

INSPECTION REPORT

BELFORD FIRST SCHOOL

Belford, Northumberland

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122244

Headteacher: Mr Julian Tyley

Lead inspector: Mrs Lesley Clark

Dates of inspection: 10 – 12 May 2004

Inspection number: 264369

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:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	78
School address:	West Street Belford Northumberland
Postcode:	NE70 7QD
Telephone number:	01668 213372
Fax number:	n/a
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Hutchinson
Date of previous inspection:	11 January 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Belford First School is much smaller than most other primary schools and serves a widespread rural area that includes the village and outlying farms and hamlets. Pupils come from a mixture of rented housing, local authority housing and owner-occupied properties. Overall, the school's socio-economic context is below average. Its take up for free school meals is above average. Almost all pupils are of White British ethnic background; a very small proportion come from mixed African backgrounds. There are no pupils learning English as an additional language. When children first start school, their attainment is below average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs (35 per cent) is well above average; the proportion of pupils who have statements of special educational needs is about average. The range of needs includes specific learning difficulties and physical difficulties. In 2002, the school received an Achievement Award for improvements in standards.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective school and gives its pupils a good all-round education. Pupils enter the school with skills below average for their age, but standards are in line with the national average by the end of Year 4. Pupils achieve well because teaching is good in most classes and a friendly, family atmosphere develops pupils' confidence well. The school is well led and managed and gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well, behave maturely for their age and enjoy coming to school to learn.
- Standards are below average in mathematics at the end of Year 2.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- The headteacher's good leadership and the very good quality of his teaching are strengths of the school but he has very little time in which to manage the school and monitor its work.
- Children get off to a good start in reception and quickly become confident and independent learners but when they move into Year 1 they do not have enough practical activities.
- Pupils respect each other's views and opinions and look after each other very well.
- Assessment is not used consistently in every class to target precisely what pupils need to learn or to ensure that pupils in the same year group do similar or comparable work.
- The school is at the centre of village life and is held in high regard by parents and members of the local community.

Improvement since the last inspection in January 1999 is good. Leadership and management are now good and there are considerable strengths in the leadership provided by the headteacher. As a result, the curriculum and strategic planning are much better. A good start has been made on monitoring the work of the school and subject leaders have a better grasp of their subjects and responsibilities. However, more remains to be done to ensure that assessment is used effectively. The provision and management of special educational needs are now good and this is reflected in pupils' good progress.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
reading	C	C	E	E
writing	B	B	E	E
mathematics	D	C	E	E

*Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average.
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

Achievement is good, overall, for the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs. No significant differences were seen between the achievement of boys and girls. Children achieve well in the reception class and are likely to exceed the goals expected at the end of the reception year in personal, social and emotional development and to meet those expected in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and in creative development. In Year 1, pupils achieve satisfactorily as do the Year 2 pupils taught with them. The work they are set, however, does not always meet their individual needs. Other pupils in Year 2 achieve well, as do those in Years 3 and 4. Standards are average in reading and writing at the end of Year 2 and below average in mathematics. Standards of work seen in the current Year 4 are average overall in English, mathematics and science. In the national tests for pupils in Year 2 in 2003, standards were well below average compared with all other schools nationally and compared to similar schools.

This was due to the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in that year group. Caution must be taken when comparing results from one year to the next because of large differences in the composition of year groups in this small school.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Their attitudes and behaviour are good. Attendance and punctuality are also good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall. It is good in the reception class and very good when there are teaching assistants to give extra support to lower and higher attaining children. The teaching is lively and a wide range of interesting activities are planned well to develop children's skills and to encourage them to learn independently. The quality of teaching in the Year 1/2 class is satisfactory. Although the teacher insists on high standards of behaviour and basic skills in writing are taught well, lessons often move at a slow pace and there are too few opportunities for young pupils to learn through practical tasks which are planned to match their different abilities. Teaching is good in the Year 2/3 class and very good in Year 4 where pupils make the most progress. Work is very well planned in both classes to build on pupils' previous learning and resources are used well to motivate and to interest pupils. Procedures for checking pupils' progress are satisfactory, overall, though the information gained from these is not always used to respond effectively to the individual needs of some pupils in Years 1 and 2. Teaching assistants give good quality help which enables pupils with special educational needs to make good progress.

The school provides a good curriculum for reception children and a satisfactory curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 4, enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum promotes pupils' personal development well. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. Accommodation is good with ample room both inside and out. The resources for learning are satisfactory overall. Support, advice and guidance for pupils are satisfactory. The involvement of pupils in the work of the school and its development is good. The school has very good links with parents, the community and other schools which benefit pupils' learning and personal development.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is well led and managed. The leadership of the headteacher is good and that of key staff is satisfactory. Management is good, though the headteacher gives up much of his personal time in order to achieve this. The governance of the school is good and ensures that all statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents think highly of the school and strongly support its work. Pupils are generally very positive about the school although a few younger pupils feel discouraged sometimes when their hard work is not praised.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in mathematics at the end of Year 2.
- Ensure that assessment is used consistently in all classes to target precisely what pupils need to learn.
- Extend the good practice in the reception class to give greater opportunities for practical activities in Year 1.
- Explore ways of giving the headteacher more time to manage the school and to monitor its work.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement is good overall. It is good in the reception class but slows so that for most pupils in Years 1 and 2 in Class 2 it is only satisfactory. Progress quickens for pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 in Classes 3 and 4 so by the end of Year 4, pupils' achievement is above average. Standards are in line with the goals expected by the end of the reception year. They are in line with the national average in most subjects by the end of Year 2 and are broadly in line with national expectations in Year 4.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children get off to a good start in reception, achieve well and quickly become confident and independent learners.
- Although pupils in Year 1 make satisfactory progress, they do not share the good achievement of their schoolmates.
- Overall, pupils in Year 2 achieve well in reading and writing. Their attainment in mathematics is below that expected nationally.
- Because of good quality teaching for pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 in Classes 3 and 4, pupils achieve well in English, mathematics and science.
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good.

