

INSPECTION REPORT

LONGTOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Longtown, Carlisle

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 133387

Headteacher: David Ratcliff

Lead inspector: John D Eadie

Dates of inspection: 10th to 12th November 2003

Inspection number: 259895

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	210
School address:	Mary Street Longtown Carlisle
Postcode:	CA6 5UG
Telephone number:	01228 791203
Fax number:	01228 792578
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Frank Johnson
Date of previous inspection:	No previous inspection

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Longtown Primary School was opened in September 2002 as a result of the merger of the separate Infant and Junior Schools. About 70 per cent of the pupils come from the town with the remainder coming from a number of outlying small rural communities. Much of the town contains social housing and there is a sizeable number of pupils from single parent families. There are areas of significant deprivation in the town and in some of the rural communities. All pupils are of white British heritage and speak English as their home language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average and most of these pupils have problems with their speaking, reading and writing. The school won the Healthy Schools Award in its first year. Attainment on entry to the school is well below average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20191	Mr J D Eadie	Lead inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology Music Personal, social and health education
13395	Mrs J Illingworth	Lay inspector	
15414	Mr D Carrington	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Geography History
20326	Mr P Clark	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education
10204	Mr D Vincent	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Religious education

The inspection contractor was:

TRIO Inspections Ltd

Unit 2
Barclays Venture Centre
University of Warwick Science Park
Sir William Lyons Road
Coventry

CV4 7EZ

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Longtown Primary is a satisfactory but improving school. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the future of the school, shared by all staff. Because of this, there is a tremendous capacity for improvement which is supported by the good management and governance of the school. The quality of teaching is good and consequently the pupils learn well. Although standards are still below average at the age of eleven, pupils are achieving satisfactorily. They are achieving well in Years 1 and 2. One of the main barriers to achievement is the quality of spoken English of the children when they join the school. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in English, mathematics and science are below average by the time the pupils leave.
- The leadership of the school is very strong and there is a real sense of teamwork in the school. Because of this the school is progressing well.
- There is a consistency about the good quality of teaching throughout the school that is helping to raise achievement.
- Many of the pupils have a very limited vocabulary and are not able to express themselves clearly.
- Standards in information and communication technology are below average.
- There is good provision for those pupils with special educational needs.
- There have been considerable improvements in standards of behaviour since the school opened.

As a new school there is no previous inspection report. However, the school has made considerable progress in its short life. The management of the school has ensured the successful merging of two very different schools and has enabled two separate staff, parents and pupils to work together well.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools	similar schools
	2003	2003
English	D	E
Mathematics	D	D
Science	E	E

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

As a new school, there are no test results for years before 2003. The last column in the table above implies that these pupils made unsatisfactory progress from the tests that they took in Year 2, four years previously. However, statistics kept by the school show that, despite their below average attainment in the national tests last term, these pupils made good progress during the first year of the school. **Pupils are achieving satisfactorily.** Children enter the school with well below average attainment and achieve satisfactorily in the nursery and reception classes but do not reach the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception. They make better progress in their physical development than in other areas of learning. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2. Despite this, standards are still below average by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 3 to 6, but standards are still below average at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. Writing is not used well in other subjects of the curriculum. Standards are below average throughout the school in information and communication technology. There are no significant differences in achievement between boys and girls. The pupils with special educational needs are supported well and achieve well through the school.

The pupils' personal qualities are developed well, though this is better for their social and moral development than for their spiritual and cultural. The attitudes of most pupils are good but a minority are not keen to work, meaning that overall the pupils have satisfactory attitudes to their school and their work. The behaviour of a minority affects the overall judgement on behaviour. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Attendance is above the national average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education for its pupils. The quality of teaching is good and the pupils consequently learn well. Teaching and learning are remarkably consistent through the school. The curriculum is suitably broad and relevant with teachers making some good links between different subjects. There is a good range of different opportunities, such as extra-curricular activities, available to pupils. A well-planned programme of visits and visitors enhances the curriculum well. The pupils receive good guidance and support. There are unsatisfactory links with other schools and these links, including those with the adjacent secondary school, do little to enhance the education being offered.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is supported well in this by other staff with leadership responsibilities. The management of the school is good at all levels. The governors offer good levels of expertise and knowledge and support the development of the school well. The school is good at evaluating the success of measures put in place and analysing performance data. There is a very clear shared commitment to continued improvement and a very evident team ethic amongst all who are a part of the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Over a third of parents responded to the parents' questionnaire and the views expressed were largely positive. Pupils also like their school and many are enthusiastic about what it has to offer them. Both parents and pupils expressed some concern about the behaviour of some pupils, a view that is supported by the inspection, although incidences of poor behaviour are generally managed very well and rarely disrupt learning.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Boost achievement and raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve pupils' levels of vocabulary and their ability to express themselves.
- Raise standards in information and communication technology.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils are achieving satisfactorily overall, although those in Years 1 and 2 achieve well. There is no significant variation in the achievement of girls and boys. The pupils with special educational needs are supported well and achieve well throughout the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) are below average.
- The good achievement of pupils with special educational needs.
- The good achievement of the pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Although higher attaining pupils are achieving as well as their classmates in English, mathematics and science, they are not often given sufficiently challenging work and are not achieving so well in other subjects.

Commentary

1. Standards in the national tests in Year 2 in 2003 were below average in writing and well below average in reading and mathematics. Although the girls performed significantly better than the boys in these tests, there was an unusually large proportion of boys with special educational needs in this group. In all three subjects, there was a higher than expected proportion of pupils gaining the higher level 3. This indicates that the higher attaining pupils are achieving well.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	14.7	15.7
Writing	13.8	14.6
Mathematics	15.3	16.3

There were 24 pupils in the year group.

2. In the national tests for pupils in Year 6, standards were below average in English and mathematics and well below average in science. When compared to schools whose pupils scored similarly in the tests in Year 2 in 1999, standards were below average in mathematics and well below average in English and science. These pupils had their education severely disrupted during the last years of the previous junior school. The progress made from the optional tests taken in Year 5 shows that they achieved well during their final year, the first year of the new school.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.7	26.8
Mathematics	26.2	26.8
Science	27.4	28.6

There were 43 pupils in the year group.

