

INSPECTION REPORT

ABBAY JUNIOR SCHOOL

Darlington

LEA area: Darlington

Unique reference number: 114165

Headteacher: Mr George Ford

Lead inspector: Dr Brian Male

Dates of inspection: 15 - 18 September 2003

Inspection number: 260746

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7-11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	365
School address:	Abbey Road Darlington County Durham
Postcode:	DL3 8NN
Telephone number:	(01325) 380748
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Roderick Burt
Date of previous inspection:	12 October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

A large community junior school taking pupils from seven to 11 years old, and maintained by the Darlington Unitary Authority. At the time of the inspection there were 365 full-time pupils in 12 classes. Many pupils start school with standards of attainment well above those usually found. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is also well below the national average. There are very few pupils from ethnic minorities and none requiring extra support for learning English. The school serves a stable and relatively prosperous community.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
14906	Dr Brian Male	Lead inspector	English History Geography Religious education
19419	Mrs Sue Boyle	Lay inspector	
24805	Mrs Alison Cogher	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Art Music Physical education
4350	Mr Clive Whittington	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good school** providing good value for money. Good teaching and effective leadership have ensured that standards of attainment have been well above average for a number of years. Pupils enjoy school and have very positive attitudes to their work. The school provides a supportive community with a very positive ethos, and is deservedly very popular in its locality.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The standards attained in English, mathematics and science (the 'core subjects') are well above the national average.
- Pupils behave very well in class and have very positive attitudes to work.
- The good quality of the teaching promotes the high standards.
- The headteacher sets a good tone for the very positive ethos of the school.
- There could now be more focus on subjects other than the core, and the curriculum for design and technology (DT) needs to be covered more precisely.
- Assessment information could be used more effectively to ensure high challenge in these other subjects.

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. The high standards have been maintained, but some key issues such as curriculum balance remain to be resolved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

The school's scores in national tests for 11 year olds. 2003 scores are not included as national comparative figures for that year were not available at the time.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	B	A	A	C
mathematics	A	A	A	C
science	A	A	A	A

*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.*

The school's scores in 2003 rose in mathematics and science but fell in English where writing scores were much lower than usual. Inspection evidence shows that actual standards in writing remained high, and that the overall attainment in these three core subjects continues to be well above average. This represents **good achievement** for the pupils. Because pupils enter the school with higher standards in English and mathematics than in science, the similar schools comparison in these subjects is lower than in science. Standards are above average in some aspects of art and music, but average in other subjects where there has not been such a focus on the precise standards required by the National Curriculum. Standards in DT are below average. Standards in subjects other than the core do not represent sufficient achievement for these pupils. The well above average standards in the core subjects result from the quality of the teaching, pupils' positive attitudes to work, and the support pupils receive from their parents.

Pupils' **personal development is good**. Their attitudes are very good and they behave very well in class and around the school, showing a good sense of responsibility. Behaviour in the small playground is not always so good. Attendance is well above the national average and pupils arrive punctually for school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **good quality of education** overall, and the **quality of teaching is good**, particularly in the core subjects. This, together with the pupils' very positive attitudes to work, promotes successful learning, particularly in the core subjects. The curriculum is broad and is enhanced by a good range of visits and visitors, but is balanced heavily to the core subjects. There is not such a focus on standards in other subjects such as history and geography and provision in the humanities is unsatisfactory. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, but not all of these are available to all pupils.

Assessment is generally used effectively in the core, but not so effectively in other subjects and so expectations are not always sufficiently high. There is good quality care, and appropriate guidance and support for pupils through the school's very positive ethos.

There is an appropriate partnership with parents. Parents are generally supportive of the school but a number feel that the school could work more closely with them. There is a good partnership with the community and good use is made of local facilities. There is a particularly good partnership with the infant school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The headteacher has been successful in leading the school to a number of national awards, and in ensuring the positive ethos. The school functions very effectively as a centre for teacher training and staff development. Other senior staff make an appropriate contribution to leadership although the role of subject leaders needs to be extended in some subjects. The school is well managed and the budget is handled effectively. The leadership recognises that the next step is to focus more on standards in the non-core subjects. The governing body carries out its work effectively and maintains a good general oversight of the school. The targets of the school's development plan could be sharper and linked more directly to the budget.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are generally pleased with the quality of education provided by the school. Some parents feel that the school could work more closely with them, and there are a number of ways in which communication could be improved. The school is active seeking the views of pupils, and the School Council provides a valuable forum. Pupils enjoy school and have very positive attitudes to work.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things for the school to do next are to reconsider:

- the balance of the curriculum so that:

- the curriculum for DT is fully covered;
- more time is allocated to subjects other than the core;
- pupils have sufficient opportunities to work and learn independently within lessons.

- the use of assessment information so that:

- the level of challenge is always sufficiently high in lessons;
- appropriate targets are set for individuals and groups;
- pupils develop an understanding of their own learning.

The above suggestions are to improve provision that is already good.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects

Pupils enter the school with high standards of attainment. Achievement across the school is good and standards in the core subjects are well above average. Standards are average in other subjects with the exception of DT where they are below. Pupils with special educational needs and those identified as being gifted or talented also make generally good progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils build well through the school on the high standards they have already attained on entry.
- High expectations in the core subjects, good teaching and the pupils' very positive attitudes to work all promote the high standards.
- Support for pupils who have special educational needs is focused on their individual needs and they make good progress.
- Standards in information and communications technology (ICT) are satisfactory.
- History and geography have lower standards because teaching does not always focus sufficiently on the higher levels of attainment
- Standards in DT are below average because the curriculum is insufficiently covered.

