

INSPECTION REPORT

HOLY ISLAND CE FIRST SCHOOL

Holy Island, Berwick-on Tweed

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122294

Acting Headteacher: Mrs M Frankland

Lead inspector: Clive Davies

Dates of inspection: 11-12th December 2003

Inspection number: 262850

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	5
School address:	c/o Lowick First School 30 Main Street Lowick Berwick-on Tweed
Postcode:	TD15 2UA
Telephone number:	01289 389231/ 388268
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Brother Damian SSF
Date of previous inspection:	May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Holy Island CE First School is situated on Holy Island in Northumberland, fourteen miles south of Berwick-on Tweed. The school is only accessible at low tide via a causeway and consequently the school on Holy Island is only used when pupils cannot access the mainland. When the causeway is open the five pupils who attend Holy Island join the other 29 pupils of Lowick First School at their school in Lowick village. Of the 5 pupils who attend 3 are reception aged and 2 are in Year 3. The headteacher at Lowick First School is the acting headteacher for Holy Island CE First School and this has been the case for some time.

The school is therefore much smaller than other primary school and the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for school meals free of charge is well above the national average. All speak English as their first language and from British families. No one is on the special education needs list. When they start school pupils have personal, social and academic skills that match those expected for their age. However, many have a wide vocabulary and are confident communicators.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3639	Clive Davies	Lead inspector	English, art and design, design and technology, music, physical education, foundation stage of learning
9214	Janet Garland	Lay inspector	
32507	Chris Quigley	Team inspector	Mathematics, science, information and communication technology, geography, history, religious education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This is a **good school with many very good features** that provides pupils with a unique start to their formal education. The pupils benefit from being taught on the island with its special environment and from working with a larger group of pupils in Lowick First School on the mainland. Pupils achieve well due to effective leadership demonstrated by the headteacher and the Governing Body. Within the context of the high costs associated with such a small school, the school still provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The good quality of the individual attention provided for the pupils ensures that they achieve well.
- The three reception-aged children are provided with an exciting and secure start to their school life.
- The standard of pupils' writing and reading is good and they achieve particularly well in these areas.
- There is a need to re-establish the very good links that existed between the teacher at Holy Island and the ones at Lowick.
- The Governing Body is extremely dedicated to providing the few children on the island with an education that takes account of their unique environment.
- The behaviour of pupils is excellent and they have very positive attitudes to their work.
- The school is taking advantage of the uniqueness of the Holy Island community but more could be done to promote this still further.

At the time of the previous inspection in May 1998 only one pupil was in attendance and therefore comparisons needs to take this into account. The school has dealt well with the issues that did arise from that inspection and has made good progress since.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

With so few pupils in the school it is not appropriate to publish a standards' table. **Each of the five pupils are achieving well and making good progress as they move through the school.** When taking account of their skill levels when they first started school compared to their attainment now, each has made great strides in their literacy and numeracy. They are confident communicators who make good use of this when writing, with the two Year 3 pupils using a full written vocabulary and describing events imaginatively. Each of the three reception children is on course to meet the learning goals in each of the six areas of learning and have made a particularly good start with their reading. Standards in all other subjects are satisfactory and good use is made of pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across all subjects. They are confident when applying their numeracy skills to solve mathematical problems or when working practically to investigate and experiment in science.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. Pupils' behaviour is excellent helping them to settle quickly during lessons and ensuring that no time is lost to minor disruptions. Their personal development is also outstanding enabling the pupils at Lowick First School to benefit from the unique lifestyles that these pupils have on the island. At lunchtimes, which are spent at Lowick School, the very positive ethos that exists helps to develop pupils' social, as well as moral, skills. They are extremely polite, well mannered and very confident when communicating with adults. In the classroom, older pupils take a pleasure in settling the younger ones down and enjoy the opportunities provided for them to show responsibility in this way.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is good. To a certain extent the pupils benefit from the best of both worlds. They have the opportunity to enjoy the unique setting of a small island school but also work alongside other pupils in the larger environment within Lowick First School. A great deal of attention is given to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. However, the school is not always in a position to make full use of its unique setting and gaining from the skills of people in the immediate community. **The quality of the teaching is good.** The level of challenge provided for pupils is very good and much is expected of them. Their learning is being helped by the way teachers share with them the objectives at the beginning of each lesson. This is helping them to be clear about what is expected of them. Up until this term there has been very effective liaison between the teacher on Holy Island and the teachers in Lowick School. Due to illness and the subsequent retirement of the Holy Island teacher this has not been as effective this term. It is something that the school is seeking to re-establish with the new Holy Island teacher who is taking up her post in January. The level of care provided for these five pupils is very good and a major contributor in ensuring that pupils have a full and varied curriculum.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The acting headteacher is very dedicated to ensuring that the five Holy Island pupils do not lose out on anything and works very hard at involving them in all the productions and special events that take place at Lowick First School. This is done whilst she still maintains a full time teaching commitment, which underlines her dedication and enthusiasm. The governors are also very committed to the school and work hard at ensuring the school's uniqueness. Governors know the school extremely well and attendance at meetings and other associated work is carried out dedicatedly.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The parents are very appreciative of the way their children are cared for and know that they are secure and safe at all times. They have very good quality information about the progress they are making and recognise the efforts made by teachers to see them at anytime. The pupils enjoy coming to school and talk fondly of the friends they have on the mainland as well as the special friendship groups they have on the island.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Re-establish the patterns of liaison that existed between the Holy Island and Lowick teachers.
- Consider how to make more of the uniqueness of the island and take full advantage of the expertise of the individuals that live on it.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Although only few pupils attend the school it is clear that standards that are above the levels expected in English, mathematics, science and music. Standards are satisfactory for all other subjects. **All pupils achieve well because of the challenge that is provided for them.**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils achieve well and make good progress.
- The three children in the foundation stage of learning are making good progress towards meeting the learning goals in each of the six areas of learning.
- Pupils are confident communicators and this is benefiting their descriptive writing and reading.