Commentary

1. Children enter the reception class with levels of attainment that are below average, particularly in their mathematical ability. They achieve well because they are taught well and expected to succeed. Their achievement is above average in communication, language and literacy skills, and in mathematical and creative development and they are likely to meet the goals expected at the end of the reception year in these areas of learning. Their achievement in personal, social and emotional development is particularly good; in this area of learning they are likely to exceed the goals expected by the start of Year 1. It was not possible to make a judgement on children's physical development or their knowledge and understanding of the world. However, the former is restricted because of the lack of wheeled vehicles.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	13.5 (15.9)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	12.7 (15.5)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	14.7 (16.6)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 15 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 in Classes 3 and 4 achieve well overall and make good progress whilst those in Class 2, particularly those in Year 1, make only satisfactory progress. The main reason for the difference in rates of progress is because, in the older classes, work is carefully planned to meet pupils' differing abilities, lessons have pace, expectations are high and pupils receive well targeted individual help. In addition, when pupils move to Year 1 they do not do enough practical activities and time is not always used effectively.
3. Standards of attainment vary from year to year and this reflects the differences between successive cohorts with small numbers of pupils. In the national tests for pupils in Year 2 in 2003, standards were well below average compared with all other schools nationally and

compared to similar schools. This was due to the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in that year group. For pupils currently in Year 2, standards are in line with the national average in reading, writing and science, but below average in mathematics. More opportunities to develop pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics is recognised by the school to be an area for development. This is a realistic assessment. Worthwhile and challenging examples are rare, and opportunities to develop these critical thinking skills are missed. Pupils in Year 4 are on course to meet the standards expected for pupils of their age in English, mathematics and science. Throughout the school, pupils' presentation skills are not good enough. Their handwriting is often untidy and when they draw shapes and lines of symmetry in their mathematics books, they do not use a ruler. Too few lessons were seen to make secure judgements on standards in any other subjects. The achievement of boys and girls is roughly the same.

4. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress in relation to their abilities because they are well looked after by experienced support staff, and positive action is taken to improve their attainment. Individual education plans are in place ensuring that work is focused and relevant. Pupils with learning needs in literacy and numeracy receive good quality additional help.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to school are good. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good overall. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and attend well because they enjoy coming to school.
- Pupils show great respect for each other's views, behave responsibly and care very well for each other.
- The school promotes pupils' personal development well.

Commentary

5. Pupils get on very well with their classmates and settle down to work very quickly. They concentrate well and try hard to complete tasks to the best of their ability. Children in the reception class cannot wait to get started on their activities and older pupils come in and busy themselves, for example, looking at some of the objects in the museum they have set up in their classroom. Younger pupils listen well and contribute politely to discussions, stating their views with confidence and independence. Attendance is above the national average and there have been no exclusions. Pupils with learning difficulties have the same good attitudes as others.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002-3 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.6	School data	0.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

6. The school has very good systems to ensure that pupils have special times during the week when they gather together to discuss important issues. They are expected to voice their opinions with courtesy for others and to listen with consideration. They learn to be tolerant of each other and to respect different points of view. Each class determines its own 'Golden

Rules' for behaviour. Typically, these include being kind to each other and looking after younger children, qualities which are much in evidence throughout the school. There is no racial tension or harassment and while pupils acknowledge that sometimes they are unkind to each other they do not feel that there is any bullying. Teachers in all classes spend time helping pupils to understand, for example, what it is like to feel left out so that through discussion and drama they learn to be considerate and thoughtful. Playground 'buddies' do a good job at playtimes in making sure that no one is feeling alone or unhappy. Boys and girls play well together in mixed-age groups and rarely need adults to organise games for them. They play very energetically and thoroughly enjoy skipping or inventing games using the playground markings they helped to devise.

7. The good provision for developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables pupils to become very caring, thoughtful and responsible. They have a satisfactory knowledge of differences in cultural traditions and beliefs through their lessons, and books and artefacts are carefully chosen to reflect cultural diversity. Pupils' spiritual awareness is nurtured well in assemblies, prayers and in moments when pupils are asked to reflect on the wonder of the world. Pupils' social and moral development is good. Pupils take their classroom responsibilities seriously and are keen to win points for their house. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and are unafraid to state their views.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching and pupils' learning is good, overall. The curriculum is satisfactory, overall, with strengths in the curriculum for children in the reception class. Standards of care, welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. Partnerships with parents, the community and other schools are very well established and are very good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and pupils' learning is good, overall. Teaching is good and often very good in the reception class. It is satisfactory overall for pupils in Years 1 and 2 who are taught together. Teaching quality is good in Years 2 and 3 and very good in Year 4. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good in Year 4 and are good and sometimes better in reception.
- Learning slows in Year 1 and for a small group of lower attaining Year 2 pupils in the same class because teaching is too formal.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well taught and make good progress.
- Assessment is used unsatisfactorily to indicate what pupils in Year 1 should be learning.