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

(National results for 2003 were not available at the time of publication of this report)

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.7 (29.4)	n/a (27.1)
mathematics	29.3 (28.9)	n/a (27.0)
science	29.9 (30.9)	n/a (28.6)

There were 92 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. National results for 2003 were not available at time of publication.

Commentary

1. Pupils enter the school with high standards. In the core subjects, this level is maintained and improved for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and the gifted and talented. These standards of attainment are consistent over time and there are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls.
2. Standards are high in speaking and listening across the school. Most pupils are confident and articulate and enjoy expressing their views. Standards in reading are correspondingly high. National test results in 2003 showed pupils standards in writing had gone down. Evidence of the pupils' work, however, indicates that standards were higher than the test scores suggest. Pupils' standards in mathematics and science are also well above average. Considerable importance is given to 'hands on' experience and this enables the pupils to use and apply what they have learned in these subjects.
3. Standards in ICT are rising. The curriculum concentrates on the acquisition of computer skills within designated ICT lessons in the computer suite. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to improve their use of ICT in other areas of the curriculum. Although standards in history and geography are in line with national expectations, these children could do better. Standards in DT are too low because there are few opportunities for pupils to design and review what they make. Standards in art and music are good in those elements covered. However, the curriculum in both subjects is insufficiently broad. There is good teaching and community

involvement in physical education, and standards here are rising. Standards in religious education are generally in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

4. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Good levels of support are provided, both within the classroom and in withdrawal groups. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are drawn up with targets for improvement, although some of these are too broad (for example: 'improve fluency in reading'). Pupils who have been identified as gifted or talented are withdrawn for extra work. This is generally effective, but the school needs to consider whether all pupils in need of this extra challenge are receiving it, and whether appropriate staffing resources are allocated.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Their spiritual, moral and social development is good. Attendance is very good and pupils arrive punctually at school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance rates are very high and pupils arrive punctually at the start of the day.
- Pupils are well motivated.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very good.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility.
- Some pupils are not as thoughtful of others as they might be.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.5	School data	0.1
National data	5.4	National data	0.5

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

Commentary

5. Most pupils like school, are confident learners and want to do their best. They are willing to work diligently even when lessons are not as challenging or as interesting as they might be. There are high expectations for behaviour and pupils behave well. They are encouraged in this by their parents, and by the very good relationships that they have with their teachers. Pupils' willingness to work and to behave makes a significant contribution to learning.
6. Most pupils play well together, but the playground space is very crowded and there is little for pupils to do. Boys tend to dominate the playground with games of football, and some pupils, particularly the younger ones, find this difficult. Some of the friendly play is quite physical, and some pupils find it intimidating.
7. Pupils respond well to the good opportunities for them to take responsibility, such as the chance in Year 5 to organise the younger pupils' sports day. The school council is effective and pupils are proud to represent their class. Pupils are encouraged through the programme for personal and social development to respect and think about the needs of others. Most pupils are caring and thoughtful but there are a very few occasions when pupils are not as thoughtful as they might be; for example, in a 'circle time' lesson (where there is an opportunity for all pupils

discuss matters of personal importance in an open and equal context) some pupils would not co-operate to enable everyone to have a turn.

8. Parents recognise the importance of good attendance and punctuality, and ensure that their children come to school and on time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

The overall standard of teaching is good, and it is most effective in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Pupils' learning is good overall, and best in the core subjects. Pupils' work is assessed well in the core subjects and satisfactorily elsewhere, but the information gained is not always used effectively to plan learning and involve pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning is thorough and expectations are high in the core subjects.
- Expectations are not sufficiently high in other subjects, and are often not related sufficiently directly to National Curriculum requirements.
- Relationships are very good, and pupils are supported and encouraged effectively.
- In many lessons pupils work co-operatively, but there are too few opportunities provided for independent work.
- The assessment data collected is not always used effectively in ensuring that teachers identify, and pupils understand, the next steps in learning.
- Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to learning.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 62 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	5 (8%)	33 (53%)	20 (32%)	4 (6%)	0 (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.

9. Teaching is good overall in English, mathematics and science. In these subjects, there are high expectations, and lessons are generally well planned with teaching benefiting from teachers' good knowledge of National Curriculum requirements. The close focus on what needs to be learned and the standards that need to be attained underpins the pupils' good progress and high standards in these subjects. Standards are not so high in ICT because not all of the elements of the curriculum have been sufficiently covered.
10. There is some good teaching in ICT, art, music and physical education, but within a restricted range. For example, there is some very good teaching of recorder playing in music, but very little emphasis on the National Curriculum requirements of composition and appreciation. Pupils therefore attain high standards within certain aspects, but their overall attainment within the subjects is only average.
11. The teaching of the humanities (history, geography and religious education) is generally satisfactory, but expectations are not high enough because there is too little focus on the higher levels of attainment. As a consequence, most pupils attain the expected levels, but few attain the higher levels. This is a contrast to the core subjects where most pupils attain the higher levels. It is also a contrast to art, music and physical education where pupils attain well in certain aspects but not in others.

