupil was set a challenging writing task where the work was structured so that he could learn to work independently. He responded very well to this, writing simple sentences and self-correcting any spelling errors that he noticed. Meanwhile, two pupils, including a pupil with a significant difficulty in writing, were given very good support so that they could record their answers using computers. A third group worked very well together with the teacher with a focus on developing reading skills. As their reading books were at just the right level and the teacher was expert in teaching reading, they achieved very well in recognising words and understanding the story.

50. Pupils' progress is very carefully monitored and assessed using a variety of small step assessment measurements and nationally recognised tests. Detailed reading records and regular reading assessments are used very effectively to plan pupils' reading programmes. Test results demonstrate that the majority of pupils make very good progress in reading. There is a very good range of courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11, including GCSE English Literature and English (foundation and higher tier), Entry Level and ASDAN. The school plans to extend this by introducing a qualification in 'Basic Skills'. In 2003, four pupils gained passes in English at grades E-F and two pupils gained passes in English Literature at grades D-F. There were 8 Entry Level passes, of which the majority were at the highest level. This year's targets are for pupils to achieve higher grades.

51. Pupils follow a very broad and rich curriculum and this takes good account of the National Literacy Strategy. There is a very good balance between activities to develop literacy skills and opportunities to study a wide range of literature, write in different genres and for different purposes. Pupils produce writing of a very high standard. For example, when writing their own books, pupils in Years 7 and 8 wrote a story plan and redrafted their work several times to

correct grammar and spelling before printing out the final version. An excellent variety and quality of additional activities support learning in lessons. There is a 'magazine club,' which encourages pupils to read in their free time. The 'Cedars Magazine,' produced by the pupils, is of a very high standard and pupils will use the facilities at the local newspaper office to improve quality further. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 have benefited from a 'writer in residence' project to produce some very good poetry and play scripts. Teachers have provided excellent interactive charts to promote reading and writing linked to the Euro 2004 football tournament. Pupils celebrate World Book Day and have good opportunities to see performances by professional actors. Those in Years 7 and 8 saw 'Oliver Twist', at the Theatre Royal in Newcastle.

52. Pupils in the secondary department who are still experiencing difficulties acquiring literacy skills, receive very good additional support through the weekly literacy support sessions, run by the secondary subject leader. This is a very effective strategy to ensure that pupils develop important literacy skills. The speech and language therapist works with selected pupils in several English lessons to provide additional support.
53. Leadership and management are very good. The two subject leaders work very well together to ensure the very good quality of provision throughout the school. Teachers' planning and pupils' work is very carefully monitored and this will shortly include monitoring of teaching. There has been good progress since the last inspection and all issues raised have been addressed. There is a very good collection of high quality fiction and non-fiction books but the library areas in parts of the school such as in the dining hall are not suitable for quiet study.

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

54. There are very good procedures for promoting language and literacy in all subject areas. All staff have received guidance on implementing the National Literacy Strategy to promote literacy in their subjects. One example is the use of small whiteboards to practice spellings. High quality examples of pupils' work throughout the school show strong evidence that pupils are given many opportunities to develop their writing skills for different purposes. A very good example of this is in science course work where a pupil in Year 11 wrote a technical report on the computer. Lessons in PSHE provide good opportunities for pupils to develop literacy skills. For example, pupils in Year 10 consider the importance of adjectives when they design a survey to find out what attracts a person to a partner.

## **MATHEMATICS**

*Lessons were seen in all year groups in mathematics, pupils' work was scrutinised and discussions held.*

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Subject leaders have developed the subject very well.
- Teachers use assessment very effectively to plan for all pupils to achieve equally well.
- Lessons are planned to motivate pupils very well.
- Pupils learn numeracy skills throughout the day.

### **Commentary**

55. Mathematics is led and managed very well by the subject leaders. They ensure that pupils follow work that enables them to achieve very well and make consistently very good progress as they move through the school. Together they have carried out thorough audits and devised appropriate action plans. Consequently, there has been a very good improvement since the last inspection. They have established very good opportunities for pupils to achieve through studying for both Entry level and GCSE. Last year, results were very good. Five pupils gained a GCSE

and 4 gained a grade at Entry Level. In line with the school's statutory targets for improvements, more pupils are studying for GCSE and Entry Level this year and are making very good progress towards achieving suitable grades. Younger pupils throughout the school have similarly challenging targets to achieve higher scores on PIVATs and are making very good progress towards achieving them.