Commentary

8. The quality of teaching is good, overall, and over the course of their time in school pupils learn well. Two-thirds of teaching is good or better. Pupils learn better, however, in some classes than in others because teaching quality varies. While there is no unsatisfactory teaching, there are unsatisfactory elements within otherwise satisfactory lessons which slow down the learning of some pupils in Year 1 and a small group of lower attaining Year 2 pupils. Children learn well in reception and quickly become confident learners, trying things out for themselves and learning through discovery. Questioning is very good and encourages children to participate. The activities are well thought out and stretch children's minds and imaginations.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 18 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	8	4	6	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

9. Strengths in teaching in Years 2 to 4 include good quality planning for different age and ability groups within the class. Lesson objectives are clear and pupils know what they are expected to do and how long they have to do it. Expectations are high and the work is challenging and interesting and at the right level for pupils' different needs. This ensures that both higher and lower attainers learn well. Planning in the Year 2/3 class, for example, is exemplary and caters extremely well for a wide range of special needs as well as higher attaining pupils. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn independently and lots of practical tasks to keep pupils motivated. Unsatisfactory elements in otherwise satisfactory lessons in the Year 1/2 class include a slow pace, too much time spent sitting listening rather than taking an active part, and sketchy planning that does not take into account sufficiently well what pupils know and what they need to learn next. Elsewhere, where teaching is very good, pupils ask questions to which they want to know the answers and lessons take on a real sense of discovery as pupils become absorbed in their tasks and the teacher becomes almost invisible as they learn.
10. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they are well taught both in class and by classroom assistants. As a result, pupils in Year 3, for example, have made great strides in their reading and writing during the course of the year. Individual education plans make it clear what they need to learn next and programmes of work, well matched to pupils' individual needs, are taught with a good blend of sensitivity and firmness.
11. Assessment is not always used as well as it should be in Year 1 to indicate what pupils need to learn, based on what they know and understand. This means that sometimes the work is too difficult for the majority of the class and at other times too easy, resulting in unsatisfactory learning. The quality of teachers' marking also varies from class to class. The marking of younger pupils' work can be quite critical and does not always indicate sufficiently clearly, and in language that the pupils can understand, what they need to do next to improve the quality of their work. In contrast, the marking of older pupils' work is much more helpful, pointing out the repetition of a word, for example, in a good-humoured way. The marking of half-termly assessment tasks is good and gives clear points for improvement.

The curriculum

The curriculum provided is satisfactory overall. A good programme of extra activities supports pupils' learning further.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for pupils in the reception class allows children to make a good start to school but when they move into Year 1 they do not do enough practical activities.
- Provision for pupils' with special educational needs is good.
- The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of extra activities.
- There are insufficient support staff to help teachers in their everyday work.
- The school's accommodation is generous and conducive to learning.

Commentary

12. The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory, overall, with good improvements since the last inspection. It meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is good. There is now a well-structured framework covering all subjects to guide teachers in their planning. Useful links are developing with other subjects, particularly literacy and ICT. However, there is a need for using and applying mathematics to be given a higher profile. The role of the special educational needs co-ordinator has been developed and individual education plans are now more focused and contain clear targets for improvement. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Consequently, pupils with special educational needs share the good achievement of their classmates.

13. The curriculum in reception gives children a good range of experiences, so they achieve well. The classroom is light and airy with sufficient space to allow children good opportunities for movement. The school recognises that more outdoor equipment is required, in particular wheeled vehicles, to raise achievement in children's physical development. When pupils move into Year 1, they do not have enough practical activities and so their rate of learning slows.
14. Opportunities for enrichment are good. Full use is made of links with other local schools and pupils have the chance to compete with other pupils. The curriculum is linked to that of Belford Middle School so pupils' learning is uninterrupted and they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Performing Christmas plays for the community, producing the school newspaper, the *Belford Bulletin*, and planning fund-raising events, give pupils useful insights into the responsibility of living in a community. The school council is a very useful forum for pupils to air their views and make a real contribution to school life.

Example of outstanding practice

The pupils of Belford First School are well known in the area for their school newspaper, the *Belford Bulletin*.

The *Belford Bulletin* is the brainchild of pupils in Class 4 who take it in turns to edit the magazine. Of course, they welcome the strong support of the headteacher and other helpers, to the extent that they have been recognised by School Newspaper Awards in 2002 and 2003 in a competition run by a regional newspaper. This is a good achievement for these pupils, as they are competing against schools from Berwick to County Durham, many with primary-aged pupils who are two years older. Printed with a professional edge and with photographs in glorious colour, its contents are diverse. The main headlines compete with national newspapers and give a taste of things to come. **'DRINKS FOR EVERYONE!'** proclaims local sponsorship in providing water bottles for schools with the explanation, 'It helps you concentrate and is healthy'. Coverage is given to clubs in school, visits and visitors, news from all classes and St Mary's Pre-School Playgroup; sport and other news keeps everyone abreast of happenings in school. Opportunities to include other eye-catching headlines such as **'SAMANTHA IS MAN OF THE MATCH!!'** are not missed. Its circulation covers Belford and the surrounding villages. The revenue from sales and local advertisers makes the venture financially self-sufficient.