12. The teaching of DT is generally unsatisfactory. This is because the requirements of the subject are seldom met. The National Curriculum requires pupils to make their own designs, choose their own materials, tools and methods, and to evaluate their work, changing it as they go along. However, in most lessons, pupils are given direct instructions of how to make things and have very little scope to develop their own products. The whole essence of the subject is therefore missed.
13. In the best lessons, teachers ensure that pupils are actively involved in learning. For example, having taken part in a class introduction, groups of pupils in science are often given tasks which require active participation, such as using disclosing tablets in a Year 3 lesson to see how food sticks to the teeth and gums. In other good lessons, pupils are given opportunities for high level discussion, readily and fluently expressing their opinions; for example, in a Year 4 religious education lesson, pupils took the role of participants in an aspect of Sikh history, and other pupils questioned them. This strategy is called 'hotseating' and is explored more fully in the English section. In these best lessons, planning is effectively related to National Curriculum requirements, expectations are high, and good use of time ensures a brisk pace. Teaching assistants and other adult helpers have an active role and make a useful contribution to learning, particularly in ICT and with pupils who have special educational needs.
14. In some classes, pupils have good opportunities to co-operate and discuss things. For example, in a Year 6 reading lesson pupils discussed in pairs points about a text before making these points to the whole class. This technique encourages confidence and participation. In other classes, teachers ask generally for 'hands up', and are often disappointed to see the same few hands. In many classes lessons are directed very closely by the teachers, and there are too few opportunities for pupils to work independently even though this is a requirement of the National Curriculum in several aspects. For example, planning their own experiments in science and their own investigations in mathematics. The school has been involved in projects to enhance teaching and learning such as the use of 'Brain Gym' but there is little sign of this in many classes.
15. Assessments are carried out regularly, but the information gained is not always used to identify specific areas where each pupil needs to improve, or to direct teaching to different groups within classes. The information is used most effectively to identify pupils with special educational needs and to ensure that their needs are well met. Even here, the targets on some individual education plans are too general in their scope to focus teaching specifically. Some individual targets are set for other pupils, but the pupils do not always know what they have to do to improve their work. Marking is often thorough and supportive, but pupils do not always read the comments written and sometimes ignore the helpful instructions given. The practice of mixing up classes and sending exercise books home at the end of each year means that teachers are not always sufficiently aware of the achievements of each pupil in their new class, and this slows learning at the beginning of each year.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall, but lacks balance because of an overemphasis on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Provision for DT is unsatisfactory and there is insufficient emphasis on aspects of music and art. There is a good range of curriculum enrichment activities. The accommodation and levels of staffing are good, and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad and enhanced through visits and visitors.
- Aspects of the art, music and physical education curriculum are good.
- There is a good programme of extra-curricular activities although pupils of all abilities do not always have access to all activities.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.

- The requirements of the DT curriculum are not fully covered.
- The organisation of the timetable leads to an imbalance in the curriculum provided.

Commentary

16. The broad curriculum provides pupils with a satisfactory range of experiences overall. However, the organisation of the school day and the timetable results in a disproportionate amount of time being allocated to the core subjects. Too few opportunities are provided for pupils to use their skills in ICT, literacy and numeracy in other subjects, and the links made between subjects are not systematically planned. Provision for DT is unsatisfactory because the required curriculum is not fully covered.
17. The National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced successfully, but there is room for improvement, particularly in the way some teachers plan activities to ensure pupils are consistently challenged. Nationally-produced schemes of work are used to support curriculum planning in all other subjects although these are not followed consistently by all teachers especially in DT. Many activities in lessons are very teacher-directed and, as a result, opportunities for pupils to develop independence in their learning is often limited. Provision for ICT is satisfactory and the weaknesses identified in the last inspection have been addressed.
18. Elements of the art and music curriculum are strong, and pupils receive good quality support in aspects of the physical education curriculum through involvement with the community. Regular visitors to the school, and planned visits to places of interest provide valuable experiences to support all pupils knowledge and understanding in subjects such as history. The good range of extra-curricular opportunities enriches pupils' learning outside of classes. However, pupils of all abilities do not always have access to some of these activities, particularly in sport.
19. Pupils settle quickly into the school because links with the infant school from which most pupils are admitted are particularly close. Good liaison with local secondary schools ensures that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
20. The school is well staffed with teachers and teaching assistants. Teachers with particular curriculum strengths are well deployed to support pupils throughout the school. This strategy is particularly successful in music. The school benefits from accommodation that is good overall. The school grounds are spacious with extensive grassed areas. By comparison, the hard play area is far too small and becomes very crowded at playtimes. The school needs to consider staggering playtimes to spread use of this space. Attractive displays enhance the learning environment. Resources are satisfactory, although the library is in need of development.

Care, guidance and support

This is a caring school where staff know pupils well, and pupils feel valued. There are good procedures for some aspects of health and safety. However, the arrangements for child protection need updating. There is good support for pupils' personal development but support for academic progress is not based sufficiently on the assessment data available. There is good involvement of pupils in the work of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is generally good attention to the health and safety of pupils.
- There needs to be greater emphasis on child protection.
- Induction arrangements are good.
- Assessment is not used sufficiently to support pupils' academic progress.
- Pupils receiving extra support miss lessons.
- Pupils are listened to and their views taken into account.
- Arrangements for child protection need updating.