Commentary

- 1 Only two pupils have taken National Curriculum tests in the past four years so it is difficult to look at trends or make comparisons of results over time. In both reading and writing pupils attained the higher levels (Level 3) in these tests, which confirms that standards are well above national average. In mathematics, although both attained above the national average, the overall results were not quite as high but very impressive none-the-less. There is very good attention to developing pupils' mental and oral skills in mathematics. This results in them being able to respond at speed to questions that are posed to them. Examination of these pupils' work over time shows that they make good progress, especially in their descriptive writing and use of number. They also carry out investigations with maturity and can recall experiments that they have undertaken in science. Standards in music are good with the pupils benefiting from the specialist teaching that they have once a week.
- 2 The three who attend the reception class are on course to meet the early learning goals in each of the six areas of learning. In some areas, especially communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development two of the three are likely to exceed the learning goal by the end of the school year. The three children normally work with a group of nine, which is made up of six children from Lowick First School. The children work well together and provide challenge and support for each other. The teacher's high expectation of the children also ensures that they work at a demanding rate and they respond well to this way of working.
- 3 Each of the five pupils who attend achieve well. The two Year 3 pupils work for some or half of the week with other pupils of the same age who attend only Lowick First School. Both the teaching and their peers challenge them and enable them to achieve to their potential. They have good communication skills and are confident when speaking to adults or their friends. During lunchtimes, for example, pupils talk about a range of topics in a very mature way. This helps to create a very positive ethos at this time. In lessons, pupils are quick to answer questions or offer solutions to problems. They use good, Standard English when speaking. This is a feature of their communication skills. They have a wide vocabulary and this is helping them to develop their descriptions when it comes to writing. The two Year 3 pupils are able writers who cope with writing long, well-sequenced stories. They confidently interweave dialogue, action and description and can sustain descriptions and manage humour and suspense very well. Their reading is of a very good standard and they confidently read aloud with fluency adding expression appropriately. They read regularly at home and can talk with authority about a range of different writers and illustrators. They make good use of their reading skills when researching, either by using information books or when using the Internet.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they are delighted to spend time with. The calm and enjoyable lunchtimes do much to help pupils' personal development, which is also outstanding.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' behaviour is excellent, especially at lunchtimes.
- Pupils' are extremely polite, well mannered and very confident when communicating with adults.
- Older pupils show good levels of responsibility especially when it comes to looking after younger ones.
- Pupils' cultural awareness could be extended by making more of the Island's unique setting.
- Attendance levels are good and pupils are very punctual.

Commentary

- 4 Pupils behaviour is outstanding. They cope very well in different situations, such as when being transported between the Holy Island and Lowick Schools and when travelling on the bus to and from the local swimming pool. At lunchtimes (that are spent in Lowick School), they settle very quickly and show very good social skills. These sessions are very pleasing with pupils sitting and talking together in a very mature manner. They take pride in the way they do so politely and use good manners. They are very quick to use 'please' or 'thank you' and go out of their way to make visitors feel welcome.
- 5 When in lessons, pupils work in a quiet and sensible manner. They work with each other very well when required to do so. They can also carry out independent studies and many carry on with topics, started at school, at home. They also strive to do well and are very proud of their efforts and take care with the presentation of their work. They are quick to respond to questions that are asked of them. In the reception class pupils make good progress in their personal, social and emotional skills and eagerly participate in any whole class situations. When presented with difficult tasks pupils are happy to persevere and try and work things out for themselves. Pupils appreciate that they are able to get on with their work and that no one is preventing them from doing so. They do not feel that bullying is an issue at either school.
- 6 When at the Holy Island School the older pupils take time to ensure that the youngest children are well looked after. They help to set out resources and take particular care of their younger classmates at break times. They make sure that they know the routines, especially with regard to transport arrangements.
- 7 The pupils' from Holy Island have a truly unique lifestyle. For long periods the island is an open playground, which provides a safe haven for them. Many of the islanders are talented artists or musicians who have chosen to live on the island to help develop their skills. The pupils from the school take advantage of some of this uniqueness in their day-to-day work but more could be done to help develop their awareness of local traditions. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory and their social, moral and spiritual development is very good. In order to enhance further pupils' cultural development the school needs to help pupils to reflect about their role in living in a multi-cultural society.
- 8 Attendance rates are good, especially when appreciating that pupils live on an island that is isolated from the mainland for long periods each day. It is especially good when recognising that pupils have to be transported backwards and forwards from the island almost every day.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (95.2%)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.8
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Pupils are supported effectively to ensure that they have well established literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Challenging teaching helps pupils of all abilities to achieve well. However, not enough time is devoted to ensure that pupils make the most of the unique surroundings and resources on the island.