56. Teaching and learning is very good. The way that mathematics is taught helps pupils to develop skills in logical thinking, use of mathematical vocabulary to formulate and solve problems, carrying out instructions methodically and co-operate together. An important factor in pupils achieving very well is because they are encouraged to work to the best of their abilities through imaginative teaching. Planning for what pupils will learn is based on thorough knowledge of the pupils' prior understanding. In a well-organised lesson for pupils in Year 2, pupils developed money skills whilst in the role of shopkeepers and customers. The activities were set according to ability and this ensured that every pupil was challenged appropriately with tasks planned to match each pupils' understanding of coins and to meet any special educational needs. The use of real objects and money helped them to acquire the necessary concepts. The use of visual timetables for the younger pupils helps them to appreciate the passage of time and the sequence of events throughout the day. Pupils with communication difficulties receive the support they require through individual explanation and with signing and picture aids to help their understanding.
57. Teachers plan interesting lessons. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 were excited to play a game to find 'golden eggs' hidden throughout the classroom. As they collected them staff encouraged them to count up to 20 according to the targets in their individual; education plans. Pupils enjoyed learning and made very good progress. In Years 10 and 11, pupils were highly motivated to programme a robot to move forward and change direction. This provided a very good opportunity for them to co-operate together to learn from each other by discussing how far the robot should move before it turned and to calculate the angle of turn. By the time pupils are in Year 11, they are encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning. Teachers therefore encourage pupils to consider the problems they have already solved before starting the next task. Consequently, they are challenged to find the patterns presented in data and devise formulae to generate further solutions.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

58. Teachers make very good use of opportunities in other subjects throughout the day to develop pupils' skills in numeracy. Most lessons in science require pupils to use and develop their skills such as taking measurements of weight and temperature and often recording results in tables and graphs. The youngest children particularly enjoy singing number songs in music and this consolidates basic skills of counting, addition and subtraction very well. Numeracy is a regular feature in physical education lessons because pupils routinely time their results, for instance, in running 30 metres and check to see if they have increased their speed.

### **SCIENCE**

*Four lessons were seen in science, pupils' work was scrutinised and discussions held.*

Provision in science is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve very well in GCSE at the end of Year 11.
- Teachers make lessons interesting.
- Occasionally, teachers' planning does not meet all pupils' needs.
- The subject is very well led.

## Commentary

59. The very good quality of the teaching and learning is amply illustrated by the success of pupils in the Entry Level and GCSE together with the detailed and precise work produced by pupils who are not taking the examinations. Pupils achieve very well. The skills of experimentation, observation and recording are very well developed from an early age. In Years 1 and 2 for example, pupils undertake a range of interesting experiments on pushing and pulling. Their recording skills are very well developed through the use of diagrams and pictures. Observational skills are enhanced through very good use of the school grounds in experiments looking at insects and small animals.
60. Teaching is challenging and lessons are exciting and encourage pupils to think and explore. By Year 6, pupils are observing the effects of magnets, measuring the growth of plants and investigating the effects of light and shade. Results are accurately recorded in graphs through the use of computers. Teachers make links with design and technology so that primary pupils make model cars of varying types and compare their performance. All pupils are very well supported and this enables pupils who represent a wide range of special educational needs, to achieve extremely well. For instance, those who have communication difficulties participate fully through the effective use of diagrams and signs, which address their individual language and literacy needs. Teachers ensure that pupils who have physical need are able to participate fully through adapting the many experiments to ensure that pupils can work as independently as possible.
61. Teaching for most secondary pupils is stimulating and interesting when led by the advanced-skills teacher. From activities as varied as studying the effects of smoking or producing a graph to illustrate the impact of stretching a spring, pupils show a very clear understanding of how to form and test a hypothesis and record the results. Although the secondary aged pupils are very well taught overall, there are occasional lessons when the teaching fails to effectively address the full range of abilities in the group.
62. The very good leadership and management of science is responsible for the significant improvements in teaching and learning since the previous inspection. The school intends to build on the very good leadership of science by increasing the time available for the subject leader to support colleagues as part of his role as an 'advanced-skills teacher'.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

*Five lessons were observed, work scrutinised, discussions held and observations of its use in several lessons in other subjects contributed to the judgements made.*

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan to meet pupils' needs very well.
- Pupils work is of a very high standard.
- Subject leaders have a positive effect on pupils' achievement.
- Computers and other forms of technology are not always available.
- ICT is used very well to support pupils' learning throughout the school.