15. During the inspection, teachers commented on the lack of support staff in the classroom. The school has made the support of special educational needs pupils its priority but recognises that there is a need to extend support further. For example, in the reception class, supervising and assessing the wide range of planned activities is difficult, and in Class 2, mixed-age teaching requires a range of supervised group activities to ensure that pupils' differing learning needs are met. The school's accommodation is good. It is generous and is immaculately and lovingly maintained. Large classrooms allow provision for a range of teaching activities. The large hall provides excellent opportunities for physical education and school productions with ample space for an audience. The school grounds are considerable, with a large, safe, hard-play area. Children in reception have their own separate play area, but currently lack wheeled vehicles to aid their physical development. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. The happy family atmosphere helps pupils to enjoy their learning and achieve well. Support, advice and guidance for pupils are satisfactory. The involvement of pupils in the work of the school and its development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a happy atmosphere because everyone gets on very well together and this helps pupils concentrate on their learning.
- Teachers and other staff provide good personal support for pupils. Pupils' involvement in assessing their own learning varies across the school.

- There are good induction procedures for new pupils.
- Pupils' views are sought, valued and acted upon. They contribute well to the development of the school.

Commentary

16. Parents like this school because it is happy and friendly. They feel that because it is a small school all children are very well known by the staff and their individual needs are met. The school has an appropriate policy for health and safety and the management of this is satisfactory. On a practical day-to-day level, the staff and caretaker are vigilant in checking the building to ensure a safe working environment for the children and promptly deal with any hazards found. Some children comment that they like this school because it is always cleaned very well. However, the school has no formal arrangements in place for carrying out risk assessments of the premises and grounds and recording the findings. This is not helped by the small amount of time the headteacher has available for managing the school. Child protection procedures are good and the staff know what to do if they have concerns about children's welfare.
17. Pupils are very confident that if they have any problems or worries there is an adult in whom they can confide. They are caring and thoughtful, and very willing, as they mature, to take increasing responsibility for others. They offer very good help to each other. The caring family atmosphere in this school is summed up very well by one of the 'Golden Rules' in class 4, 'remember to look after younger children'. Pupils act as 'buddies' to help sort out any minor squabbles that sometimes occur in the playground or to look after those who find playtimes difficult. Parents feel that this is a very good support system and engenders a care and respect for each other. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well both in class or small groups and, as a result, they achieve as well as other pupils. The very good links between the pre-school and the reception class help the children settle quickly and happily into the routines of school.
18. Information about pupils' academic achievements is used satisfactorily to guide future learning. There are occasions when the lack of extra adult help in the reception class makes it difficult to assess children's learning as it is going on. Involving pupils in assessing their own work and their knowledge of how well they are doing varies throughout the school. Some pupils are aware of their individual learning targets and can explain how well they are doing, but others are unsure.
19. Pupils know that their views matter and the school will try and act upon what they say. The school council has an influential role in this and is encouraged to think of ways to improve routines and facilities. For example, as a result of pupils' suggestions, fresh water fountains have been provided. The minutes of the meetings show pupils' ideas are sensible and considered well in a democratic way.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents is very good and the links with the community and other schools are also very good. These strengths contribute well to pupils' learning and good achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a strong partnership with parents which is based upon mutual trust and confidence.
- The school listens to parents and responds to their views.
- Very good links with the community and with other schools strengthen and enliven pupils' learning experiences.

Commentary

20. Since the last inspection, the partnership with parents has strengthened and is now very good. The school is very popular and highly regarded by parents and members of the community. Parents like the welcoming atmosphere at school and feel that staff are always available to discuss any concerns that they may have about their children. Parents make a good contribution to pupils' learning and to the life of the school and what it achieves through helping in classrooms, accompanying school visits, attending school events and supporting their children when work is sent home. The friends' association is very successful in fostering close co-operation between parents, pupils, staff and the village community by organising a wide range of social and fund-raising events. The school relies heavily on the generosity and goodwill of parents and members of the community for their help in school and their support for events. Money raised is a vital supplement to the school funds and helps to purchase equipment used by the pupils to assist their learning.
21. The school communicates well with parents through a good range of information about the school, the curriculum and children's progress. Pupils' progress and achievements are regularly reported to parents through parents' meetings, written reports and reviews for pupils with special educational needs. The quality of the annual written reports is good, overall, but varies across the school. For example, in Class 2, comments about children's achievements are sometimes written in an unhelpful negative way rather than providing useful targets for the next steps of learning. The school seeks parents' views and acts upon their suggestions. For example, the house system was introduced as a result of parents' requests. Parents appreciate the way the school is keeping them well informed about the consultations over school reorganisation within the local education authority.
22. The school has developed strong links with other small primary schools through a national leadership initiative. The leadership qualities of the headteacher have been enhanced through professional dialogue with other headteachers of similar schools and effective peer monitoring. They openly discuss common issues and share ideas and expertise. There is very close liaison with the middle school which provides opportunities for the sharing of resources and assists the continuity of pupils' learning.
23. The school uses local resources well to widen children's learning. There is a wide programme of visitors to the school and children visit many interesting local places to enrich their curriculum. Members of the local community play an active part in the life of the school, helping with various aspects of the curriculum such as music, ICT, drama and assemblies. The school newspaper, produced by the children, is well liked and sold in the village.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership, management and governance of the school have improved since the last inspection and are now good. The leadership of the headteacher is good and support given by key staff is satisfactory. The school is managed well because the headteacher gives up much of his personal time to achieve this. The governance of the school is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher sets a good example through his very good teaching and good purposeful leadership.
- Arrangements for checking the performance of the school are good but the headteacher has an unrealistic workload to be able to manage the school and monitor its work effectively within a healthy work-life balance.
- Subject managers are taking a more active role in monitoring the standards in their subjects.
- The school is committed to inclusion and concern for the needs of individuals.
- Governors make a good contribution to the leadership of the school and its successes.