Teaching and learning

The quality of the teaching is good. The level of challenge provided for pupils in both reception and Year 3 is very good. Their learning is being helped by the way teachers share with them the objectives at the beginning of each lesson.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good level of challenge provided for all pupils.
- The reception-aged children are helped to settle into school routines and achieve well because of the level of challenge that is provided for them.
- Due to prolonged illness of the Holy Island teacher the level of liaison between the Lowick teachers and Holy Island teacher has not been maintained during the term when the school was inspected.

Commentary

9 In all lessons the pupils from Holy Island were working in classes that contained pupils from Lowick School. The teaching is good with the table below showing that no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In almost all lessons the teaching was good with many very good features. In each of the two classes, containing Holy Island pupils, the level of challenge is consistently high. Teachers are very aware of the need to keep pupils' interest levels high and are quick to provide additional challenges for more able pupils when it is necessary to do so. This also applies to teachers who visit the school for specific sessions, or to staff who work with pupils outside the school. The music lessons, for example, are challenging and pupils' swimming instructors also have high expectations of the pupils. As a result pupils are able to achieve to their potential and attain high standards. Standards in music and swimming are better than expected for their age as a consequence of the experiences provided.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 10 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	1	8	1	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.

- 10 The three reception-aged children are provided with high levels of challenge. This is very much in evidence during introductory sessions when the teacher makes demands on their ability to respond at speed to questions relating to number or to aspects of reading. The children enjoy this level of challenge and there is a strong sense of children achieving to their potential as a result. If children use gestures to answer questions the teacher insists that they use sentences and supports their efforts when doing so. They have open access to the computers and are confidently able to carry out work related to the on-going theme of the lesson. In one lesson the children were able to explain why Father Christmas would be able to deliver all of the presents and use words like 'address' to help with their answer. The resources within the reception class are well set out so that children can move from one activity to another and still meet a challenge that captivates and interests them. This is particularly the case in the play environment.
- 11 Up until this term there has been very effective liaison between the teacher on Holy Island and the teachers in Lowick School. Due to illness and the subsequent retirement of the Holy Island teacher this has not been as effective this term. It is something that the school is seeking to re-establish with the new Holy Island teacher who is taking up her post in January. The headteacher has worked hard to ensure that the pupils' progression in their learning has not been disrupted but some aspects of continuity of work have been slightly handicapped.
- 12 In each of the two main classrooms in Lowick School there is an interactive white board. Teachers make good use of this facility to support the pupils' learning. The board is used effectively by each teacher to help cope with the wide age and ability range within each class. Each lesson starts with the teacher sharing the learning intention with the pupils. This is helping the pupils be very clear about what is expected of them and often helps them to relate to the time they have available to complete their tasks. The pupils also use learning targets to help them be focused about the next area of learning. These are used effectively in literacy, numeracy and ICT. One of the other main strengths of the teaching is the way in which teachers cater for the needs of pupils of different ages and different abilities in one class. This is particularly the case in one of the classes during the afternoon sessions when the three reception-aged children are taught alongside Year 1 and 2 Lowick pupils. In this class good use is made of the teaching assistant who has very good early years experience to help ensure that tasks are moderated to suit the needs of the youngest children. There is very good indication in teachers' planning as to how they intend to cope with pupils' ability levels. This is then transferred into practice by using different resources, levels of support and having different expectations for each group.

The curriculum

The breadth of curricular opportunities is satisfactory, although more needs to be done to make the most of the unique setting of the island. The provision for enrichment of the curriculum is good. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school uses its unique link with Lowick First School on the mainland well to develop a rich curriculum for pupils. When pupils are taught at Holy Island school, there are missed opportunities to fully exploit this unique environment to its full capacity.
- The school's active involvement in the Kyloe cluster group is having a positive impact in enriching the curriculum and in developing social development.
- There is a good use of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum although there are further opportunities to develop the use of graphs, charts and tables in science.
- The accommodation and resources at the school are limited. However, the school benefits from its good link with Lowick First School, where there is a good level of resources.
- The organisation of units of work means that some subjects are not covered very often. This makes it difficult for pupils to remember what they have learned.