- Lunchtime arrangements are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

21. The school places great emphasis on pupils' welfare, and staff work alongside governors to ensure that the necessary procedures for health and safety are in place. There is a member of staff with responsibility for child protection. However, many staff are unclear about the schools' policy for child protection or to whom they should go with a concern.
22. Induction procedures are good, and pupils entering the school quickly settle into new routines. Pupils new to the school say they are well supported and are happy in school.
23. Teachers keep appropriate records of pupils' personal development, and targets are shared with pupils. Those pupils who are identified as needing additional support for personal development take part in small-group circle time aimed at raising their confidence and self-esteem. However, although this is valuable in many ways, the present arrangements mean that pupils miss the same lesson every week. In some instances, the lessons missed may have been just as effective at supporting pupils. The assessment of academic progress is not shared sufficiently with pupils, and, although they may have targets, many pupils are vague about what they need to do to improve their work.
24. Pupils' views are sought through the school council and through questionnaires, and changes are often made as a result. For example, the school council was unhappy at the state of the dinner trays and in response to this new trays were purchased. The two items still highest on pupils' agenda are that there should be more to do outside and during 'wet playtimes' and that toilet doors should lock properly. Lunchtime arrangements mean that pupils have to spend overlong standing in queues. At times there are too many lunchtime supervisors inside the building and too few outside. This is particularly so when pupils use the field as well as the playground. These arrangements need to be revised.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has generally good links with parents, although there is scope to improve communication. The school makes good use of its links with the community. Links with other schools, particularly the adjoining infant school are very strong.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents give good support to the school.
- Not all parents are satisfied with the communication between school and home.
- The school actively seeks the views of parents.
- The school has particularly good links with the infant school.
- Links with the community effectively support learning and pupils' personal development.

Commentary

25. Generally parents are very supportive of the school, and are satisfied with what it provides. The parent friends association is very active and raises large sums of money. A good number of parents help in school and with extra-curricular activities, and they are made to feel welcome and valued.
26. Most parents feel comfortable approaching the school, although not all feel that their concerns are dealt with well. The school provides a good number of opportunities for parents to come into school to see their child's work, but these meetings are sometimes rather informal and too public to be really useful. However, in response to parents' concerns about this, the school has revised its arrangements for the autumn term. When pupils move into a new year group, information about the timetable and the curriculum is sent to parents. However, it is not always

sufficiently detailed to enable parents to help their children effectively at home or support learning in school. The format of pupil annual reports have recently been revised. Information is not always as precise as it might be and in some there is too much emphasis on the work covered and pupils' attitudes to work. Information about what pupils know and can do is often limited.

27. Annual questionnaires to parents are used well. For example, the result of a recent questionnaire has resulted in a session for parents about circle time. However, there is scope to develop consultation further; for example, on policy matters.
28. The school works very closely with the infant school to the extent that they work together moderating test results. These very close links help to ensure that pupils transferring from the infant school settle quickly. However, not all lessons make use of the assessment information provided by the infant school. The school has established good links with the local community and other schools. Links also draw effectively on the business community through such initiatives as the THEAMA (Thinking and Extension Activities for the More Able) project aimed specifically at supporting higher attaining pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The headteacher provides good leadership in many areas and the school is well managed. Other senior staff make an appropriate contribution to leadership although the role of subject leaders needs to be extended in some subjects. The governing body carries out its work effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a clear educational direction in terms of ensuring high standards in the core subjects.
- Leadership should now ensure there is more focus on standards in other subjects.
- The headteacher is committed to improvement and has led the school very successfully to achieving many national awards.
- The role of subject leaders needs extending, particularly in non-core subjects.
- Development planning needs to be sharper and linked more directly to the budget.
- The school functions very successfully as a centre for teacher training.

Commentary

29. The headteacher has been particularly successful in using the framework of national awards and standards such as the 'Arts Mark' and 'Inclusive School Award' to set an agenda for change and innovation in many areas. He sets a good tone for the positive ethos that prevails in the school and for the pupils' positive attitudes to learning. He has worked very closely with partner institutions such as the High Force Initial Teacher Training Centre and ensured that the school provides a good centre for training and development. He has been determined that the school should not become complacent about its high standards and has kept a focus on the core subjects that are tested nationally, whilst ensuring that the curriculum is enriched with activities such as music. The focus on standards in the core subjects could now be widened to subjects other than the core, where standards could often be higher.
30. Other senior staff make an appropriate contribution to leadership although the role of subject leaders needs to be extended in non-core subjects in order to ensure that standards are sufficiently high. Lesson and curriculum plans are monitored, but not always sufficiently rigorously in terms of the standards that the pupils will attain in terms of National Curriculum expectations. This is particularly the case in subjects other than the core. There is general evaluation of provision, but this is not always in sufficient detail to ensure that school policies and approaches are consistent across all classes. The senior management team is small and much of the responsibility for evaluating provision and maintaining an overview falls upon the

headteacher. As the nature of school leadership changes, the composition and terms of reference could be reconsidered to ensure that responsibilities are shared.