3. The headteacher has carried out very detailed analysis of the data from the tests to look at the achievement of different groups. This shows that those pupils with special educational needs achieved at least as well as the group as a whole. The figures also show that the pupils who attained well in the tests in Year 2 four years previously achieved a little better than the group as a whole. This indicates that good levels of challenge are being provided for higher attaining pupils. The school has set very challenging targets for performance in the tests for 2004.
4. Children enter the school with well below standards of attainment. There is good provision in the Foundation Stage and they achieve satisfactorily. They reach standards below those expected for children of this age by the time they start the subjects of the National Curriculum in Year 1. The only area of development where their standards are in line with those expected is in their physical development, this being the only area of learning where the children enter the school with anything approaching average standards. In all other areas of learning, standards are below average at the end of the reception class. Achievement for these children is hindered by their very poor speaking skills when they start school.
5. In Years 1 and 2 the pupils achieve well but are still reaching below average standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. This achievement is better than that in the rest of the school for two major reasons. The procedures put in place by the school to raise achievement have had more effect in these two year groups as all these pupils have benefited from them. Also the staff in these two classes are a more experienced team.
6. The pupils in Years 3 to 6 are achieving satisfactorily and standards in English, mathematics and science remain below average at the end of Year 6. Most of these pupils' education suffered significantly due to problems in the Junior School in the last year or so before the merger and the new school has done well to bring their achievement to satisfactory. There is a clear impetus to raise achievement in these year groups as teaching is now consistently good and a number of good procedures have been put in place. Standards in ICT are below average as insufficient use is made of the computers due to the correct emphasis on raising achievement in English and mathematics.
7. The pupils with special educational needs are supported well and achieve well. Detailed plans are made for their learning and teachers and support staff work well together to ensure their good achievement. Those pupils with potentially higher attainment are achieving as well as their classmates in English, mathematics and science as teachers plan suitably challenging work for them in these subjects. In other subjects, there are not the same levels of challenge for them and they are not achieving as well as their classmates.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall, but younger pupils are more positive about learning and behave better than older pupils. Levels of attendance are good. The school makes good provision for moral and social education, and satisfactory provision for spiritual and cultural education. As a result pupils make good progress overall in their personal development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance is above the national average, and the school takes effective steps to ensure that pupils attend school.
- Children in the nursery and the reception class, and pupils in Years 1 and 2 have good attitudes to school and behave well.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved significantly since the new school opened.
- The school promotes pupils' moral and social development well.
- A minority of very difficult older pupils sometimes display unsatisfactory attitudes to learning and engage in challenging behaviour.
- Pupils are not sufficiently aware of the variety of cultures that exist within Britain and the multi-cultural nature of modern British society.

Commentary

8. Good levels of attendance make a positive contribution to pupils' academic and personal achievements. The school's procedures to promote good attendance and punctuality are effective.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.5	School data	0.5
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

9. Pupils generally have positive attitudes to learning, and come to school expecting to learn and to work hard. They enjoy lessons that are well taught and contain interesting and challenging activities. Children in the nursery and the reception class have consistently good attitudes to school, and their willingness to learn enhances their achievement. This positive outlook continues in Years 1 and 2. The quality of attitudes to learning declines in Years 3 to 6 and is only satisfactory overall. It is affected by the presence of a significant minority of pupils who have short attention spans and are sometimes reluctant to follow their teachers' instructions. These pupils do not achieve as much as they might because of their lack of concentration and application.
10. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. It has improved substantially in the last year as a result of the new school's effective policies on discipline and good provision for moral development. The majority of pupils respond well to the school's expectations regarding behaviour, and have good relationships with one another and with members of staff. They socialise amicably in the playground. Some pupils have problems with self-discipline and controlling their anger. The school gives them very good support and in general manages their behaviour very effectively. It includes them successfully in ordinary lessons and does not allow them to disrupt the learning of their peers. Two pupils have been excluded in the last year for aggressive behaviour, but poor conduct of this kind is uncommon. The parents' and pupils' questionnaires raised concerns about bullying. The school has responded very promptly by carrying out a detailed survey of pupils' experiences. The results, and inspectors' discussions with pupils, show that bullying used to be a problem but is not now a feature of life in school.

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	210	2	0

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

11. Pupils of all ages understand concepts of right and wrong, thanks to the school's good provision for moral development. Its code of conduct is effective in promoting fairness and consideration for others. Members of staff are very good role models. They apply the school's system of discipline fairly, they are courteous, and they have respect for pupils. They provide very good examples of teamwork and co-operation. Pupils also respond well to the school's good provision for social development. Many of them start with limited social skills and low self-esteem, but gradually become more mature and confident. The school successfully teaches them to share, to take turns and to work collaboratively. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to be independent and to take on responsibility, for example as class monitors and members of the School Council.

The latter plays an important part in the school's arrangements to sound out and act on pupils' opinions. They carry out the task of representing their classes effectively, and conscientiously report their views to council meetings.

12. The school makes satisfactory provision for cultural development. Pupils study beliefs and customs in their own and other cultures in religious education lessons, and in subjects such as geography, history and art. They learn about local traditions through school trips and residential visits. Their stay in Edinburgh gave them some insight into the multi-cultural nature of British society, but this is not a strong feature of their personal development. Pupils have an insular outlook because of the remoteness of the area in which they live. For similar reasons, it is not easy for the school to give them direct experience of the many different cultures that exist in modern Britain.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good education for its pupils.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good and consequently the pupils learn well. The quality is particularly consistent in Years 1 and 2 where the teaching observed was never less than good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is considerable consistency in the quality of teaching through the school.
- The teachers have good knowledge of the subjects that they teach.
- The teachers make good use of time and of the resources that are available except for the computer suite and computers, which are underused.
- Teachers manage the pupils well and apply the behaviour policy consistently.
- Teaching assistants generally make a good contribution to the pupils' achievement, though there are some occasions when they are not used so well.
- Assessment in English, mathematics and science is good.
- Planning in the Foundation Stage does not acknowledge the early learning goals¹.
- Planning is inconsistent and there are instances where learning objectives² are too general.
- Assessment is good in English, mathematics and science but there are few systems in other subjects.

Commentary

13. The quality of teaching is good overall and, as can be seen from the table below, there is a remarkable consistency in the quality through the school. This is largely due to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and the training that has been provided by management in the early days of the school. This training is also mainly responsible for the teachers' good knowledge of the subjects that they teach. This ensures that they teach with confidence and their good knowledge enthuses and interests the pupils.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 52 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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¹ The 'early learning goals' are the expected levels of attainment for children as they start the subjects of the National Curriculum in Year 1. 'Stepping stones' are the steps leading towards these goals.

² Learning objectives are the skills, knowledge and understanding that the teacher is aiming that the pupils should learn during the lesson.

0	3 (5.8%)	37 (71.2%)	12 (23.1%)	0	0	0
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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.