## Commentary

63. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers plan very effectively to ensure that pupils throughout the school develop skills very well. Pupils have mastered basic skills very well in Year 2 and can use a drawing programme to create a picture. Since they are taught systematically, by the time they are in Year 4 most pupils can select the software of their choice from the desktop display, operate programmes successfully, and edit, save and print their work independently.

Since teachers plan to meet pupils' individual needs, it enables pupils to achieve equally well regardless of their special educational needs. For instance, those pupils who have physical difficulty in using computers use special switches and devices to use them in the same way as others.

64. Achievement is very good. Last year the few pupils in Years 10 and 11 who were entered either received a good grade GCSE or the highest grade at Entry Level. Pupils' current work for GCSE is impressive and they are making very good progress. Pupils have currently produced beautifully designed promotional materials such as business cards, letter-headed notepaper, fax-sheets, calendar and compliment slips, all with an attractive logo as part of their course work. Work is published on the school web-site with a message board for visitors to comment. Teachers select well from a good range of software to develop pupils' skills in all aspects of ICT, providing them with challenging and motivating work. Pupils in Year 6 conducted a survey of hair colour amongst their peers. They were able to input data using a spreadsheet programme and produce both a bar graph and a pie chart. Teachers encourage pupils and students to achieve new skills and understanding through the use of well-planned, motivating lessons, clear instructions and by encouraging them to review and evaluate their work. The standard of work in evidence in all areas of the school is very high.
65. Leadership and management are very good and has ensured very good improvements since the last inspection. Subject leaders provide very good support for their colleagues. They evaluate all aspects of the subject and operate an action plan for further improvements. The school has provided extra training for a support assistant with a particular interest in the subject, and benefits from the input she is able to give to support less confident colleagues.
66. The school now has a good number of up-to-date computers both in a computer suite and also in classes, which are networked for efficient use. As the computer suite is also used as a secondary classroom, its availability is restricted. Therefore it is more difficult for teachers to provide whole class lessons in other classrooms. This is compounded by the lack of any interactive whiteboards, although a few of the narrow classrooms would make it difficult to site them appropriately for the whole class to participate.

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

67. ICT is used very well to extend pupils' knowledge in other subjects and to provide pupils with practice in numeracy and literacy skills which is varied, motivating and fun. During the inspection, students in the secondary department were creating a computer presentation on "How to have a healthy heart", drawing on their knowledge of biology and their interest in sport. Teachers arrange very well for pupils who have communication or physical special educational needs difficulties to use computers to help them to communicate, record their work or produce written work for instance to print their poems in English.

### **HUMANITIES**

*Two lessons and two part lessons were seen in religious education. In addition, there was an observation of a visiting speaker. One lesson was seen in geography and an ICT lesson that had a link with geography but none in history. The subjects were not part of the inspection focus and judgements are not made regarding achievement, teaching and learning or provision.*

### **History and geography.**

68. Pupils have regular visits out of school to enhance their learning in history. Visits to museums enables pupils in Year 2 to compare old toys with the present day, and pupils in Years 5 and 6 to compare schools in Victorian times with their own. Pupils were able to record their experiences on return to school after sampling a simulated lesson at the museum. Several pupils in Year 11 have completed their GCSE courses in geography and history. In history, they chose to study life in prisons at different times and the settlement of the American West.



69. Geography makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural awareness and personal development as they study societies with different economic and social circumstances to their own. For example, their study of water encompassed India, Ghana, Vietnam and Tanzania and they learnt of the consequences of having insufficient water. The use of a portfolio with dated photographic records of pupils' work in the humanities is excellent.
70. Teachers successfully link geography with other areas of the curriculum. For example, pupils up to Year 2 study the fictional 'Island of Struay', and draw upon knowledge and skills from literacy, numeracy, ICT, mathematics, art and design and design and technology. They made model sheep and held a sheep show, constructed papier maché islands using a variety of natural materials, and drew an island using a computer art programme. Pupils, whilst investigating 'water', carried out a detailed investigation of the many uses of water around the school and the technology required to deliver it from the source. They produce very good booklets showing photographs of important items such as stop cock, showers and drainpipes.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' understanding of world faiths is promoted very well by effective use of the local community.
- Work in religious education plays a prominent role in extending pupils' knowledge and moral understanding.
- The subject leader provides a very good role model for other teachers to follow.