Commentary

24. The headteacher inspires trust and confidence from pupils, parents, governors and staff. Good leadership and management have been the key factors in raising the achievement of pupils and bringing about a much needed stability to the school since the last inspection. This good progress, led by the headteacher, is particularly commendable because it has been achieved alongside a very heavy teaching commitment. Parents acknowledge this too and appreciate how hard he and the other staff work to provide a good education for their children. A great deal of the headteacher's time is spent managing the school outside the working day.
25. The school's self evaluation is good and realistic. The school development plan is a useful working document with clear priorities for future improvement and for raising standards. The headteacher is highly organised and makes efficient use of the limited time available to observe lessons for managing the performance of staff, but more extensive observations take place less frequently. The headteacher has made sure all co-ordinators have observed some teaching and learning in their subjects, but this is not as much as he would like. Staff feel that one of the best developments over the past few years has been working together and benefiting from each other's expertise, gaining new ideas from observations of teaching and learning, including student teachers. As this is a small school, all staff carry several curriculum responsibilities and they manage their various roles satisfactorily. They are beginning to gain a clearer overview of their subjects and the areas that need developing, and work hard to support each other in order to take appropriate action to bring improvement. For example, problem solving in mathematics was identified through checking test results as the main reason for lack of achievement in Year 4 in 2003. Problem-solving activities are now the key feature of Year 4/5 transition work and have featured in staff training organized by the local education authority. Since the last inspection, appropriate management responsibilities have been delegated to the deputy headteacher.
26. Being part of a small school pilot project has enabled the headteacher to work with other schools in a different local education authority. He has gained a lot of useful information from observing lessons and from being observed by others in other small schools. This is good management of both time and resources because it is beneficial to school improvement and raising standards. The headteacher gives a clear lead from his very good teaching and direct involvement in making the curriculum imaginative and relevant to children's creative enjoyment.
27. The headteacher has created a good team spirit which explains why this is a happy school. Pupils and staff work effectively together in the knowledge that each individual is valued. All staff set a good example for pupils, especially in promoting high quality relationships, and this makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal and social development. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and the co-ordinator leads and manages this aspect well. These pupils achieve well because they are identified early and given suitable help and guidance.
28. Governors are committed to the school, working hard in their various ways and according to their interests, skills and available time. They are intensely involved in what goes on at school and are very supportive of it. This came across in discussions. For example, they are clearly upset by the very recent and precipitate changes that cancelled the Sure-Start link as they had put a lot of time and effort into it. Governors have a good knowledge of the work of the school through regular visits to classes and reports from the headteacher. A strong feature of the governing body is the programme of focused visits planned for governors. After each visit, the governor involved presents a written report to the governing body. They ask questions and challenge the staff, for example, asking about test results. The governors and headteacher are handling the proposals for reorganisation very well and with great sensitivity, to ensure children's academic and personal development are not affected. Governors are forward thinking and have met with the governing body of the middle school to formulate proposals for creating a federation to make the most efficient use of resources in one viable unit.

29. Finances are carefully managed and regularly monitored. Spending is appropriately linked to the school's priorities for improvement. Governors place a strong emphasis on staffing and maintaining small classes but this is done at the expense of providing time out of the classroom for the headteacher to carry out management responsibilities. The governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met. The school makes good use of its limited financial resources and seeks to provide best value when deciding on expenditure.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	241,652
Total expenditure	235,467
Expenditure per pupil	2,871

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	6,060
Balance carried forward to the next	12,245

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Teaching is good or often better in the reception class and children, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Overall, provision has improved since the last inspection, largely because of close links with the playschool and through the increased opportunities given to the class teacher to gain from the expertise of other schools. This stage of the children's education is well led and managed and children get off to a good start.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above those expected at the end of the reception year because of very well-organised teaching.

Commentary

30. Children quickly become independent, happy and purposeful learners because they are very well taught. Interesting and imaginative activities encourage children to gain confidence, use their initiative and work productively with other children. They achieve very well in this area of learning. Children form very good relationships with each other and with adults who work in school. They are keen to learn and concentrate for long periods of time on their tasks. Because the teacher has very little additional help in class, children have been taught right from the beginning where resources are stored and they are accustomed to sorting out what they need and clearing away after themselves without fussing. They quickly become self-reliant as a result and are thus very well prepared for learning in Year 1. High expectations of both work and behaviour result in children having good attitudes to learning and having a very good understanding of the consequences of their actions on others. For example, they declare that 'it is mean to leave Ozzie Ostrich out of a game' and suggest to him that they might 'find someone in Class 1 to look after you'.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well and are likely to meet the goals set for them by the end of the reception year.