31. The school takes many steps to evaluate its effectiveness. A range of data is collected and analysed, but targets set do not always stem directly from the analysis and are not always sufficiently sharp to allow further evaluation to be precise. For example, steps are being taken to address concerns about boys' achievement in English in Year 5, but the school's own data indicate that this is a particularly highly attaining group. As the targets set are not clear, the steps taken are unlikely to be effective. The school's overall development plan makes links to the budget, but developments have not always been costed sufficiently precisely for it to be the central shaper of the budget. As a result, there is a significant surplus in the budget whilst there are areas such as physical education and information and communication technology where more resources are needed.
32. The school is administered very effectively and the school secretary is particularly efficient in carrying out her many duties. Her workload is greater than usual, ranging from finance to first-aid, but she always gives parents and pupils her full attention. Her very understanding and sympathetic approach are important to the positive tone of the school.
33. The governing body carries out its work effectively and maintains a good general oversight of the school. They are rigorous in their questioning of the school about aspects of its work and plans for expenditure, and have monitored the standards in the core subjects. The overall strategic view would emerge more clearly if the overall development plan set sharper overall targets that defined direction, and ensured that individual targets are sharper and flow precisely from the analysis of data.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	864038
Total expenditure	803914
Expenditure per pupil	2190

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	87685
Balance carried forward to the next	60124

COMMUNITY PROVISION

The range of community provision made by the school is comparatively limited. An annual after-school ICT course is arranged for parents, and the school is part of the High Force School-Centered Initial Teacher Training (SCITT), and provides training for new teachers. Both of these are valued by the participants.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The ICT course arranged is well attended and valuable.
- The school's contribution to the SCITT is seen as valuable.
- There is little other provision by the school, but good community provision is made by other institutions in the area.

Commentary

As there is a good range of courses and variety of facilities available through other providers in the local community, there is no particular 'gap' that the school needs to fill. The governors make the school facilities available to the local community through the usual letting arrangements for meetings and other events. There is little use of other facilities such as the field or computer suite. The community generally makes use of the local secondary school for these purposes.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good** overall. Standards of attainment are well above average in both reading, speaking and listening, and above average in writing. This represents good achievement for the pupils overall. These standards result from the good quality of the teaching, the pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and from the school's considerable focus on this subject in terms of time and support.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is some good and very good teaching of the subject.
- Pupils have good attitudes to reading and enjoy literature.
- The programme for teaching writing needs to be linked more directly to reading.
- More use needs to be made of ICT in developing writing.

Commentary

Speaking and listening

34. Standards are high across the school. Most pupils are confident and articulate and enjoy expressing their views. Many have sophisticated speech patterns using such devices as, "... I'll give you an example ..." when explaining. Some teachers have some very effective strategies such as paired discussion and reporting back, and 'hotseating' (where a pupil or teacher takes the role of a character and answers questions posed by the class) that encourage confidence and clarity. These are used in English and other subjects, but not by all teachers or to the same extent. 'Hotseating' is most effective when the questions are prepared in advance (such as in the Year 4 religious education lesson mentioned above) and the person in the hotseat has some costume or props to help them assume the role. There are few occasions when pupils play a full part in the 'plenary sessions' where learning is evaluated at the end of lessons. This is most effective when pupils have time to prepare their presentations, and other pupils are encouraged to ask them searching questions.

Reading

35. Standards in reading are well above average across the school. The school gives considerable time to the teaching of reading, arranging extra lessons outside of the usual 'Literacy Hour'. Pupils take books home and receive significant support from parents. Most pupils read fluently and with good understanding. The great majority reach the higher level (Level 5) where they can discern meaning beyond the literal and refer to the text to substantiate their points. For example, in a good Year 6 lesson, one pupil pointed out, "She can't be that friendly because it says that 'The children sat in silence' and they wouldn't do that if she was friendly". The group reading sessions are most effective when there is an adult with the group, and when the focus is on the content and meaning of the story rather than just the recognition of words. They are best when thought has been given to the teaching points that can be made from a particular chapter. Most pupils enjoy reading and enjoy the range of literature available, but the library is restrictive and is not fully used for research. Classes have their own collections of books, but few are arranged in attractive ways that would encourage a reluctant reader. The extra one-to-one teaching for pupils needing extra support is often valuable, but is counter-productive when the programme of support does not take sufficient account of the loss of learning through missing other lessons to receive it.

Writing

36. The school's scores in national tests for 11 year olds fell significantly in 2003, but evidence of the pupils' work indicates that standards were higher than the test scores suggest. However, standards are lower than in reading. By the end of Year 6, most pupils' writing is correct in terms of spelling punctuation and grammar, although there are a few pupils who do not meet the expectation in terms of these features. The great deal of time spent on spelling exercises in many classes is not always effective because most pupils spell well anyway and those with problems are not always helped by these discrete activities. Fewer pupils than in reading attain the higher level (Level 5) where writing is expected to be varied and interesting in a variety of forms with words used imaginatively and precisely. Teachers often refer to these features, particularly in the 'Literacy Hour' when the literary features of texts are considered, but pupils do not always carry this knowledge into their writing. The carry-over is most effective where the texts studied come from the longer books being read, and where pupils use the features identified in a variety of contexts in their own writing. There are opportunities for pupils to redraft and improve upon their work, but this is mostly to correct errors rather than to improve clarity and style. There are few opportunities for pupils to discuss their work with adults or fellow pupils as part of the redrafting process. On many occasions, lessons do not take sufficient account of what pupils have already learned, or the specific needs of different individuals or groups. Teaching is most effective where it is targeted precisely to these needs and takes account of the levels already achieved, and what different groups need to learn to reach the next level.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

37. It was difficult to assess the application literacy skills across the curriculum as very little previous work was made available to the inspection team. Although pupils write in the context of subjects such as history and geography, there is no plan of how this will fit with the range of styles expected, or how it will contribute to progress. There is some use of word processing by pupils to write a variety of pieces, but little evidence of its use to redraft and improve writing, or to print out pupils' writing for them to reconsider; for example by highlighting nouns and seeing what adjectives might describe them.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good** overall. The good quality of the teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes to learning promote good progress and high standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons effectively.
- Assessment information is not always used effectively to target teaching.
- There could be more opportunities for pupils to use mathematics in other subjects.