### **Commentary**

71. Teaching and learning are very good. Up until the end of Year 9, religious education is taught through work that is based on the Gateshead Agreed Syllabus. Pupils have very good opportunities to visit places of worship representing the major world faiths. For example, pupils in Years 8 and 9 have been to a Buddhist monastery and studied Christianity through visits to Durham Cathedral and a local church. Teachers are very skilled at developing and extending the understanding of religions which pupils gain on the visits through carefully thought out activities when they return to school. In a very good lesson about Judaism for pupils in Years 2 and 3, the teacher's very good questioning and use of digital photographs to prompt the pupils, enabled them to recall in detail about what they had seen when they visited a Synagogue. They knew that the religious leader was called a Rabbi. Pupils made models of Jewish religious objects, which they had seen. As the activities were very stimulating and well planned, the pupils thoroughly enjoyed them and made very good progress in understanding Judaism.
72. Pupils throughout the school achieve very well. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow accredited courses in religious studies. In 2003, five pupils attained GCSE passes at grades C to F and three pupils attained Entry level. Pupils take great care with their course work, which is of a high standard. This year a pupil has produced a mature and thoughtful piece of work about a Christian marriage. Since pupils are given many very good opportunities to reflect and consider moral issues, religious education makes a strong contribution to their spiritual and moral development. Examples of this were highlighted when a visiting speaker from a national children's charity helped pupils in Years 7 and 8 to consider what it means to be homeless and destitute. Teachers ensure that pupils consider communities beyond their own. This happened when Year 11 pupils discussed whether Christians could support apartheid. Pupils were impressive in their willingness and ability to express sensible and thoughtful opinions.
73. The subject leader provides very good leadership and management and has developed the subject well since the last inspection and has guided other teachers very well. Teachers'

planning and pupils' work is carefully monitored and pupils' progress is thoroughly assessed to ensure pupils throughout the school achieve consistently well.

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

*Only two lessons were observed in design and technology so judgements are not made about the provision, teaching or learning. Three lessons were seen in both art and design and music and four in physical education and swimming.*

### **Design and technology**

74. Pupils up to the end of Year 6 develop their understanding of working with a range of materials. Skills of measuring, fastening and joining are well developed and pupils' achievements are helped by the close links with teaching in science. Pupils have good opportunities to improve design skills, as shown by the Year 2 work on designing a wheeled vehicle. Older pupils follow a well-structured teaching programme in food technology, which is facilitated by good accommodation. Whilst studying resistant materials a few pupils achieve success in external examinations and produce test pieces illustrating their understanding of making and design, such as nesting boxes. The skills of the support staff enable a broadening of the curriculum to include wider skills such as bricklaying and the design of ceramic tiles. Although there is a very good room for food technology, other accommodation for design technology is poor. Cramped conditions and lack of storage space inhibit the range of activities that can be undertaken at secondary level.

### **Art and Design**

Provision in art and design is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The presentation of pupils' work in art is exceptionally good.
- Pupils in Year 11 achieve very well in GCSEs.
- Art makes a very significant contribution to pupils' cultural and spiritual development.
- Accommodation for art fails to reflect the very high quality of the work produced.

### **Commentary**

75. The work in art which pupils produce is of very high quality and pupils throughout the school achieve very well. This reflects the very high standards of teaching and learning. From experimenting with colour in Year 2, to pupils in Year 11 producing a three-dimensional sculpture, pupils are enthused and encouraged through imaginative and stimulating teaching. Pupils develop skills of colour and shape in Years 1 and 2. Their work shows the beginning of an understanding of how colour and shape can be combined to produce patterns and representation of figures. By Year 6, very good guidance from teachers and the use of sketchbooks enables pupils to develop the observational skills. From Year 7, pupils demonstrate very good achievement in the use of a wide range of media, such as pottery, painting and sculpture. Pupils who have physical special educational needs benefit from very effective support, which enables them to participate fully in lessons and to enjoy the experience of creation.