14. Another area of consistency is the application of the school's behaviour policy. One of the first issues for the school was the production and implementation of a behaviour policy. This has resulted in an orderly working environment where the expectation is that pupils will work hard and succeed. Although there is a significant minority of older pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour, they are managed well in class and their behaviour is rarely allowed to have an adverse impact on the learning of the class. The pupils are also responsive to this. For example, in one lesson seen, a boy decided to be uncooperative. After issuing two warnings, the teacher clearly stated her expectations and said that she would deal with the boy in the next break, when he was dealt with well. The other pupils carried on with their work and the lesson was able to proceed almost as if nothing had happened. The quality of learning was unaffected in this lesson. The teachers' planning is one area which is not so consistent. The main inadequacy is that the learning objectives are sometimes insufficiently precise. In the Foundation Stage, although planning is good and there are clear indications of learning objectives, the planning does not acknowledge the early learning goals being addressed in the particular session.
15. The teachers generally make good use of resources. For example, in a science lesson on the heart, the teacher had a good range of pictures to stimulate the pupils' interest. She had also obtained a lamb's heart from a local butcher, which enabled the pupils to see the detail of the arteries and veins about which they had been talking. Very good health and safety procedures were evident in this lesson as the heart was in a sealed container with a clear lid. The ability to see the real thing also sparked discussion about what the white fatty areas around the heart could be, promoting learning about a healthy lifestyle. Teachers also use time well. Lessons move at a good pace and the impetus of learning is maintained by the use of time constraints. "Four minutes to finish" or something similar was heard in many lessons. The computers are underused. Although there is a good number of computers in the classrooms, these were rarely used during the inspection. Similarly, the well-equipped computer suite in the attached Community Centre was little used. There is no timetable for its use in Years 1 and 2 as it is not designed for use by pupils of this age. Opportunities are therefore missed to support learning with the use of ICT.
16. The teaching assistants make a good contribution to learning most of the time. They make a particularly valuable contribution to the achievement and learning of those pupils with special educational needs and are largely responsible for the good achievement of these pupils. Their numbers are enhanced as there is a good number of volunteers, parents and others, who help in class. Some of these are well qualified. However, there are occasions when these extra adults are not used well, for example just sitting listening during the introduction to the lesson rather than being responsible for lower attaining pupils and ensuring that they are involved in the learning.
17. Systems of assessment are very thorough in English, mathematics and science. These systems mean that the teachers can plan for individual pupils and groups to ensure that they progress successfully. They also allow the headteacher and management of the school to measure the progress that pupils are making over time to evaluate the success of initiatives put in place. There are few systems of assessment for other subjects and this is a weakness. The school recognises the need to work on these but has correctly concentrated on higher priorities in its first year.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum throughout the school is satisfactory. Opportunities for enrichment are good. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. Overall the accommodation and resources are satisfactory. The school offers a broad range of interesting learning opportunities which enable the majority of pupils to achieve appropriately.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy are beginning to work well as the school strives to reach higher standards.
- The curriculum offers good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- The school is aware of the need to develop the use of ICT to underpin its planned use in most subjects.
- The accommodation is good, with more than ample playing fields and hard games areas.

Commentary

18. The school is socially inclusive and provides a relevant, balanced curriculum to which all pupils have equal access. A comprehensive plan has been introduced for the development, monitoring and reviewing of all areas of the curriculum from Years 1 to 6, resulting in well-focused and appropriate curriculum subject action plans that continue to guide the school's good improvement. The school's strategy for teaching literacy has been successfully implemented across the school. However, the school is aware of the need to consolidate opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking, listening and writing skills across the range of subjects. The school's strategy for teaching numeracy is good and this has a positive impact on raising achievement, especially where mathematics is linked to problems encountered in everyday situations. Developing pupils' numeracy skills through other subjects continues to be an area for improvement. The application of knowledge and skills to problem solving, investigation and research in mathematics is promoted with success.
19. The school provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to have experiences outside the constraints of the curriculum. There is a wide range of trips and visitors into school to support and to enhance the curriculum. For example, earlier this term Year 6 went to a special children's production of Macbeth and there was an artist in residence who worked with pupils in Year 4 during the summer. There is also a good range of extra-curricular clubs. A wide variety of sports, for boys and girls and mixed, and art and drama clubs. All pupils benefit considerably from these experiences.
20. The school accommodation, which includes two halls, good outside play areas and a computer suite in the attached Community Centre, is good. There is a satisfactory range of resources to support pupils' learning in most subjects. However, use of appropriate software packages to support the good levels of computer hardware throughout the school continues to be an area for improvement.
21. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, and this helps them to achieve as well as their classmates. Those pupils who have identified special needs are given every opportunity to take part in all the school's many extra curricular activities. Specific literacy and numeracy needs of pupils are well attended to due to the good quality support given.

Care, guidance and support

The school looks after its pupils well, and the care that they receive enhances their academic achievement and personal development. They have good access to support and guidance. Procedures to ensure their welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. The school also makes satisfactory arrangements to involve pupils in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Members of staff know pupils well as individuals, have good relations with them, and monitor their achievements and personal development effectively.

- Pupils who have emotional, behavioural or social problems receive good support.
- There are good arrangements for the induction of new pupils who settle well at school as a result.

Commentary

22. Care and guidance are effective because they are securely based on positive relationships between pupils and adults in the school. Pupils trust and respect members of staff, have confidence in their ability to deal effectively with problems and are willing to turn to them for advice. More than eight out of ten pupils who took part in the inspection's survey of pupils' views said that there is an adult to whom they would go if they had any worries. Their confidence in members of staff is justified. Teachers and teaching assistants are caring, supportive and prepared to listen. They know pupils well as individuals and put their knowledge to good use when monitoring academic achievement and personal development. They identify anyone who is unhappy or failing to make satisfactory progress and give that pupil appropriate help. The headteacher leads by example in respect of the provision of care. He is regularly out and about around the school, getting to know pupils and helping to sort out their problems. Non-teaching staff also make a valuable contribution to the school's arrangements for support and guidance. Lunchtime supervisors see that pupils are safe and secure, organise playground activities, and deal with minor incidents, such as fallings out between friends.
23. There are good formal arrangements for supporting pupils who are experiencing serious difficulties. In most cases they have emotional and behavioural problems and come from troubled home backgrounds. The school's programme of personal, social and health education makes an important contribution to their wellbeing by developing their social skills and raising their self-esteem. The whole school behaviour policy also provides effective support. Its system of green, yellow and red 'zones', ensures that pupils' behaviour is formally recorded and tracked, and that everyone is aware of the standards that he or she has attained. Pupils who are in the yellow zone are aware that they are not doing well and need to improve. In most cases the system of sanctions and rewards is effective in improving their behaviour. However, a minority of pupils do not respond positively to ordinary measures and require extra support. The school draws up improvement plans for them, and where necessary brings in specialist support from outside agencies. These measures are effective in improving general levels of behaviour.
24. Children are given good care and guidance during their induction into school, and when they transfer from the reception class to Year 1. They receive a sympathetic and supportive introduction to the nursery unit. Even before they are formally on roll they get good opportunities to meet members of staff and to become accustomed to school routines. For example, they get the chance to come in for preparatory sessions at which they can meet other children and take part in activities. Because they are well prepared, they settle well, grow in confidence and make good progress. Arrangements for the induction of pupils into the reception class are also effective and help them to make a good start in the main school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents and the local community. Links between home and school are a mixture of strengths and weaknesses, but make a positive contribution to pupils' learning overall. The school uses the local area and community effectively to enrich its curriculum and broaden pupils' experience. Links with other schools and colleges are unsatisfactory and are largely ineffective in promoting pupils' progress

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has regained the confidence of parents after a difficult period during the amalgamation of the former infant and junior schools

- The school benefits from the services of a good number of parent helpers who give very good support to pupils' learning in lessons
- Parents' involvement with and support for pupils' learning at home is relatively limited.
- Links with other schools and colleges are not well developed. They not nearly as strong or extensive as in most schools.