Commentary

33. Teaching is good and children have ample opportunities to develop their skills in communicating with others. The role-play area is used well to develop children's speech as well as making writing fun when they take down each other's orders in the classroom café. The teacher's animated and enthusiastic approach engages children's interest well and so they listen very attentively and ask lots of questions. They enjoy sharing a book with the teacher and writing tasks are made relevant with sufficient structure to help lower attainers and a large measure of independence given to higher attainers. Average attainers quickly become used to consulting a word book, for example, to help them write down words they have used before but have forgotten. Higher attainers use their knowledge of letters and

sounds to help them to write unfamiliar words and remember some common spellings. ICT is used well to reinforce literacy skills and the children enjoy pitting their wits against the computer.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are likely to reach the standards expected at the start of Year 1 as they develop a good understanding of number because they are well taught.

Commentary

33. Children learn how number relates to quantity very enjoyably because of imaginative teaching. For example, when counting up to 50, children eagerly followed their teacher's lead in changing their voices, actions and movements every five numbers. Well-organised activities reinforce learning effectively. When the teacher has additional support, teaching is very good because it is possible to focus more intensively on developing mathematical language, helping children with special educational needs, for example, to understand 'more' and 'less' as they sort out cutlery and plates before laying the table. Opportunities are sometimes missed, however, when classroom assistants are available, to note down what children are learning. Activities present children with challenges and these stimulate them to learn well, as when constructing a series of ramps for marbles to roll down. The teaching motivates children well and lessons move at a good pace.
34. Too few lessons were seen to make secure judgements on standards, teaching and learning in **knowledge and understanding of the world**. Thorough planning of this area of learning gives children the opportunity to take part in a wide range of learning experiences. Good use is made of the outdoor environment, and the way activities are arranged in the classroom means that children are learning constantly through interesting discoveries they make for themselves.
35. Similarly, too few lessons were seen to make secure judgements on standards, teaching and learning in **physical development**. The outdoor play area, set aside for reception children, offers good scope for outdoor play and the large hall is used well to develop their skills in running, jumping, finding a space, and changing direction and speed at will. Resources are fairly limited; there are no large wheeled toys, for example. Within the classroom, children have constant access to different tools such as pencils, scissors, glue and staplers which help them develop manipulative skills and good eye-hand co-ordination.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**, overall, and is often very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Activities are highly imaginative and well thought out to develop children's skills and to stimulate their creativity.

Commentary

36. Children are likely to meet expected standards at the end of the reception year and a good proportion should exceed them because much of the teaching in this area of learning is very good. What prevents it from being very good all the time is the lack of additional support. Teaching depends on children being sufficiently mature to carry out their tasks responsibly

rather than benefiting from adults working alongside them to develop their skills. Bearing this in mind, children achieve well. In music, children learn to copy sounds and sound patterns and to use their voices expressively to help tell the story of Cinderella. They are aware of how instruments are played and pretended to play the Northumbrian pipes with their fingers, saying it made them feel 'Irishy'. They learn to explore colour and tone in art and have good control when cutting out thin strips of newspaper for creating monochrome pictures.

Example of outstanding practice

Beginning with the story of Cinderella, children worked imaginatively to explore different materials and to make the perfect slipper.

Children discussed whether it was a good idea to wear glass slippers and began to consider more suitable materials and to suggest 'silly' ones which they then wrote about. Close by was a large collection of shoes, already counted in pairs during their number work. The teacher questioned them as to how they were made, feigning puzzlement in order to encourage children to explain the different ways in which the shoes were held together. Higher attainers pointed out that some materials were waterproof while average attainers thought about lots of different ways of attaching the soles to the uppers. They worked out that the best way to make a pair of shoes fit someone would be to draw round their foot. Children designed and made a wide range of shoes using a variety of joining techniques. One girl with special educational needs, for example, made a high heeled shoe exactly proportioned to fit her foot.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well, attaining average standards by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils are articulate and listen well.
- While the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, learn to read well, the way reading is taught slows the progress of some pupils.
- Older pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 have much more interesting writing tasks than younger ones in Year 1.

Commentary

37. The quality of teaching is good, overall, varying from satisfactory to very good. Standards in Year 2 are currently in line with those expected in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Although most pupils achieve well, achievement is only satisfactory for Year 1 and 2 pupils in Class 2 because of weaknesses in the way that reading and writing are taught. Other pupils in Year 2, who are taught with Year 3 pupils, achieve well because the work is well matched to their differing needs. A large proportion of pupils in Year 3 have special educational needs. This affected the overall results in the 2003 national tests which indicated that standards were well below average. Because year groups are small, however, there are considerable variations from year to year depending on the composition of the class. Pupils put on a real spurt in Year 4 because of very good teaching; while standards are close to those expected, pupils are well placed to attain more highly as they grow older. Leadership and management of the subject are sound. Recent monitoring has picked up many of the shortcomings identified here.
38. Pupils learn to listen well and all teachers take care to ensure that they have many opportunities to ask questions and to share what they have learnt with the rest of the class. Pupils learn to be articulate from an early age and younger pupils relish any opportunities they

are given to do drama. Older pupils speak clearly and are able to observe agreed formalities in class discussions, politely stating whether they agree or disagree before giving their opinion.