76. It is noteworthy that pupils achieve very well in their GCSE assessments. Last year 2 pupils gained high grades in GCSE and three additional pupils achieved at Entry Level. Eight pupils are studying for GCSE this year and the standard of their coursework is very high, indicating continuing improvement.

77. A significantly positive feature of the very good quality of teaching and learning is the degree to which art is used to develop pupils' awareness of both local and other cultures. Pupils produce art in the style of a range of famous painters as well as using this work in other subjects as a

basis for discussion. Local culture is strongly represented with paintings of the Tyne bridges and the Angel of the North forming the feature of several pupils' work. Pupils work with artists in residence and they have produced magnificent woodcarvings in the school grounds.

78. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader has energetically addressed the range of issues that were identified in the previous report to ensure that there has been very good progress. She has successfully ensured that art plays an important role in the life of the school. The school has received recognition of the quality of work through the acquisition of an Arts Mark Gold Award. This is all the more significant given that the accommodation is of poor quality. It requires the best efforts of the staff to ensure that work of such very high quality is produced from a portable classroom which is in such a poor state of repair. There is little room for pupils to leave ongoing work or to set out larger items they are working on.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils consistently rise to the challenge of the teacher's high expectations.
- Music makes a powerful contribution to pupils' cultural experiences.
- Working for GCSE allows students to gain external recognition for the quality of their work.

## **Commentary**

79. The subject specialist is enthusiastic and has extremely high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teaching and learning is excellent and has ensured that pupils make outstanding progress and achieve exceptionally well. At the time of the inspection, primary pupils were preparing for a 'world music,' festival where they will perform songs in several languages alongside 22 other schools. Standards in singing are remarkably good in relation to pupils' communication difficulties. Pupils can sing in parts with varying pitch and expression and respond to the rhythms with dance movements. All pupils sing with evident joy and their ability to learn and perform in unfamiliar languages is impressive, especially as many pupils experience language, balance and movement difficulties. Pupils who have school phobia develop confidence in their own performance and participate equally well. Pupils in wheelchairs find their own ways of expressing themselves through movement, and, during rehearsal one boy had the confidence to let go of his walking frame and dance to the rhythm of the music, under the watchful eye of a teaching assistant.
80. In making music together, the pupils overcome their learning difficulties, with great benefits to their self-esteem and confidence. Through their links with The Sage, Gateshead's new national music centre, the school benefits from a wide range of visitors bringing their talents and cultural traditions to share with the pupils. Some examples from the current academic year include an African drumming workshop, tap-dancing display, a gospel group and African dancers.
81. The subject leader provides outstandingly good leadership and management. Her enthusiasm has encouraged pupils to follow the example and be extremely keen to play music and take part in school productions. There has been a very good improvement since the last inspection and the quality of music has been recognised through its contribution to the school receiving the Arts Mark Gold Award. Pupils in Year 11 study for a GCSE in Expressive Arts. They are confident performers and having completed their GCSE course they have embarked upon preparation for a performance. In a short time, they have written words and composed music to play an instrumental accompaniment to their singing.

## **Physical Education**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The subject leader provides excellent leadership in physical education to the school and community.
- Commitment from staff has ensured that there is an outstanding range of sporting opportunities for pupils beyond lessons.
- Achievement in swimming is excellent.
- Accommodation for physical education on the school site is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