Commentary

- 13 The school has a strong and good link with Lowick First School. When pupils are taught at the school, they benefit from a rich curriculum that makes full use of the expertise within the village. There are a number of craftspeople that live and work in the area and Lowick School makes every effort to involve them in the life of the school. Pupils visit a potters workshop and studio and experience lessons in the potter's wheel. Other local artists visit the school to help pupils in design, pottery and mask making. The local church is used to teach about baptism and on one occasion, the vicar performed a service to demonstrate the promises adults make to bring up their children in a Christian way. The village lies close to the vast beaches of the Northumberland coast and the school uses them well for seashore studies. However, when pupils are taught at Holy Island, an area of outstanding beauty, set in a conservation area and steeped in religious and historical significance, is not fully captured in the curriculum. This limits the development of the school's distinctive character. Similarly, the unique nature of island life and living in a small community is not reflected in the work set for pupils and opportunities to develop citizenship education are missed.
- 14 The school belongs to a cluster of schools known as the Kyloe Cluster Group. The link with the Holy Island and Lowick Schools is an innovative link that has helped these very small schools to benefit from a range of good provision that would otherwise be beyond its reach. This group of small rural schools work together very well to provide an enriched curriculum for pupils. During the inspection, the schools were busily planning the annual Christingle concert where pupils from all schools come together to worship and sing Christmas carols in one of the village churches. At other times of the year, sporting activities such as cricket and rounders help to provide a good involvement in sport but also contribute very well to pupils' social development. In this rural setting, pupils are given very good opportunities, through the cluster group, to socialise with pupils from other schools who they will later meet with when they transfer to the middle school. As a result, they feel confident and are well prepared when they move on. Pupils have also joined together to sing for former prisoners of war. This was a moving and important experience for pupils in their personal development. The cluster group employs a music teacher, who brings her expertise to the school once a week. This joint venture is an innovative way of employing a member of staff that would otherwise be out of the school's reach due to financial restrictions.
- 15 Pupils use the skills that they have learned in literacy and numeracy lessons well across the curriculum. This is especially so in writing, where pupils use the full range of different types of writing to present their ideas well. For example, stories, lists, poems, plays and report writing are all found in pupils' books. Mathematical skills are also used well. This is particularly so in science, where pupils measure length, weight, temperature and time well. However, there are missed opportunities to develop the use of graphs, charts and tables to both record and to analyse their results. Pupils also speak with clarity and maturity on a range of issues well.
- 16 Resources and accommodation at Holy Island are satisfactory. Pupils of all ages are taught in a single room, but careful planning ensures that resources are appropriate for each age group. When pupils are taught at Lowick, they benefit from a wide range of resources. This is especially so in information and communications technology (ICT), where the school has a good range of computing hardware and two interactive whiteboards. They are well used and are helping pupils to achieve well across the curriculum.
- 17 The curriculum is organised into topics that are taught once a term and planning of this is sound. It ensures that coverage of all subjects is adequate and that pupils' skills are developed adequately over time. However, because of the sometimes-long gaps between the teaching of some subjects, especially history and geography, pupils don't have a clear memory of what they have learned. All of the issues during the last inspection have been dealt with well and improvement since then has been good.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is very good. Provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is good and the involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The care and support of pupils is a strong part of the school's work:
- The day-to-day checking of pupils' work is good.
- Holy Island pupils benefit from the lunchtimes at Lowick First School.
- Although the systems for seeking and acting on pupils' views are good, this is often limited to casual discussions.

Commentary

- 18 The very small number of pupils attending means that staff know pupils very well. This is also the case when, for the majority of the time, they are taught at Lowick First School. Staff at both schools work hard to ensure there is a seamless transition between their time at Holy Island and Lowick schools, although this has not been as strong during the term in which the school was inspected. Pupils feel secure and cared for and this helps them to concentrate and achieve well. However, because of recent staffing difficulties, the link between the two schools has become less effective. This situation is now resolved and there are good plans to re-establish strong links.
- 19 Teachers regularly check pupils' work to see what they can do well and what they need to do next. This helps teachers to plan lessons that meet pupils' needs well. This means there is a good level of challenge for all pupils. There is a need, however, to re-establish the link between Holy Island and Lowick Schools to ensure that there is a continuous programme of work for pupils. Teachers make good plans that meet the needs of pupils well. Teachers' planning shows how they will challenge more able pupils and how they will support pupils who need extra work to help them understand. Because of this, pupils achieve well no matter what their ability.
- 20 Pupils usually benefit from the very good lunch times at Lowick First School. They are calm and orderly with a warm family atmosphere. Pupils are polite and show good table manners and respect for all staff. The cook knows the pupils well and they enjoy her home cooking. There is a real emphasis on this being a social occasion, and due time is taken to allow pupils to sit and chat to one another. This is a very good aspect of the school's work and highlights well the caring nature of the school. There is a real family atmosphere in the dining hall and all of the lunchtime staff know pupils very well. All staff model good table manners very well, and as a result, pupils are polite and courteous to one another. Staff also take the time to encourage pupils and to ensure they are well fed, ready for the afternoon teaching session. This is an important aspect of the lunchtime session, as it prepares pupils very well for a productive afternoon's learning.
- 21 There are a variety of good ways in which the school seeks the views of pupils whilst they are at Lowick First School. For example, pupils are asked which after school clubs they would like. During circle time activities, pupils are encouraged to give their views on a range of issues such as the use of pesticides in farming and in discussions about issues that affect the rural environment. In this way, the school uses its distinctive character well to provide relevant topics for discussion. However, the school does not ask pupils what they would like to see changed in the school, nor does it consult them about any proposed changes to the curriculum, teaching methods or any wider school issues. Because of this, there are missed opportunities for pupils to experience a sense of democracy. The school has sustained the strengths seen during the last inspection well.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are very good. The school makes efforts to ensure that parents on the island are well informed about what is happening both there and in the school on the mainland. Links with other schools are good and with the community are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are confident that they have a very effective partnership with school
- Parents say that the school maintains strong and effective communications with them despite the isolation of the setting.
- They know how they can help their children with their work, what they are studying, and how they are progressing
- Parents are happy to speak to teachers and feel that problems would be tackled promptly.
- Links with the local cluster are beneficial to pupils and the quality of education and sporting opportunities available.
- Links with the community on the Island are satisfactory but could be developed further.