Commentary

25. The vast majority of parents are satisfied with the school and with the quality of education that it provides for their children. They have confidence in the leadership of the headteacher and have good relations with members of staff. Parents are supportive of the school and of pupils' learning. There is very good attendance at parents' consultation evenings, for example. Sometimes parents are uncooperative and unhelpful, even when there are grounds for concern over their child's work or behaviour. However they are in a minority. Most parents feel comfortable about approaching the school over problems and are prepared to work closely with members of staff to solve them. The school has had to work hard to gain parents' trust. It has had to overcome resentments over the merger of the former infant and junior schools. It has replaced ill feeling with goodwill by listening to and acting on parents' views, and by providing a good quality of education for pupils. The provision of good information has also helped to develop positive relations between parents and the school. The quality of newsletters is good, and arrangements for reporting on pupils' academic progress are effective. Parents have good opportunities to learn about, and to discuss with teachers, what their children have achieved, and how they can improve their work.
26. Parents make a positive contribution to pupils' learning in school by serving as voluntary helpers in the classroom. The number of regular volunteers is greater than is usual in primary schools. Teachers generally make good use of their services. They plan and deploy volunteers' time effectively to promote pupils' learning and progress. They are very appreciative of the work that these parents do. They are conscious that the presence of volunteer helpers in the classroom provides pupils with valuable additional support and does much to enhance the quality of lessons.
27. Parents' support for pupils' learning at home is less effective. It is not as well developed as in many schools. Although many parents hear their children read and encourage them to do homework, there is a significant number who have little direct involvement. Some of this group has low aspirations regarding education. They lack the knowledge and confidence to give their children effective help. The school is aware that it needs to extend and improve the quality of parents' involvement with pupils' learning at home. It is seeking to develop this aspect of the home/school partnership, and has firm plans to initiate projects that will promote family learning.
28. There are few links with other schools, and those that exist do not enhance pupils' welfare and academic progress. The local education authority's designation of catchment areas and the school's geographical location contribute to this weakness. It has no obvious connections with schools in Carlisle, further East in Cumbria or over the Scottish border. There is the potential for a strong partnership with Lochinvar secondary school, which shares the same campus, but currently links between the two schools are weak and ineffective. They make very little contribution to pupils' learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher leads the school very well and is supported well by other staff with management responsibilities. Management is good at all levels and the governance of the school is good. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher gives very good leadership to the school and has built a staff team who are determined to make improvements.
- Senior managers give good leadership and there is a very good team ethic in school.
- School self-evaluation is good.
- The merger of the infant and junior school has been managed very successfully and the school has very good potential for the future.
- Governors complete their work well; they have good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Management of the school is good, though the school is overspending.

Commentary

29. Longtown Primary School has a comparatively short history, but it is a promising one and the pursuit of improvement is very much part of its good ethos. The headteacher gives very good leadership to the school. He has a very clear and convincing agenda for improvement and has established a very realistic set of time targets for the completion of key stages of the school's development. He is very aware of the progress being made towards each of these priorities and brings very good personal drive to the work for improvement.
30. The headteacher leads the curriculum very effectively and for this reason, the overall curriculum is more cohesive than is sometimes the case. The headteacher is a realist and knows where the curriculum needs greatest improvement, for example in the development of writing skills in all subjects and the use of ICT generally. Nonetheless, there is good sense of purpose to fill such gaps and make the pupils' learning experiences of consistently good quality.
31. Other staff, including senior managers, join the head effectively in this quest for improvement. There is very good, shared commitment and sense of teamwork in school. This is a particular asset and is a very positive reflection of the success of the merger of the separate infant and junior schools. All staff clearly bear loyalty and dedication to Longtown Primary School. They work hard to make improvement, the tally of success so far is good and there are bright prospects for the future.
32. School self-evaluation is sharp because of the lead of the headteacher, but other staff and the governors are becoming more involved and more effective in this process. At present the school gives satisfactory value for money. The team in school recognise this and know that standards, chiefly in English, mathematics, science and ICT must be higher and achievement consistently good for the school to show its mettle. The process of target setting and tracking is working successfully, though there are a few aspects in this for improvement, such as the development of assessment in some subjects. As the work to make the necessary improvement to standards and achievement beds in, there is the possibility that the value for money given by the school will improve.
33. Governors are fully part of the ongoing process of improvement. They are led effectively and organise their business well. Governors have good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, they are interested, supportive and involved in the work of the school and are increasingly asking questions to challenge school managers that the school is effective enough. This aspect of holding the school to account is the next priority for development for the governors as a group.
34. School management is good. Subject managers carry out their duties effectively in the main and are working effectively for improvement in their subjects and areas. The direct monitoring of subjects is set to a two-year cycle that generally works soundly. However, some subject leaders have yet to have opportunities to monitor their subjects in depth. Financial management is assured, though the school is operating a deficit budget because of circumstances surrounding the merger of the two schools. Governors have a staged three year plan to eliminate the overspend. This will entail some difficult cost-saving decisions, but governors are ready for the challenge and there is every prospect of success in setting finances on an even keel. No table of

finances is included in this report as the school does not have figures for a complete financial year.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- When children start in the nursery they have well below average levels of knowledge and skills; creative skills are extremely limited.
- The children's well below average speaking skills have a significant impact on their learning.
- Teaching and learning are good in all six areas of learning.
- Achievement is satisfactory in the nursery and reception classes.
- Standards are below average in five of the six areas by the time children leave reception.
- Provision in the nursery and reception is well led and managed.
- There is very good support for children with special educational needs and they achieve steadily.

Commentary

35. At the start of their education in the nursery, children have well below average knowledge and skills. In particular, their speaking skills are very basic and this affects the progress that they make in their learning. Children in the nursery answer the staff politely but in very simple ways, often using just one short word. When they work or play together it is very apparent that they do not speak very much. Many activities are completed in silence. The staff work hard to develop children's speaking skills and provide some good experiences to do this. However, these skills only develop slowly, such is the well below average starting base.
36. Overall provision in the nursery and reception classes is good. Teaching is good in both classes and in all areas of learning. The quality of learning experiences is also good and is rooted firmly in good planning. The nursery and reception classes are well resourced and the accommodation is of good quality. The chief asset of the two classes is the staff; there is a good number of teachers and support staff and they are effective in their work. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed and the prospect for continued improvement is good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Commentary

37. Many children come from family backgrounds where there is some hardship. Some lead isolated lives in remote districts before coming to school and know few adults. Others have personal or social circumstances that impact profoundly on their development. When they start school, their personal, social and emotional development is well below that of children in most schools.
38. The school has developed good induction procedures that enable staff to get to know the needs of the children before they start school. This enables them to respond to these needs effectively as soon as the children join the nursery. Nearly all activities are used as a means of developing the children's confidence, self-esteem and relationships. Most children learn to work well together, even if they do not speak much, and to make choices and become increasingly independent. Children with special educational needs for emotional and behavioural difficulties are supported very effectively to enable them to settle to work with other children. They make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development, but by the end of the reception class they still have much to achieve.