82. The subject leader's exemplary leadership and management has ensured that pupils' achievement has improved very well since the last inspection. The subject leader also provides guidance to other schools as part of her role in the Schools Sports Co-ordinator initiative. This enhances the school's already strong sporting links in the community. Pupils attend sports clubs at lunchtime and after school clubs with pupils from other schools on four evenings each week, including dance and football training by Newcastle United. The quality of provision is exemplified by the achievement of the Sportsmark Gold Award with distinction. Pupils follow a very rich programme of physical education.
83. There are very good opportunities for accreditation through GCSE and Entry Level courses and pupils progress very well towards junior sports leader's awards, both in theory lessons and when they help with younger pupils during lessons and clubs. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are excellent in lessons. Lunchtime and after school clubs are very well attended. This is enhanced through opportunities for senior pupils to provide voluntary support. Many pupils participate in local, regional and national competitions through the generous time that staff dedicate to out of school activities. This includes many weekend events and residential activities. Pupils achieve exceptionally well in participation and competition with other schools.
84. The school recognises that pupils can achieve outstandingly well in swimming and ensures that all pupils receive swimming lessons every week. This has led to a very high reputation for the standards achieved. In one lesson, pupils in Years 7 to 9 demonstrated that several were achieving in swimming different strokes in advance of the level expected for their age. Through the expert teaching of the subject leader, a volunteer instructor, school and pool staff working as an effective team, pupils made excellent efforts for the whole lesson. Higher achieving pupils alternated between swimming hundreds of metres using the crawl and other strokes to following exercises to develop arm and leg technique. Many pupils compete for the school in local and national competitions and several are undergoing international trials.
85. As a result of very good teaching, pupils throughout the school achieve very well in physical education in spite of the unsatisfactory accommodation. Since planning is very effective to meet pupils' individual needs, those with physical difficulties follow tasks that enable them to make equally very good progress. Staff understand pupils very well and ensure that pupils who have communication difficulties receive the support to understand what they have to do and make their needs known. Although resources and equipment for physical education are very good, the lack of storage means that most of the items cover a large part of the hall floor and render it only suitable for a limited range of activities. However, the teacher plans very successfully to use this space for pupils in Year 5 to warm up at the start of a lesson by varying their types of jumps and demonstrating that they understand the effect of exercise on the heart and body. The teacher planned very well for pupils in Years 7 and 8 to run individually around the 300 metres environmental path. As in all lessons, there is very effective planning to match pupils' needs. An example is the opportunity for pupils in wheelchairs to participate in slaloms as other pupils try hurdles across the playground. Although the school has done all it can to improve the grounds, there has not been enough progress in improving facilities for physical education and changing since the last inspection.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

*Six lessons were seen in personal, social and health education and citizenship. Observations of staff promoting pupils' social and personal development throughout the day contributed to the judgements made.*

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are learning how to be good citizens.
- They have many opportunities to develop their personal and social skills throughout the day.
- Pupils are very well prepared for leaving school.

### Commentary

86. All pupils follow a very good curriculum that has been very carefully planned by the two subject leaders who lead and manage the subject very well. This has ensured that pupils achieve very well in personal and social development and develop a very good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and their responsibilities as citizens. For example, in a very good lesson, pupils in Years 4 and 5 remembered their visit to the mayor's office. During the lesson a pupil played the role of mayor to debate whether schools should be open on Saturdays. All joined in sensibly and enthusiastically making points such as "it should be closed so you can have fun with your friends" and "it should stay open so you can learn more." At the end of the debate the pupils held a secret ballot to decide the issue. These very well thought out practical experiences motivated the pupils and resulted in a very good understanding of the role of their local council.
87. Teaching and learning is very good. Teachers and assistants ensure that pupils continue to develop skills during the many opportunities they receive throughout the day to learn personal and social skills. There is effective planning for this in circle time for pupils up to Year 6 and in tutorial sessions for older pupils. The vast range of additional activities such as lunchtime clubs, sporting activities and opportunities to perform enable pupils to develop their self-confidence very well. There are many very well thought out strategies to teach pupils how to care for each other and take responsibility. Younger pupils vote for playground 'buddies' who will help and support them and prefects in Years 10 and 11 take on duties such as running the tuck shop and delivering the milk to classrooms.
88. Pupils participate in many activities to help others in the community. They collected food parcels for the Salvation Army at Christmas and raised funds for a school for orphans in Tanzania. The school promotes healthy lifestyles very well through activities such as the 'no smoking day' and holds the Healthy School Award Gold Award. Pupils are prepared well for life beyond school through careers guidance, work experience and 'preparation for adult life' lessons. They learn life skills such as how to shop for and prepare a healthy snack. The subject has improved well since the last inspection. Teachers planning and pupils' work are very carefully monitored and there are plans for subject leaders to check on teaching in other classes.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	2
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>2</b>
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	1
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	1
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7). \* In a special school such as this, "standards achieved" are judged in relation to pupils' individual targets and not in relation to national standards.*