Commentary

- 22 Parents play a very active role in the education of their children. Most of the parents are governors and are therefore very well aware of what is happening at both schools. Parents are very positive about the way they are helped to feel part of the school, although the administration is based on the mainland. Effective ways of communicating by reading books and notes were praised during the inspection. They are keen to support their children's education and feel that they have good information about how they are progressing. Regular newsletters and notes are sent out by the school to enable parents to feel in contact with the school. The information received gives appropriate time for parents to respond when necessary.
- 23 Parents have good relations with teachers and feel free to broach any concerns they might have. They reported that the school has a very beneficial effect on their children's personal development. Parents know the staff at both schools well and most take advantage of regular informal meetings with them. When an issue arises parents feel that they can contact an appropriate member of staff and the issue is swiftly dealt with.
- 24 The local cluster of schools works well for the pupils and parents are confident that links made at the first school level helps their children to make the transition into a bigger and more mixed environment at middle school. Although community links are satisfactory, there is scope for the school to take greater advantage of the unique community on Holy Island to enrich pupils' experiences.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. Effective efforts have been made by the acting headteacher to establish good liaison between the school on the mainland and Holy Island School. The governors are very committed to the school and work hard at ensuring the school's uniqueness. Governors know the school extremely well and attendance at meetings and other associated work is carried out dedicatedly.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governors are very committed to the school and keep a high profile in its management and leadership role.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership and provides the school with clear educational direction.

- The school has a very clear and well-written school improvement plan, which reflects its strengths and areas for development.
- Financial control is good and the school is vigilant in ensure it is getting the best possible value for money.

Commentary

- 25 Many of the governors are parents with a high investment in the school. They are very active and know the school well. They appreciate that the pupils have a unique form of education and work hard to ensure they benefit from this. They also appreciate that there are difficulties associated with the fact that pupils are taught on two sites that are quite a distance apart. They have therefore checked and are satisfied that the pupils are not losing out because of the transporting arrangements that exist between the two schools. They have effective systems in place to check on the progress the school is making towards its identified priorities. They know about the achievement of individuals and have appropriate systems in place to check on standards. The intimacy that exists between the governors and the school is helping the Governing Body feel well informed and puts it in a good position to challenge the work of the school as a whole. Staff at the school appreciate the support they receive from the governors and there is an effective working relationship established as a result.
- 26 The headteacher is very experienced and manages the difficult task of running two schools and having almost a full-time teaching commitment very well. The task of keeping contact with pupils when they are being taught on the Holy Island is not easy. This has been particularly difficult during the term of the inspection because of the illness of the Holy Island teacher. However, the headteacher has ensured that the pupils have not lost out and has often taught at the Island School to ensure continuity in their learning. She provides all staff with clarity about any new direction that is being taken; for example, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies were introduced with relative ease because the headteacher was very aware of the intentions and aims of both strategies. Staff, parents, pupils and governors also very well respect her and there is much appreciation for the work that she has done over the past few years. The headteacher knows the Holy Island pupils and families well and this has helped enormously with ensuring that there has been continuity and progression in the pupils' learning. She undertakes appropriate monitoring to check on the quality of teaching and learning and is a good motivator of staff.
- 27 The school's improvement plan, which is linked to the Lowick First School plan, is very well written and clearly identifies points for development. The plan sets out what the school needs to do in order to meet its improvement priorities and recognises the resources that are required. It also acknowledges what needs to be done to sustain the school's strengths and how resources may be needed to ensure that this is the case. However, more needs to be done to ensure that the Holy Island's uniqueness is incorporated into pupils' learning experiences. Financial implications are very well documented and there is an awareness of what may happen if numbers either fell or increased.
- 28 As can be seen from the table on the next page the school handles its budget very prudently and provides sensible measures to ensure that it is not overspending. Careful consideration is given as to how to use the finances to best influence the achievement of all pupils. The headteacher, with the governors, takes time to ensure that the best possible combination of human and learning resources is maintained so as to achieve the best outcome for the pupils. The principles of best value for money are therefore very high priority and something that the governors are very careful about checking out.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	14,800
Total expenditure	22,277
Expenditure per pupil	5,569

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	17,567
Balance carried forward to the next	10,090

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

This section refers to the provision for the three reception-aged children who work on many occasions with the six reception-aged Lowick children.

The provision for children working in the foundation stage of learning is good. The very good level of support for these children gives them a very positive start to their education.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make good progress and achieve well in each of the six areas of learning.
- The teaching for reception-aged children is challenging and effective.
- The curriculum provides a range of well thought-out and practical experiences for the children.
- There is good leadership for the Foundation Stage of Learning, ensuring that the curriculum is matched to the needs of the children.
- The school has prioritised keeping reception-aged children together as a small group for prolonged periods.