39. In general, the children achieve satisfactorily in the two classes and by the end of reception their personal, social and emotional skills have improved from well below average to below average.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Commentary

40. As discussed above, the children's starting level of speaking skills hampers the development of other skills. The staff provide good experiences to encourage greater proficiency in speaking, as observed in a nursery session on the *Three Little Pigs* and a reception session where toast was made and the stages of this process discussed in detail. It is apparent that even in reception, speaking can be a laborious business and that only the higher attainers really speak with clarity and confidence. The school has identified many children with speech problems (about 35 per cent in each class) and the staff are monitoring these children for difficulties with their speech development. Occasionally, activities are not used effectively enough to explore language, but most of the time speaking skills are built on effectively.
41. Reading skills are developed well. Children in the nursery enjoy books and choose to join story-telling activities with interest. During the inspection it was noticeable that nursery children were still learning to hold books the right way. They know, however, that books and print hold messages and are inquisitive about the story that unfolds. In reception, several children have started the process of reading simple words. They join in with their teacher when she reads from the white board, notices or other text. Many children, however, cannot do this confidently and they wait to hear the teacher's words before attempting to read what they see. Both the nursery and reception classes are reading-rich. There are some very good resources available to encourage enjoyment of reading and the children respond positively to these. Some initiatives are popular with the children. The story sacks in nursery and the use of book bags in reception that enable the children to take their books home are two such examples.
42. Writing skills lag behind those of reading. Many children, including some in reception, make simple line stroke marks as they attempt to write, but do not have the knowledge or skills to form more complex letters. The very small proportion of higher attainers write legibly and their attempts result in writing that is of plausible shape and controlled enough size.
43. By the end of reception, the children's communication, language and literacy skills are below average. This impacts on the development of English skills in the rest of the school and achievement in some non-core subjects³. Nonetheless, the children achieve soundly during their time in nursery and reception.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Commentary

44. Children start nursery with well below average mathematical skills. Whilst many know the name of the first few numbers, their understanding goes little beyond that. Experiences in nursery are well tailored to build mathematical knowledge and skills. For example, registration sessions are used to develop number sequencing as children count their registration numbers in order round the circle. These children follow the teacher's line as she recites number rhymes such as *Fly away Peter* and counting to five becomes more secure during the first few weeks in school.

³ The core subjects are usually regarded as English, mathematics and science; non-core subjects are subjects other than these.

45. Good teaching such as this is the norm for mathematical development in both classes. In reception, sessions such as that observed that used a washing line to develop the sequencing and notion of one more than ten are well taught and children progress well in their learning. However, this progress is from a well below average starting point and the building of a secure platform for mathematics in the infants takes considerable time. It is unlikely that the majority of children will reach the goals for mathematical development by the time they complete the reception year.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Commentary

46. There is some exciting work in nursery and reception to build children's knowledge and understanding of the world from their well below average starting point. In both classes, the theme of *Bubbles* served this development well during the inspection. The children in both classes, for example, experimented with a number of different bubble blowing machines that created bubbles of different size, complexity and longevity. The children in reception particularly talked about the myriad colours they saw, which was a planned link to work in creative development artwork. The teacher used this time well to try to develop the pupils' speaking skills, although many of them still answered using one word only. This work was later contrasted by the teacher who used a special bubble mix that produced very small and long lasting bubbles that the children could capture and hold. This caused some excitement and good moments of reflection as the children talked about the differences between these bubbles and those blown about outside.
47. Children have appropriate opportunities to use computers in both classes and their knowledge and skills improve steadily over their two years in the Foundation Stage. However, only a very few children have computers at home and so, for most, every skill has to be developed in school.
48. In all, the children achieve soundly as they develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. By the end of the reception year, the majority will not have reached their goals in this area, but their outlook on the world will have been broadened successfully.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Commentary

49. It is in this area of work that children start in the nursery with the most developed skills, which are nearly average. Good teaching and learning enables the children to develop these skills and to control their movement safely and use space wisely. By the end of reception the majority of children reach the goals for their physical development.
50. There are a few children in both nursery and reception who appear lean and under-developed physically. The staff recognise, and work successfully to help overcome such barriers to learning. Snack and drink time is a regular part of the school day and is made into an enjoyable event. The children learn that they must look after their bodies and health. In the nursery, for example, in a physical development session, the children felt their hearts race after activity and slow when they were at rest. They worked well to move around the hall in imitation of characters and events in the story of *The Three Little Pigs* and showed good levels of confidence and agility. The children for whom physical development is slowed because of economic and social reasons joined in well and were able to achieve as successfully as the other children.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Commentary

51. The starting level of children's creative development is low. Indeed, it is at the lowest level of all six areas of learning. Good experiences are provided for children to improve their skills and knowledge but achievement is held back because so much has to be learned. The quality of teaching and learning is good in both classes and children learn to enjoy painting, singing and dance.
52. At planned times, nursery children have opportunities to choose the activity they wish. It was noticeable that some children chose to draw, put a few marks on the paper, and then went off to join other activities, such as water-play. Others held their concentration longer and painted patterns in bold slabs of colour. Those working with playdough moulded and shaped the mass of material, but in some instances did not produce a recognisable form, even after a few minutes.
53. Achievement through nursery and reception is sound in creative development but by the end of reception a fair proportion of children still have difficulty controlling tools and implements and the results are not as advanced as many children of this age produce. About half the children are likely to reach the goals in their creative development but many still have significant steps to take in order to be ready for the work in Year 1. Standards are well below average by the end of reception because the starting point is low, but they reflect positively the slow but sure progress made.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standards in speaking, reading and writing reached by pupils in Year 6 are below the national average. Attainment in listening skills are broadly average.
- Achievement in Years 1 and 2 is good. In Years 3 to 6 it is currently satisfactory but is on course to be better.
- One of the main obstacles to achievement is the limitation in speaking skills exhibited by many pupils.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- Teachers' planning is satisfactory but the objectives of each lesson are not always defined with sufficient precision.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is of a very high standard.
- The procedures for assessing pupils' progress are good. Good use is made of this information to identify strengths and weaknesses in the English programme. Wide-ranging and appropriate action has been taken to address the matters identified.
- There are good procedures to ensure that agreed initiatives are properly implemented.
- The potential for further improvement is good.
- The use of literacy skills, particularly writing, to support pupils' work in other subjects is insufficiently systematic.

Commentary

54. A much higher proportion of pupils than normal enter the school with language skills which are well below those typically found. The ability to express themselves fluently is particularly

uncertain and this adversely affects performance in reading and writing. By Year 2, standards have risen but are still below average levels and this below average level is also evident in Year 6. The standards in Year 2 and in Year 6 apply to speaking, reading and writing. Listening skills have been improved to average levels by the end of both Years 2 and 6.

55. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well in relation to their capabilities. This is because teaching is consistently good and teachers provide a range of tasks that ensure that pupils are working at a level that is properly suited to their capabilities. Achievement in Years 3 to 6 is currently satisfactory but has the clear capacity to be good. This is because the quality of the programme is good and teaching equally stimulating and of good quality. The full impact of this strong provision has yet to be realised given the longer, four year span, for this stage. In all parts of the school, lower attaining pupils do well in relation to their capabilities due to the careful match of work to their needs, the sensitive support from teachers and from teaching assistants and the accurate recognition of what is required to help them improve.
56. The confidence with which many pupils can express themselves, and the complexity of their spoken language, has marked limitations. Most listen attentively and older pupils make considered responses to the contributions of others. Nevertheless, their speaking capabilities are not as high as those normally found. In reading, a smaller than average proportion of pupils in their final year is able to read difficult text fluently, to analyse plot and character and to make inferences beyond the literal meaning of the text. Most discuss what they have read with obvious enjoyment but not always with expected insight. The range of writing for different purposes is good and the ability to use descriptive language is being developed well. Nevertheless, pupils' overall ability to organise and develop narrative in a logical and sustained manner is below that typically found. The emphasis upon interpretation of text and the use of expressive prose makes a good contribution to the spiritual development of pupils.
57. This is because teachers consistently provide tasks which ensure that pupils are working at a level that is properly suited to their capabilities, have good knowledge of the subject, manage the pupils well and employ a range of interesting techniques in their lessons. This has the effect of motivating the pupils and promoting good levels of achievement within lessons. Sound planning means that understanding and skills are built methodically although the lesson objectives for each lesson are not always sufficiently precise. In all parts of the school the teachers and teaching assistants work effectively as partners and provide sensitive and helpful support.
58. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is of a very high standard. It regularly focuses upon particular points within pupils' written work and provides helpful and constructive comments that suggest clear ways in which the narrative can be improved. This provides immediate and clearly understood guidance for the pupils and contributes positively to their achievement.
59. A good range of formal assessments and teacher evaluations are used to assess pupils' progress. The school has made good use of this information to thoughtfully analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the English curriculum. As a result, a wide range of initiatives to strengthen the programme and to raise standards has been introduced. Changes to the reading, spelling and handwriting programmes and additional help for identified groups exemplify this approach. The measures to improve the English curriculum are appropriate but require more time to impact fully.
60. The school has introduced measures to ensure that the agreed initiatives are introduced with the consistency and rigour which will be required to improve standards further. Given the good quality of provision, the able leadership, the consistently good teaching and the good development of the subject within the short time the school has been open, the school is poised for further advances.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

61. Whilst the use of literacy skills in other subjects is satisfactory overall there are some inconsistencies in its application. In history and geography, for example, there is variation in the degree to which writing is employed to take the particular subject forward whilst also focusing on approaches which will improve literacy skills.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below the national average.
- The quality of teaching is good and consequently most pupils learn well.
- Recent improvements in assessment procedures and performance data analysis have given the school a more accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses.
- Pupils are not clear about what they need to do to reach higher standards.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to support the pupils' learning in mathematics.
- Strong leadership and management are positively driving standards upwards.

Commentary

62. The provision in mathematics is good, meeting the needs of pupils of all capabilities well. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in the majority of lessons by teachers and additional adults, therefore achieving as well as their peers. Boys and girls are achieving similarly. There are very encouraging signs that standards being achieved are on an upward trend, especially in Year 5. The school is well placed to achieve greater success in future years. It has set challenging targets for Year 6 in 2004 that reflect well on its ambition to drive forward improvement in the provision for mathematics.
63. As a result of recent monitoring and good evaluation by the school, it has rightly identified the need to develop pupils' oral mental skills. At present many pupils show a slow mental recall of multiplication tables and this hinders progress. However, many lessons contain links to problem solving in everyday situations. For example, in Year 5 the understanding of timetables related to television programmes. This rightly enhances pupils' greater understanding of matters in the wider world. The use of computers to practise and consolidate pupils' numeracy skills in their classrooms is not at present an integral part of all mathematics lessons.
64. Overall the quality of teaching is good. In one Year 3 and a Year 6 lesson the quality of teaching observed was very good. In these two year groups, teachers transmit their enthusiasm for the subject and well-planned activities appropriate to all pupils' levels of learning capture their interest and obvious enjoyment. New learning at a brisk pace is fun. Expectations are high and the quality of pupils' work is also of a good standard. Very clear explanations ensure all pupils understand how to complete the tasks successfully, supported by clear learning objectives. The use of correct mathematical vocabulary also receives a clear focus at the start of the lesson. In a Year 3 lesson pupils were highly motivated by the use of practical resources and a good knowledge of targets to be achieved. The final review section of the lesson successfully revisited these targets and an atmosphere of success was duly celebrated. In some lessons the use of additional adult support was less effective due to their somewhat passive role during the early stages of lessons. Also time constraints in some lessons meant that the final part was rushed and the opportunity to check pupils' understanding of new learning was not fully exploited.
65. An enthusiastic, strong subject leader is successfully moving the subject forward and there is good capacity for further improvement. Adaptation of the National Numeracy Strategy as the basis for planning in the subject is used throughout the school and this has made a significant contribution to the rising standards. Greater precision in the analysis of test results and better evaluation of strengths and weaknesses has started to impact positively. Targets for pupils are not yet used sufficiently to aid pupils' achievement. Marking is consistent in its regularity and

positive nature. However, it often fails to indicate clearly to pupils how they can improve. Lesson observations have also gone some way towards identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching, but do not focus with enough rigour on standards achieved or the rate of progress of different capabilities.

Mathematics across the curriculum

66. Pupils often use mathematics as part of their work in other subjects, thus developing an appreciation of the practical uses of these skills. For example, graphs and tables are used in science to record observations. However, opportunities tend to be incidental rather than planned as part of ongoing mathematics topics. As such, opportunities are not yet sufficiently well developed across the curriculum and remain a continued area for development.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below the national average.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- There is a good curriculum in place, based on experimental and investigative science.
- The subject is led well, with good ideas for development.
- There is, therefore, good capacity for improvement.
- Systems of assessment are good and effective in raising standards.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT.

Commentary

67. Although standards are below the national average, a number of good initiatives have been put in place and there is a good capacity for improvement. For example, the subject leader has put in place a good curriculum, developed from the previous very different infant and junior school documents. After the first year of the school, he adapted this curriculum in the light of his analysis of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' achievement and in consultation with his colleagues. This curriculum is based on the important experimental and investigative aspects of the subject and is helping to raise the pupils' achievement. The pupils in Year 6 already have a satisfactory understanding of what constitutes a fair test and the various variables involved.
68. The quality of teaching is good, with teachers confident in their knowledge of the subject and therefore able to enthuse and interest their pupils. In a number of lessons seen, the teachers were encouraging their pupils to carry out observations and investigations. This practical work is giving the pupils good understanding and knowledge of the aspects covered. There are two main reasons why standards are not higher because of this good teaching. The curriculum has not been in place long enough for its effects to have fed through and the pupils' poor speaking skills hinder their progress in discussing the results of their observations and investigations. At present, insufficient use is made of ICT to support work in this subject. Although there are instances of pupils using computers to produce graphs of results, for example, there is no use of ICT to control or monitor the results of experiments.
69. The subject leader is very knowledgeable and has carried out a great deal of work to advance the subject in his first year in post. As well as putting in place the curriculum, he has developed a system of assessment, which is being used well through the school. He is also trialling a system of pupils' self-assessment in his own class. This is giving his pupils a very clear knowledge of exactly what it is that they know and what they still need to master. Progress in the subject is therefore good and there is every prospect of standards being improved in the near future.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards achieved are below average.
- The computer suite is of very good quality.
- ICT is used inconsistently to support learning in different subjects.
- Pupils like ICT and they work well.
- Assessment, monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education and standards are areas for improvement.
- There are gaps in the levels of available software to fully support all parts of the National Curriculum.