Commentary

38. Since the last inspection, standards in mathematics have been maintained at well above those found nationally. Pupils' achievement is good. The National Numeracy Strategy has been integrated into the school's provision to provide a consistent structure to lessons. Pupils in all year groups are organised in ability sets for mathematics lessons, and this helps to ensure that pupils receive the teaching support they need to improve.
39. Overall the quality of teaching is good, and pupils learn effectively in lessons. Lessons are well managed. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject, and are developing a range of teaching strategies and approaches to learning that will continue to support pupils' high attainment. They challenge pupils through their questions, and plan

practical activities that help pupils to extend their understanding. Resources are used well to support pupils' learning.

40. Pupils quickly attain a secure and ready mental recall of mathematical facts that underpins effective learning. For example, Year 6 pupils confidently converted decimals to fractions and percentages. Practical work enables pupils to become confident in the use of measures and to develop a very secure knowledge and understanding of two and three-dimensional shapes. They develop a very good understanding of the number system and are encouraged to use a range of strategies to solve mathematical problems. Pupils gain experience of handling data that is increasingly linked to their work in ICT.
41. Regular assessments provide teachers with the information they need to plan lessons that are well matched to the learning needs of pupils. However, although teachers plan lessons carefully, they do not always take full account of pupils' previous learning. As a result, some parts of lessons do not always challenge pupils enough, particularly higher attaining pupils. Assessment information is used to set targets for whole year groups, but the analysis of this information is not rigorous enough to ensure that the targets set are always challenging. Pupils' knowledge of their own learning is limited because they are provided with little information and guidance about what they have achieved and need to do next to improve. Homework is set regularly and used well to support pupils' learning.
42. Pupils enjoy mathematics. They work hard and co-operate well in pairs and small groups when given the opportunity to do so. Pupils behave very well and listen carefully to their teachers' instructions and explanations. These very positive attitudes ensure that time is not wasted and pupils of all abilities learn well as lessons are productive and purposeful.
43. The co-ordinator for mathematics is knowledgeable and enthusiastic, and has secured improvements in the teaching of skills to develop pupils' ability to use and apply mathematics. She is aware of the need to improve the use of assessment information to guide target setting. However, her role as leader and manager is not sufficiently defined to ensure that the next steps in developing the provision are clearly identified and acted upon.

Mathematics across the curriculum

44. There is some valuable use of ICT to handle data and use spreadsheets, but the use of mathematics across other areas of the curriculum could be extended.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **good** overall. Standards of attainment are very high across the school in all areas of the curriculum. This represents good achievement for the pupils. These consistently high standards are the result of the **good** quality of the teaching which builds successfully on the high standards the pupils have already attained on entry to the school. The pupils have very positive attitudes to science. The good quality within this subject found during the last inspection has been maintained.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and there is a good emphasis on practical activities.
- There is very good development of scientific enquiry.
- Pupils' enjoyment of the subject enhances their learning.
- ICT could be used more to extend work.
- More use could be made of assessment to help pupils understand how they might improve.

Commentary

45. The good standard of teaching across the school ensures that the high standards gained in the infant school are developed effectively through a wide range of interesting, relevant tasks. Opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding through investigations and practical tasks makes learning more enjoyable and this results in the high level of enthusiasm seen in many lessons. Relationships are invariably strong and pupils are encouraged to do their best.
46. The best teaching occurs when pupils are given opportunities to plan their own investigations and to contribute to lessons, generally through well-targeted questions. For example, Year 4 pupils collected samples of insects and other small creatures from the school grounds, and good questioning helped them relate these to their precise habitats. Pupils' contributions are valued and pupils become confident and enthusiastic learners. Involvement in practical tasks enhances interest and understanding; for example, there was great enthusiasm during a lesson where pupils used disclosing tablets to show how food clings to the teeth and gums. In a good Year 5 lesson, pupils enjoyed their practical involvement in the task of classifying and grouping various substances through observation and asking relevant questions. In most lessons, pupils co-operate very well, helping and supporting each other.
47. Insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their scientific skills through the use of ICT. Some work is recorded and graphs are drawn using computers, but pupils do not have the facility for research or to use specific scientific programs unless they are in the ICT suite, where time is very limited and other areas of the curriculum are also a priority.
48. Although general assessment is satisfactory, the data gained is not used sufficiently to identify those specific areas where each pupil needs to improve. Marking is thorough, but pupils often do not read the comments written and ignore instructions given. In a number of exercise books, for example, a teacher had written, 'Finish this'. This had not been done and the teacher had not checked to ensure that it had. Other marking is supportive and reinforces what has been learned.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**, being a combination of strengths and areas for further development. The standards of attainment are high in those areas of the curriculum which involve the use of computers, but less so in other parts. Teaching is generally **good** and the pupils are keen and interested. A key issue from the last inspection was 'ensure that ICT meets National Curriculum requirements in relation to modelling and external monitoring'. This has largely been addressed and standards have risen.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of the ICT suite.
- There is good emphasis on use of computers, but less on other parts of the ICT curriculum.
- There are too few computers in classrooms.
- More use could be made of ICT in other areas of the curriculum.