Commentary

- 29 There were only 3 children of reception age at the school at the time of the inspection (they often joined the 6 other children from Lowick School). When the tide allows the children work for four mornings a week with the six other Lowick, reception-aged children. For the remainder of the time they work with the two Year 3 pupils at the Holy Island School or join the Lowick Year 1 and 2 pupils.
- 30 In each of the six areas of learning the three children make good progress and achieve well. They benefit from being in a small group for a prolonged period each week. There are particular strengths noted in pupils' **communication, language and literacy** and in **mathematics**. Their **social skills** are also good. When children first start school they demonstrate an appropriate range of skills in their personal, social and academic abilities. During their first year at school they successfully build on this with most pupils attaining the early learning goals in each of the six areas of learning at the end of the year. Children are on course to exceed the learning goal in communication, language and literacy, mathematics and personal, social and emotional development by the time they finish their reception year. Two of the three are reading independently and writing short sentences and notes to each other.
- 31 Teaching in the Foundation Stage of Learning (reception) is good for each of the six areas of learning. The teacher is very challenging and this helps to raise children's expectations. The planning and activities provided take full account of the range of children's abilities. A good balance is struck between time spent on the carpet and time spent on practical tasks. The creative environment, both at Lowick and Holy Island, is helpful in enabling children to move onto spontaneous play, when necessary. There are very good procedures in place to help the staff keep track of children's progress throughout the reception year. Records kept show how children are making progress towards the early learning goals and the planning is adjusted to take full account of the ability range within the class. The children are very well supported and this provides them with a positive start to school life.
- 32 The curriculum for the reception aged children takes full account of their needs, is very practical and draws on the national guidance for the six areas of learning. There is no natural access to an outside area in either school. However, the present arrangement sees the

adults working with these children doing their best by providing extended opportunities for these young children to have activities available in the hall or to be able to work outside on set occasions when the staffing arrangements allows. There is a high priority given to learning from direct experiences with a part of both classroom organised to reflect an environment, which promotes creativity and communication. Planning for the needs of reception-aged children is thorough and careful consideration is given to assessment opportunities so as to record individual progress.

- 33 The leadership of the Foundation Stage of Learning is good. The teacher has ensured that there is a smooth transition from the reception class to Year 1 and that there is good liaison happening between feeder playgroups and the school. The leader of the playgroup that is situated in the school grounds is the classroom support in the afternoon sessions that take place at Lowick School. Parents are fully involved at all stages with huge encouragement for them to play a full and purposeful role in their children's education. This was something that was reflected on positively in the parents' questionnaire and during the meeting with parents before the inspection started.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

This section refers to the provision for the two Year 3 pupils who when attending Lowick School are in Class 3 with other Year 3 / 4 pupils from Lowick.

ENGLISH

Provision in English is good. The school is successfully building on the pupils' oral skills and ensuring that they have a full range of opportunities to use their wide vocabulary to support their writing.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' oral skills are good and used effectively to help them with their writing.
- Pupils read with expression and fluency.
- The teaching is good and ensures that more able pupils are provided with appropriate challenge.
- The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented effectively and helps pupils to achieve well in all areas of English.
- There is good use of pupils' literacy skills in other subjects.

Commentary

- 34 Both the pupils who are presently in Year 3 did exceptionally well in the reading and writing National Curriculum test for 7-year-olds. Both attained the higher levels (Level 3) in both areas and this reflected a well above average national comparison. One of the main reasons why pupils attain so highly is that they have very good oral skills. They use a wide vocabulary and their descriptive language is particularly impressive. Their good communication skills are being used to good effect when writing. They are able to draw upon a wide vocabulary, which is helping their descriptive language in particular. Sentences start in a range of interesting ways and their punctuation is usually accurate, especially when using direct speech. They give good consideration to the reader when writing stories and are able to add humorous extracts without detracting from the main story line, for example, 'I don't believe it, the sink talks..'. They successfully cope with writing playscript, poems and letters. Spelling is of a good standard and their handwriting is neat and legible.
- 35 Both enjoy reading. From very early on they are familiar with a wide range of authors and they are taught to use their voices for good effect when reading aloud. They know about different types of texts and moderate their voices accordingly when they meet bold or italic text. When meeting unfamiliar words they have a good range of skills to call upon to help them. They talk

with confidence about a number of authors and have developed strong preferences by the time they are in Year 3. Their research skills are quite advanced and this is aided by the fact that they use the Internet with confidence.