39. Pupils learn to read competently and parents are pleased with the progress their children make. The new library is used well to give pupils additional reading material each week. Both older and younger pupils are keen to read to an adult and to talk about books. Teachers take care to read books with their pupils that reflect the cultural diversity of Britain. Reading record books give parents adequate information about their children's progress. The way reading is taught varies quite considerably from class to class. While older pupils share and discuss books regularly in a group, this happens infrequently for pupils in the Year 1/2 class who read individually with their teacher each week. Opportunities are therefore missed to develop pupils' skills in reading and comprehension through stimulating discussion with others whose reading is at a similar level. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 use a restricted range of strategies when they come across unfamiliar words. They tend to guess what it says rather than using their knowledge of letters and sounds to help them. Pupils' reading comes on apace in Year 4 as very good teaching and questioning make pupils think about what they read. Pupils who find reading difficult are given good quality help at an early stage and as a result their reading skills improve rapidly. ICT is used well to reinforce basic skills for those with moderate and severe learning difficulties.
40. Standards in writing are average by the end of Year 2; over time they are generally better than in reading. This is because the basic skills of punctuation and handwriting are taught well in every class and homework is used well to reinforce spellings. Lower attainers are very clear as to when full stops and capital letters should be used and higher attaining pupils in Year 2, taught with Year 3 pupils, are taught well and cover a wide range of writing styles which makes learning fun. Pupils in Year 4 write fluent and interesting prose, poems and drama scripts. Younger pupils, however, miss out on the full range of writing experiences. Opportunities are missed to make writing interesting and relevant through practical activities or by writing captions, for example, for their work on display. Assessment of what pupils know and understand is not always used well enough to guide what pupils need to learn next and so, while a few very able Year 1 pupils understood what a synonym was, lower attainers in the same group had the utmost difficulty understanding syllables. Marking of assessed writing tasks is good and teachers set appropriate targets for improvement. The marking of pupils' writing in their books, however, varies in quality and some comments stress the negative, rather than encouraging through praise.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

41. Pupils are given good, worthwhile opportunities to practise their reading and writing skills in subjects such as history, religious education and design and technology. Opportunities to talk, to ask questions and to discuss in different subjects are used effectively for developing speaking and listening skills in every class.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in mathematics for pupils in Year 2 is below that expected nationally.
- Older pupils achieve well, and by the end of Year 4, standards have improved.
- Assessment information is not used effectively to plan specific individual targets for learning in Years 1 and 2.
- There are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills.

Commentary

42. In Class 2, the momentum gained in the reception class slows and Year 1 and Year 2 pupils make only satisfactory progress. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, though work is not planned sufficiently well to meet pupils' differing needs and the time allocated to mathematics is less than in other classes. Although learning accelerates for pupils in Year 2 in Class 3, the overall attainment of pupils currently in Year 2 is below the nationally expected level.
43. As pupils move through Year 3 and Year 4 their rate of learning increases considerably in response to work that is more closely matched to their needs, is more imaginative and is taught with greater pace. As a result, pupils achieve well, and by the end of Year 4 they attain standards expected of their age.
44. Pupils' progress is regularly assessed. Information from marking pupils' books, standardised tests and statutory and non-statutory assessments give useful data about pupils' progress. Although a start has been made, this information is not used as effectively as it could be in Years 1 and 2 in Class 2. The current targets are not precise enough to plan effectively for pupils' individual learning needs and so ensure that pupils are given challenging work to enable them to raise their achievement.
45. Little evidence was seen of pupils using and applying mathematics in everyday situations. Although a start has been made, the use of practical investigations in mathematics still needs a much higher profile if standards are to rise. The imaginative practice currently being developed should be shared. For example, Year 2 pupils in Class 3 were given realistic shopping experiences to develop their understanding of money by calculating prices and giving change.

Mathematics across the curriculum

46. Mathematics is used satisfactorily across the curriculum. In science, for example, pupils use thermometers when measuring temperature and in history, they calculate the rations that a family had to survive on for a week during the Second World War.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good, so pupils achieve well.
- Lessons are planned to give pupils many opportunities to carry out practical investigations.
- The presentation of pupils' work could be improved.

Commentary

47. Pupils achieve well, and by the end of Years 2 and 4, they attain the standards expected for their age. This good achievement is a result of the consistently very good teaching seen in Classes 3 and 4 where pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 are given challenging work well suited to their abilities. The school uses an investigative approach so pupils discover for themselves and learn in greater depth. Lessons are planned carefully with detailed learning objectives designed to meet the needs of pupils with different abilities and to capture the interest of both boys and girls. Teachers take care to explain the work carefully so that pupils understand what they have to do and work with the minimum of fuss. As a result, almost all pupils work hard and achieve well. Good open-ended questioning, such as, 'Why are there holes?' or 'Why are leaves smooth?' encourages pupils to find out and also forms a good basis for assessing their learning in the plenary.