Commentary

70. At the end of Year 6, pupils' ICT skills are below average. In the direct teaching sessions seen in one Year 6 lesson, good teaching enabled pupils to make good progress and achieve well. However, limited keyboard skills clearly reflected that standards of attainment are below the level expected for 11-year-olds and, in some instances, well below this.
71. As a community linked project, the school has done a good job to improve resources in recent years. The computer suite is very well equipped with high quality hardware and a well-qualified technician services its everyday needs. There are similar quality hardware resources in most classrooms. This gives teachers and their pupils every opportunity to use ICT at the centre of learning. Teachers' subject knowledge and confidence has been promoted successfully by recent nationally funded training. However, the regular use of the computer suite by pupils from all year groups lacks a cohesive policy, resulting in the suite remaining unused for much of the time.
72. Pupils have limited experience of computers when they start school, and many have restricted access to such technology at home. Thus the standards achieved are very much the product of the school's work. It is clearly evident that if ICT became a central plank to underpin skills across all areas of the curriculum, levels of attainment have the potential to rise from their present lowly status. In the limited number of lessons seen, specialist subject knowledge was used well to give clear, well ordered explanations and demonstrations, including good use of the interactive whiteboard. Good use of questioning and the choice of appropriate tasks meant that all pupils, including special educational needs and higher attaining pupils, were challenged and supported appropriately. However, the levels of work undertaken by the majority relating to the use of 'logo' to give desired instructions were in fact levels of attainment expected of typical Year 3 pupils, thus clearly reflecting that standards in this strand of the National Curriculum are well below age related expectations. However, by direct contrast, Year 6 pupils confidently and quickly rearranged given text and were able to highlight text as part of an English lesson.
73. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have at least the basics of controlling the computer by means of a keyboard and mouse. They have had experience of basic operations such as word processing and simple paint packages to illustrate for example, the seaside. Their experiences in these areas are, however, fragmentary as they have long gaps between experiences. By the end of Year 6 pupils have continued to develop their basic understanding of different aspects of ICT, but again experiences do not build into a broad curriculum, especially in terms of controlling and modelling. In a Year 5 lesson pupils were learning about the use of information in history to create a multi-media package. However, basic keyboard skills limited pupils' learning, with some behaviour becoming restless.
74. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows relatively few examples of the use of computers to support work across the curriculum. Practice is inconsistent between year groups. The issue of teachers' confidence in integrating ICT into their work across the school is an urgent one for the school.

75. The newly appointed subject leader is fully aware of the need to raise the subject's present status. Monitoring of teaching and learning is necessary in the subject to ensure that the best use is made of resources and that all teachers are supported positively when they use the computer suite. The school has developed a clear view of how ICT should develop; however, limitations in suitable software limit the subject's progress. The assessment of skills and pupils' knowledge is at present unsatisfactory. There is, therefore, insufficient insight into how each group of pupils is learning to assist staff to give potentially higher attaining pupils more challenge.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

76. During the inspection very little was observed of ICT outside the two direct teaching sessions observed in the suite. In discussion with pupils in Years 3 and 4, they reported that they use their classroom computers to consolidate their literacy skills by copying out their work. The school is aware of the need to pursue the priority of enhancing cross-curricular use of ICT.

HUMANITIES

None of these subjects was a focus for inspection and only in religious education was there sufficient evidence to make overall judgements.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of sensitive and pertinent issues is included in the curriculum.
- The similarities, as well as the differences, between religions is given due emphasis.
- The school finds it difficult to arrange visits to the places of worship of other religions.

Commentary

77. Achievement is satisfactory. The pupils have worthwhile experiences to learn about and learn from religious education. The statutory requirements relating to religious education are met and the programme properly reflects the syllabus agreed by Cumbria. Most pupils reach standards broadly in line with those expected of pupils of similar ages and achievement is satisfactory in all parts of the school.
78. Relationships, emotions and respect for others feature strongly in the programme and most pupils respond thoughtfully to the sensitive issues which are raised. Year 2 pupils, for example, watched with rapt attention when the Divali custom of lighting candles was simulated. When discussing significant events in their lives, Year 5 pupils were open and thoughtful with many demonstrating insight and maturity in recognising how unhappy events can lead to greater compassion towards others.
79. The programme includes suitable emphasis upon the beliefs, customs and traditions associated with some other religions. It emphasizes similarities, as well as differences, between different religions. This makes a satisfactory contribution to the spiritual and cultural development of pupils.
80. The geographical position of the school makes it difficult to arrange for pupils to visit the places of worship of other religions. Although the school has attempted to organise visitors of other faiths, this has proved difficult and pupils are not, therefore, gaining this first-hand knowledge and understanding of other cultures and faiths.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average by the ages of seven and eleven.
- Weak speaking and writing skills hold back standards.
- Achievement is satisfactory and boys and girls work equally hard.
- Higher attaining pupils are sometimes not challenged enough.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall.
- The two subjects are led and managed soundly.
- Assessment in geography and history is not consistent across the school.
- ICT is used insufficiently to advance standards in geography and history.

Commentary

81. During the inspection there were more opportunities to evaluate history as a subject than geography. For that reason they are dealt with together here. Overall, it is evident that standards are below average in geography and history at the end of Year 2 and 6 but that achievement is satisfactory given the well below average starting point.
82. The pupils' weak speaking and writing skills hamper the development of skills in both subjects. Pupils, even as old as eleven, are often dependent on the teacher for the information they require in geography and history. Questioning has to be very specific and targeted at individuals in order to help them understand the topic. Staff are successful in this, but such closely guided learning slows overall progress.
83. In general, there are ample resources of very good quality for the work, but pupils are sometimes given insufficient opportunities to research topics for themselves. There is also not enough use made of geography and history as vehicles to improve writing. In pupils' past work, much writing was set to the frame provided by a worksheet, which did not encourage writing at length or in depth. This, in particular, sometimes caps the achievement of the higher attaining pupils.
84. Whilst skills levels are below average, knowledge is at a better level. Pupils work from sound curricula for both subjects and the quality of teaching, although satisfactory overall in both subjects, shows some good features in its focus on the ideas of chronology in past events, and the similarities and differences across time and between different places in the world. In a Year 2 lesson, for example, very effective use was made of excellent resources to show pupils how wash day differed in Victorian times from today. In fact, this lesson also developed skills and understanding well because the pupils were able to pummel clothes in a washtub with a dolly and to put them through a mangle after that. Dressing in Victorian costume made the experience even more memorable. Such work enthuses boys and girls alike and in general both genders achieve as successfully as each other.
85. There are two aspects of history and geography where improvement should lead to improved achievement and standards in addition to enhanced focus on speaking and writing. The first is more consistency in assessment that will enable staff to have better insights into the progress made in skills, knowledge and understanding. The second is greater use of ICT to develop geography and history skills. It is a positive feature of the two subjects that links to subjects other than English and ICT are generally good, for example the use of mathematics to collect, present and interpret information in geography, but these links could be enhanced through more cross-curricular work with ICT.
86. The two subjects are led and managed soundly. There is a clear improvement plan for both of them and because the general quality of school leadership is very assured, prospects for the future are bright. An asset in this is the good quality of the curricula for each subject and the firm status that geography and history hold in school.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

None of these subjects was a focus for the inspection and only in art and design was there sufficient evidence to make overall judgements on provision.