- 36 The teacher pays good attention to the needs of pupils of different ability from each class. These more able pupils are provided with a chance to explore their imaginations. During the inspection the pupils, as part of the Year 3/ 4 class, experimented with writing aspects of the Christmas story in the form of a poem. The lesson provided every opportunity for them to explore new ideas and they successfully developed a different style of writing in a relatively short period of time. The teacher's insistence that pupils didn't lose sight of their descriptive language was adhered to.
- 37 The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented well. This has raised the staff's confidence in teaching this subject and provided the school with a clear progression in the teaching and learning. This has been one of the reasons why there has been a noticeable improvement in this subject since the previous inspection. It has also helped staff to think about how best to challenge pupils of different ability.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

- 38 There are many subjects that make demands on pupils' literacy skills. In science, geography, history and religious education pupils are asked to present their work in a range of different forms that often requires them to write. In these subjects they use their literacy skills to convey their plans and their findings well. There are some good examples of recount and report writing being used along with bulleted lists, labelled diagrams and annotated sketches.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for the teaching of mathematics is good. Mathematics is a very popular subject at school and pupils make good use of their numeracy skills when solving mathematical problems.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work seen are above the nationally expected levels and pupils have a great enthusiasm for mathematics.
- Pupils readily use the skills they have learned in mathematics lessons to solve problems.
- In lessons, pupils achieve well because of the good level of challenge that is provided for them.
- Teachers check pupils' work regularly and, although marking is not as strong, this helps them to plan lessons that are at just the right level.
- The headteacher's work as a leading mathematics teacher is helping to improve teaching in the subject.

Commentary

- 39 Both pupils attained well in the National Curriculum tests for 7-year-olds and this reflects their good achievement. Standards are well above the national average in this subject. Both pupils can use their knowledge of doubles to work out a range of problems about time well. They have good knowledge of the times tables and they speak with enthusiasm about mathematics and they clearly enjoy challenges. They readily apply the skills they have learned in mathematics lessons to problem solving.
- 40 In lessons, teachers challenge all pupils well and the work is at just the right level. These more able pupils are provided with just the right amount of challenge. This is because of the school's good use of the day-to-day checking of their work. This helps them to plan work that meets the needs of pupils well. The teacher's good questioning is also a feature with high

expectation that the pupils use known facts to help them work out answers. Work is set at the right level because the teacher knows the pupils' needs very well. However, marking is not used as usefully as it could be in telling pupils how well they have done and what they need to do to improve.

- 41 There is good level of subject leadership. The headteacher has overall responsibility of the subject. The headteacher is a leading mathematics teacher for the local education authority and this has had a good impact on the teaching of mathematics in the school. In particular, this work has led to the purchase of interactive whiteboards, which are used effectively to support pupils' learning.
- 42 All issues raised during the previous inspection have been addressed through the good implementation of the nationally recommended numeracy strategy. Standards are high and pupils achieve well. This is a good level of improvement since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

- 43 In science, in particular, there are some good examples of the use of measurement but there are aspects of data handling and interpretation that are not sufficiently covered. Good use of ICT helps pupils to reinforce understanding of time well

SCIENCE

Provision in science is good. Pupils' scientific enquiry skills are particularly advanced.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have a real fascination and love of science. In particular, they achieve well in scientific enquiry.
- Pupils have a very good knowledge of science and they apply it well to investigative work.
- Teachers inspire and capture pupils' fascination with science well. This is further built upon in the after school science club.
- Pupils are being challenged and supported effectively through the teaching and because of this they are achieving well.

Commentary

- 44 Pupils attain standards that are above that expected for their age. They achieve well especially in relation to their scientific enquiry skills. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 indicate above average standards are being attained. Both pupils have good understanding of all aspects of science and they use their literacy skills to convey their plans and their findings well. Satisfactory use is made of numeracy skills, especially in measurement. Pupils measure time, weight, length and temperature well, using a range of equipment. Both pupils have a very good knowledge of all aspects of science. They apply this knowledge well to scientific enquiry in which they ask questions, plan, investigate and use a range of skills to test their ideas well. They speak with enthusiasm and, during discussions, they work out a range of problems such as finding an electrical circuit that would not work and saying why. Their reasoning skills are effectively developed and they back up their answers with an appropriate scientific explanation.
- 45 Teachers do all they can to develop pupils' fascination with science. They make lessons practical and this results in pupils investigating well. Discussions with the pupils revealed that lessons were fun and that there was plenty of opportunity for them to investigate. A good emphasis on investigative work captures pupils' interest well and this was reflected in the way they talk with enthusiasm about their scientific work. Pupils work well collaboratively with others in their class, as a result of teachers' good organisation. Good use is made of the interactive whiteboard to help pupils' understanding.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good use of ICT in mathematics and this is helping pupils to achieve well in this subject.
- The Internet is used appropriately, but there are further opportunities to develop its use, especially in history and geography.
- Interactive whiteboards are used well as a teacher demonstration tool and in some lessons.

Commentary

- 46 Standards are satisfactory in ICT and both pupils make appropriate progress in the subject. They have a sound knowledge of the way in which computers can be used but do not always have the opportunity to exploit this potential in their learning. The two pupils alongside others in Years 3 and 4 have developed the school's web site and they talk with enthusiasm about their work. Pupils use word processing, graphics and sound appropriately to present information across the curriculum. Computer-generated mathematical games are effectively used to help pupils develop their knowledge of number. They use a range of mathematical problem solving games that develop pupils' thinking skills well in a range of contexts. The Internet is used to download images, which are later used in work; however, opportunities for research are not fully developed.
- 47 Teaching is satisfactory for this subject. The interactive whiteboards, based at Lowick, are being used well as a teacher demonstration tool, but the full interactive nature of the boards is not always fully utilised. In one science lesson the whiteboard was used well to help pupils understand which materials are magnetic. In a good mathematics lesson, pupils use a software package to help them solve time problems well. A very good system of self-assessment helps pupils to understand what they are good at and what they need to do to improve.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

- 48 Whilst there is good use of ICT in mathematics, there is limited use of ICT in other subjects, such as geography, history and religious education. The computers in the classroom are used to good effect for word processing and to present written work in different forms. However, more research could be done through the Internet and this is an area for further development.