Commentary

49. The ICT suite is used very effectively to ensure that all pupils gain a good knowledge of the subject. The quality of teaching is generally good. Lessons are specific, and although there is sometimes a lack of challenge for those pupils with higher abilities, most achieve well. The ICT curriculum is, however, rather narrow and there are still too few opportunities provided for control technology and monitoring.

50. Pupils are very competent in all aspects of word processing. They use spreadsheets and access the Internet with confidence.
51. Pupils' attitudes are very positive and all try hard. Teachers and other adult helpers provide good support and there are very few lessons where pupils are still struggling by the end. In some classes 'computer buddies' are appointed, so that when they have completed their tasks, they help others. This system is very successful.
52. The lack of computers in the classrooms means that pupils have only a limited time to develop their learning and so have few opportunities to work independently on researching geographical or historical facts; for example, or drafting and redrafting a piece of writing.
53. A group of pupils who have their own computers stated that what they found what was learned in school to be useful, relevant and helpful to what they did at home.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

54. More use could be made of ICT across the curriculum. The lack of computers in individual classrooms means that pupils are unable to follow through work covered in the suite and their time there is, understandably, limited. There are few opportunities, for example, for pupils to follow through research in geography or history or for drafting and redrafting pieces of writing.

HUMANITIES

History and geography

Provision in history, geography and religious education is **satisfactory** but there is too little emphasis on the higher levels of attainment. Standards of attainment are in line with those usually found, but this represents unsatisfactory achievement for these pupils whose attainment is well above average in the core subjects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There needs to be more emphasis on requirements of higher levels of attainment.
- Some good teaching enhances pupils' understanding well.
- The curriculum is enhanced by good programme of visits and visitors to add interest and excitement especially in history.

Commentary

55. This required content of the syllabuses for history and geography is covered appropriately, but without the extra challenge that would enable pupils to attain the higher levels. Teaching in lessons seen was generally satisfactory, but there is insufficient emphasis within the curriculum on the higher expectations of each of these subjects. Such a focus is a strong feature of the teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. As a result, by the end of Year 6, most pupils have a good recall of facts they have learned and can, for example, talk about features of life in Tudor England such as houses and the court of Henry VIII. However, few pupils have attained the higher level where they can explain the changes within the period studied. In geography, pupils have been taught effectively about processes such as erosion and deposition, but teaching has not focused sufficiently on an understanding of geographical patterns such as climate or patterns of settlement to allow pupils to attain the higher level. Although there are clear objectives for individual lessons, there are no objectives for topics as a whole and, as a result, some teachers are not as clear about the focus as they are in the core subjects.

56. Learning is well underpinned by a series of visits and visitors. For example, visits from actors playing the parts of Vikings and engaging the pupils in role-play greatly enhance pupils' interest and understanding. Visits such as the residential visit to Grasmere enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of the geography and ecology of a contrasting area.
57. The leadership and management of all three subjects has been successful in ensuring that the basic curriculum is covered appropriately and that resources are well used, particularly in terms of providing first-hand experiences. They have not been successful in ensuring that the expectations of the higher levels of attainment are made sufficiently clear in overall planning and that lessons have sufficient focus on these elements.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory** overall. The prescribed Programmes of Study are covered appropriately and pupils develop a generally appropriate level of knowledge, although understanding could be extended in many areas.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some good teaching enhances pupils' understanding well.
 - Pupils' understanding could be developed further through deeper discussion.
 - The curriculum is enhanced by a programme of visits and visitors.
58. At the time of the inspection, the locally agreed syllabus for religious education did not specify a higher level of attainment, but there is a general expectation that pupils' understanding will be extended where possible. By the end of Year 6, most pupils have an appropriate level of knowledge of the aspects they have studied, and can, for example, remember that there are '5 K's' of the Sikh religion. However, many still struggle to meet the expected level of understanding in aspects such as, "Identify at least two denominations in the Christian Tradition and explain basic differences". Where teaching is good, it explores this understanding, but in many cases, lessons stop short at the knowledge. For example, one Year 4 lesson engaged pupils' interest well by involving them in an impromptu play about Guru Govind Singh seeming to behead his followers, and the bloodstained sword added much to the pupils' enjoyment. The discussion following the play explored notions of loyalty and trust, but did not relate these to the Sikh faith and so did not develop the pupils' understanding. In another class, looking at the same event, the teacher used 'hotseating' to explore the feeling and emotions of those concerned, and this proved very successful and extending understanding and relating it to the religious beliefs.
59. The curriculum is enhanced by a programme of visits and visitors; for example, a visit to the local Christian Church was very well prepared and enhanced by the visit of the local vicar who was able to set the scene so that pupils knew what to look for during the visit. There are visits to a range of places of worship, such as Sikh Temple, and visitors from other faiths.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' drawing skills are good because the teaching of these skills is good.
- Pupils are enthusiastic.
- The co-ordinator provides strong leadership but her role as a manager is underdeveloped.

Main strengths and weaknesses (continued)

- Opportunities for pupils to work in three dimensions are limited.
- Pupils have limited knowledge of a range of artists, and their evaluation skills are underdeveloped.