ART AND DESIGN

Provision in art and design is **good**. Pupils are achieving well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The wide range of work in different styles that the pupils undertake.
- The good use of sketchbooks.
- The opportunities to work on large-scale projects with visiting artists.
- The range of other extra-curricular opportunities.

Commentary

87. Art and design holds a high profile in the school. There are numerous examples well displayed around the school of work that has been completed with support from visiting artists. These are in a range of media. For example, in the entrance hall there are some very colourful panels in acrylic paint on canvas created by the pupils from the old junior school specifically for the new school. There are also some very attractive mosaics based on local scenes. In the main hall there is a most effective display of paper pulp panels depicting *above* and *below the waterline*. Whilst in the small hall a striking collage panel completed by pupils in the old infant school just before the merger. As well as all these and the usual paintings, there is an amusing display of clay figures based on the work of Antony Gormley. All these are of a good standard and show good levels of achievement.
88. Sketchbooks are used well to support learning. The pupils are encouraged to try out their work and be critical and improve. Because of this and the good quality of teaching, standards in art and design are higher than in most other subjects and are satisfactory overall. A number of pupils produce work of a good standard, but as their starting point is so low, work for most is often immature in the lower classes. Even towards the top of the school, observational drawing is not at the expected level, although much of the painting and use of different media is appropriate. For example, some designs in Year 6, based on the work of Bridget Riley, are very effective.
89. Teachers are confident in their knowledge of the subject and teaching is good. The subject is enthusiastically led and, although a very experienced and talented subject leader left at the end of the last year, her legacy has been continued, not least in the art club, where pupils were creating some really effective work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

It is not possible to make a judgement on the quality of provision due to insufficient evidence.

Commentary

90. Only one lesson was seen during the inspection, and there was limited evidence of work completed. On the basis of the available evidence it is apparent that the pupils' skills of making products are below average. However, the pupils in the one lesson observed, in Year 6, made satisfactory evaluations of their models and had clear ideas of how they could improve them.
91. There is a well-planned curriculum for the subject and the subject leader has worked hard to create this from the very different schemes that were in place in the previous infant and junior schools.

MUSIC

It is not possible to make a judgement on the quality of provision due to insufficient evidence.

Commentary

92. Two lessons were observed during the inspection and in both of these the teaching was good. The school has made good use of its funds to employ a specialist musician to teach all classes once each week. Unfortunately funds only allow the teacher to be employed for one day each week, so no class receives more than a 40 minute lesson and some only 25 minutes. The teacher does his best to fit all aspects of the National Curriculum into this time, but this does not allow for any depth of coverage. Standards seen in these lessons were average in terms of the pupils' ability to accompany a song in Year 2 and compose a rap in Year 6. Singing in assemblies was tuneful and had due regard for dynamics, although more pupils than is usual find it difficult to sing in pitch.
93. There are some good other opportunities outside class music. For example, there are two major productions each year, and a mixed choir practises throughout the year for these productions. There are also opportunities for pupils to learn other instruments, although a very limited number are presently taking advantage of this opportunity.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Only a limited number of lessons were seen in physical education. All of these lessons involved movement and dance. The games lessons observed were part of extra curricular activities provided by the school. It is therefore not possible to make a firm judgement about the overall provision. From viewing the planning and discussions with teachers and pupils, it is evident that all the strands of the subject including outdoor and adventurous activities are regularly taught alongside recent local authority guidelines. Pupils benefit from weekly swimming sessions and records show that most are on track to meet the requirement to swim 25m by the end of Year 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality and range of extra curricular activities is good, and pupils achieve well in these activities.
- The focus on skills could be sharper in some lessons.
- Physical education is soundly led and managed by the subject leader who, in turn, is positively supported by staff.

Commentary

94. In the movement and dance lessons observed, pupils enjoyed their work. Skills were built soundly, though the focus in this process could be stronger. The management of behaviour and the use of time are positive aspects of teaching. In the lessons observed, learning was sound for the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs and the higher attaining pupils made satisfactory progress.
95. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are regularly coached during extra-curricular games sessions. Good use is made of the spacious playing field and hard playing surfaces, which benefits all pupils. In the extra-curricular session observed the majority of pupils made good progress in their catching and throwing skills. The clearly planned activities provided good opportunities to practise and consolidate skills in games of tag rugby. The school has rightly identified the need to improve teachers' subject knowledge through further training, especially with a focus on improving pupils' gymnastics capabilities. These activities contribute well to pupils' personal, social and moral

development because of the emphasis on taking part and being part of a team that pervades much of the work of the school.

96. Enthusiastic leadership of the subject and support from fellow staff have provided good opportunities for competitive sports with local schools. However, an overview of whole school strengths and areas for development is limited by a lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation. Present systems to assess pupils' skills and development are unsatisfactory.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good plan for developing these aspects of pupils' learning.
- Issues are dealt with sensitively by teachers and other adults.
- Outside agencies are used well to support learning in this area.

Commentary

97. A limited number of lessons was seen in personal, social and health education, but there was ample evidence from other sources to make judgements. For example, a number of teachers dealt with these issues during class time and the consistent application of the behaviour policy makes a positive contribution to the pupils' social education. The whole ethos of the school supports achievement in this area and adults provide very good role models to support learning. Much of the teaching seen was good although pupils are only achieving satisfactorily, largely because of their limited ability to express themselves clearly. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, the pupils found it difficult to carry out the task of telling the class some details of another pupil with whom they had been talking.
98. The curriculum for pupils' personal, social and health and citizenship education is good. The school sees this area of development as an important part of its work. Sex and drugs awareness education are appropriately taught, and there is good involvement of external specialists, including the school nurse. Much of this is built into the science curriculum, but during the inspection there was the second in a series of lessons where the school nurse came in to assist during a session with the whole of Year 6 on relationships and sex education. This session was sensitively handled and very well planned. Training for circle time has been provided, with teachers often linking assembly themes with work undertaken in personal, social and health education sessions. This positive reinforcement is proving to be very effective and, as such, is making a significant contribution to pupils' personal development including their attitudes, relationships and behaviour. The school has put in place a good health education programme, ensuring that the pupils have ample awareness of the necessity of a healthy lifestyle.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	8
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	5
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7); not applicable to this school (8).