HUMANITIES

Standards and achievement in geography and history are satisfactory overall. However, because no lessons were observed during the inspection, it is not possible to make an overall judgement on the quality of education in these areas.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and achievement in geography and history are satisfactory
- Pupils' memories of what they have learned in the past are rather limited due to the way the curriculum is organised.

Commentary

- 49 Standards in geography and history are satisfactory. By the time they reach Year 3, pupils have a sound knowledge of their local environment and that it lies in a rural setting. They have a satisfactory level of geographical skills, which enable them to describe the main features of the area and they can satisfactorily compare their village to other locations. However, they have some difficulty in recognising how people affect the environment. Pupils use some appropriate geographical vocabulary but in the main, 'everyday language' is used to describe the features of places.
- 50 As pupils progress through the school there is a similar picture in history to that in geography. Pupils have a rather limited knowledge of what they have learned. One unit of work, in which pupils studied the Anglo Saxons, was recalled well. Pupils use the terms 'invader' and 'settler' appropriately and vividly recalled their visit to Bede's World – an open-air museum depicting life in Anglo Saxon times. Pupils use a range of information sources to find out about history, such as the Internet, books, videos and visits but even more could be done to encourage independent research.
- 51 Pupils' achievement in geography and history are satisfactory. However, the curriculum organisation leaves a large amount of time between units of work. Pupils generally have a wider view of the world from learning outside the school but this is not always sufficiently built upon in the way the curriculum is currently organised. There is not enough being made of the pupils' unique location or enough made of skilled people who live in the locality to enrich the history and geography curriculum.

Religious Education

- 52 Religious education is the focus of another inspection in this Church of England school.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

- 53 During the inspection it was not possible to make firm judgements about standards and provision in **art and design and design and technology**. However, from the range of work seen it matched what is expected for pupils' age. In a Year 3 and 4 lesson on making Christmas cards pupils were able to apply an appropriate level of creative effort into making Christmas cards. However, not enough use is made of the island's unique environment to stimulate pupils' interest in art. Pupils do not get enough contact with art produced by local people and this is something that needs developing.
- 54 The standards in **music** are above the level expected for pupils' age. The school benefits from teaching by a specialist teacher who challenges the pupils and raises their achievement. During the lesson for Year 3 and 4 the two pupils can recognise different percussion instruments that are played to them.
- 55 The specialist music teacher comes into school as part of the arrangement with the Kyloe cluster. She provides the pupils with a good level of progression in their musical tuition and this ensures that they make good progress. She provides the school with leadership for the subject and this is used to good effect to help keep track of pupils' progress.
- 56 In **physical education** the provision is good. Standards are satisfactory but there is good teaching and the curriculum is organised well to ensure pupils have a full range of activities provided for them. In a dance lesson with Year 3 and 4 pupils, both pupils moved very effectively to music showing movements that took full account of height, shape and speed. They were practising a routine that they were using in a later Christmas production. The pupils showed a good understanding of what they could do with their bodies to create

different emotions. The teaching for the session was very good because of the direction that was provided.

- 57 All pupils go swimming regularly. They achieve very well during the sessions with all improving their ability to swim. There is significant progress made over a term as non-swimmers take their first unaided strokes and those who were weak swimmers learnt to swim at least a width if not a length unaided. This provision adds much to the pupils' physical education experience and all enjoy the experience which helps them develop socially as well as improve their swimming.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships between pupils and teachers give pupils confidence to share ideas and opinions.
- Pupils gain a feeling of self worth because they know their contributions are valued and achievements are celebrated.
- There are many opportunities both during and outside the school day to develop this area of learning.

Commentary

- 58 There is a very positive relationship between the pupils and the adults working in school which makes it that much easier for the school to develop an appropriate curriculum for personal, social and health education. The school has worked hard to ensure that there is an appropriate provision for this aspect of the pupils' education. There is a great deal of mutual respect with high levels of trust apparent. Pupils are confident when offering opinions and know that others value their own contributions. As a result there is strong sense of maturity coming across and pupils find it easy to discuss any topic with adults or with each other. Pupils know that their contribution is valued because the staff of the school ensure that everyone feels special. Activities like circle time (a time for pupils to sit together and discuss a range of issues) help the pupils feel that it is appropriate to give their own point of view as well as listen to the views of others. Visits out of school to a range of places of interest and visits from people like the school nurse, police, and the road safety officer adds to this. The headteacher has placed a high priority on pupils being involved in community life and has welcomed opportunities to make links with the parents, the community and with the cluster of small schools in the immediate area.

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	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1
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	3
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	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	3

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