Commentary

60. Pupils are enthusiastic about art and enjoy their lessons. Teaching is good and teachers are confident in the teaching of specific skills such as drawing. In this element of the curriculum pupils' produce work of a standard that is above that normally found. Teachers do not regularly assess pupils' work, and, as a result, lessons do not take full account of pupils' previous experiences and learning. Pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory. For example, pupils in Year 3 work collaboratively to produce three-dimensional pieces of work, but opportunities for pupils in Years 4 to 6 to develop these skills further are underdeveloped. Pupils learn about the work of artists although the range of artists in terms of time, gender and culture is narrow. Pupils have too few opportunities to evaluate their own work and the work of others. The use of ICT in art and design is limited, but developing. Involvement in national initiatives and competitions make a positive contribution to pupils' experiences. The provision of an extra-curricular art club for Year 3 pupils, and a club for higher attaining pupils from all year groups further enrich the art and design curriculum. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and has worked hard to raise the profile of the subject. However, monitoring to ensure that provision is focused on raising standards in all elements of the subject has been limited.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy music and reach good standards in singing, playing an instrument and performing.
- The co-ordinator has good subject knowledge and is deployed effectively.
- Specialist instrumental tuition enriches the curriculum.
- Opportunities for composing, and listening and responding to music are not sufficiently promoted.

Commentary

61. Pupils are enthusiastic musicians and work hard in lessons. Teaching in the lessons and extra-curricular activities observed was consistently good. Pupils' attain standards that are above those normally found in singing, playing an instrument and performing. However, pupils have too few opportunities to compose and play their own music, or to listen and respond to a variety of music. Consequently they do not achieve the same standard in these elements of the subject that they reach in singing and playing of instruments. Pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory.
62. All Year 3 pupils are encouraged to attend a before-school recorder club, and a significant number continue to attend similar clubs in Years 4, 5 and 6. As a result, by the end of Year 6 many pupils are skilled recorder players and confidently read music. Some pupils are learning to play instruments such as the cello, violin and keyboard. They are supported in their efforts by specialist teachers, and talented parents, who make a very valuable contribution to pupils' learning. The school orchestra and choir provide valuable opportunities for pupils to practice their skills and enjoy music making together. In Years 3, 4 and 5 pupils benefit from the teaching of the skilled co-ordinator. A structured scheme provides good support for teachers. Assessment of pupils is not sufficiently developed to support the raising of standards in all elements of the music curriculum.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy sport.
- Visitors from the community make a good contribution to pupils' learning.
- The range of extra-curricular activities is good.
- Not all pupils have access to extra-curricular activities.

Commentary

63. In the games lessons observed, pupils showed an enthusiasm for learning. Long-term planning ensures that all elements of the physical education curriculum are covered during the year. The school encourages community involvement and pupils benefit from the specialist input of, for example, football coaches from Darlington Football Club. Lessons are well structured, although they do not always ensure that boys and girls have the same experiences. School records show that attainment in swimming meets national expectations for Year 6. Over the year there is a good range of extra-curricular activities. However, as pupils take part in a trial before they are allowed to join many of these activities, pupils whose skills are not well developed are not given the opportunity to take part. Teacher assessment of pupils' work is informal and inconsistent. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and enthusiastic but has completed limited monitoring of the school's provision to identify priorities for development.

Design and technology

Provision in DT is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work is too prescriptive and does not give pupils the required opportunities to plan and to select materials and methods.
- Standards of attainment are therefore well below those usually found.

Commentary

64. The teaching of DT is generally unsatisfactory. This is because the requirements of the subject are seldom met. The National Curriculum requires pupils to make their own designs, choose their own materials, tools and methods, and to evaluate their work, changing it as they go along. However, in most lessons, pupils are given direct instructions of how to make things and have very little scope to develop their own products. The whole essence of the subject is therefore missed.

65. As a result of this, pupils do not attain the standards expected by the end of Year 6. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to develop a whole-school approach to the subject, and has started to provide teachers with the information they need to resolve the situation. Teachers are not secure in their understanding of the expectations for design technology, or of how pupils acquire the knowledge and skills they need to reach the standard normally found by the end of Year 6.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (PSHCE)

Provision in PSHCE is **satisfactory** overall. There is a direct programme through 'circle time' and the school's positive ethos and opportunities for pupils to contribute to the school community through taking responsibilities and through membership of the School Council enhances provision.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Circle time well established and staff well trained in this technique.
- Pupils enjoy the provision, but not all take it seriously.
- There could be more focus on citizenship.
- Sex education could be taught earlier.

Commentary

66. The programme of circle time is taught effectively. Teachers are confident in the procedures and have some good techniques for involving the pupils. The level of challenge could be higher in some lessons, and pupils could be encouraged to think more deeply about their contributions and about their responses to others. In some cases this would mean more careful planning of the sessions in terms of the issues to be explored and the learning outcomes expected.
67. Most pupils enjoy these sessions and find them valuable to their personal development. However, in some lessons the quality of the experience is marred by some pupils who do not take the session seriously. An example of a Year 5 lesson has already been given in paragraph 7, where some pupils attempted to 'hi-jack' the session and not let others participate. This is directly contrary to the spirit of circle time. These unsatisfactory attitudes are not always challenged effectively by teachers either during the session, when it might be difficult to do so within the usual procedures, or afterwards.
68. The school's very positive ethos, and some good opportunities for pupils to contribute to the school community also help develop personal and social skills. The School Council provides a very valuable forum for pupils to participate in a formal committee structure, feel that their ideas are valued and they can make a direct contribution to the organisation of the school.
69. The programme for sex education comes near the end of Year 6 which is much later than most schools. There could be a greater focus on citizenship through a more formal programme, whether this is integrated into other subjects or taught separately.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
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	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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