48. Good examples of practical work were seen in Years 3 and 4. Year 3 pupils in Class 3 used a magnifying glass to look very closely at the similarities and the differences between different leaves. These were recorded in pencil sketches and wax rubbings and this attention to detail made sure that pupils thought hard, asked questions and so learnt at greater depth. Year 4 pupils in Class 4 made predictions about the materials that would be good for keeping a baby's bottle warm and gave reasons why. They demonstrated that they understood the principles of fair testing well. The very good relationships in this class allow the teacher to put pupils in different groupings so higher attaining pupils can assist those who find learning more difficult. Pupils clearly enjoy this work.
49. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the quality of teaching and learning and in pupils' achievement. However, a scrutiny of pupils' books shows that the presentation of their work is often untidy and this sometimes hinders effective learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

50. Insufficient teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) was seen to make judgements about the standards of attainment and the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. There has been some improvement since the last inspection as the quality of resources is better and pupils now have access to new computers linked to the Internet. Some of the older computers, however, although still useful, are not compatible with the latest resources and today's technology. The school recognises that there is still some way to go in terms of standards, curriculum coverage, resources and increasing teachers' confidence. Although computers are shared equally around the different classrooms and are accessible for small groups of pupils to use them to develop their skills in other subjects, the lack of sufficient computers in each classroom makes the teaching of skills difficult. This is exacerbated by the lack of classroom support. Moreover, connection to the Internet is unreliable and so pupils' opportunities for research are limited as is their access to a commercial software package to which the school has made a significant financial commitment.
51. Pupils enjoy working with computers and are not put off when things go wrong. A significant number have access to computers at home. The headteacher is clear about what needs to be done next to improve provision further, although a tight budget limits what can be done. Parents and the local community give valuable help, for example, with the purchase of an interactive whiteboard. The school's website has been effective in attracting prospective parents moving to the local area. The lunchtime newspaper club, which produces the *Belford Bulletin*, is an indication of the potential for using ICT within the school.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

52. This is a rapidly developing area though there is more to be done. Teachers are increasingly including opportunities to use ICT in other subjects in their short term planning. For example, Year 3 pupils in Class 3 look at digital microscope photographs of leaves during science lessons and Year 4 pupils in Class 4 use the Internet to find out more about food rationing during the Second World War.

HUMANITIES

53. Only one lesson was seen in religious education and in history and no lessons were seen in geography. Limited work was available for examination, so no judgements have been made on overall provision, standards, teaching or learning in these subjects. Overall, leadership and management of the humanities are satisfactory.
54. In **geography**, it is clear from curriculum planning that pupils cover an appropriate range of topics that include both local and national geographical features. The local area is used well and resources for learning are satisfactory.

55. In **history**, pupils in Years 2 to 4 cover a full curriculum that links in well with literacy. There was little written evidence of history in Year 1. Year 4 pupils' well-written letters give a very good idea of what it might have been like to be an evacuee during the Second World War. One pupil made it clear how different the countryside might seem to an evacuee: 'Mother, did you know there is a thing called spring here?...and there is space to run around.' In the one lesson seen, pupils worked together well in groups to find out more about rationing and used their numeracy skills to calculate family rations for a week.
56. In **religious education**, the school follows the local Agreed Syllabus for the subject. In the Year 2/3 class, pupils showed a good knowledge of Judaism and began to relate some of the Jewish practices to their own experiences.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

57. It was only possible to see **art and design** taught once during the inspection. No lessons were seen in **design and technology**, **music** or **physical education** and no secure judgements can be made about provision, standards, teaching or learning in these subjects.
58. In both **art and design** and **design and technology**, it is clear from discussion with the staff and analysis of pupils' work that the curriculum is covered effectively. Displays in classrooms and corridors add colour to the school environment and show the range of activities offered to pupils. They use charcoal to draw self-portraits, for example, and use paint, crayons and pastels to create rain forest patterns and pictures in the style of Monet, Degas and Rene Magritte.
59. In **music**, it is clear when watching recordings of pupils' recent musical performances, that pupils have tremendous scope to exercise their talents. Productions are lively, enthusiastic and performed to a high standard. Singing in assemblies is tuneful and pupils enjoy taking part. As part of the curriculum in **physical education**, pupils from Years 2 to 4 go swimming each week and the majority are able to swim 25 metres by the time they join the middle school at the end of Year 4.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHE) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Every class has a generous amount of time in which to discuss important issues. This contributes well to developing their skills in speaking and listening.

Commentary

60. One lesson in PSHE was seen in each class. It is plain that pupils are used to sitting in a circle to discuss matters of interest or importance relating to how they should lead their lives. Young pupils show much maturity when enacting what it is like to be left out of a game and are able to articulate how they felt and why. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 think of many good ideas for rules to live by and recognise that some of these reflect the class and school rules they helped to make. In Year 4, the title of the 'Philosophy and Thinking Time' session indicates the very good depth of discussion the teacher expects and receives. In one lesson, pupils decided democratically which questions they most wanted to ask about a story, and from this an intense debate ensued. The quality of their thinking was very good and pupils gave their opinions politely. One pupil announced that he had changed his mind after listening to someone's views and, at the end, they concluded, 'there is no real answer to this because the story did not give us enough information'. The good ethos of the school supports pupils' personal development well.

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	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
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	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
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	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
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).