

INSPECTION REPORT

ABBHEY INFANT SCHOOL

Darlington

LEA area: Darlington

Unique reference number: 114181

Headteacher: Mrs E.McCue

Lead inspector: Dr J.N.Thorp

Dates of inspection: 8th – 10th November 2004

Inspection number: 266266

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	243
School address:	Abbey Infant School Cleveland Terrace Darlington
Postcode:	DL3 8JA
Telephone number:	01325 380803
Fax number:	01325 355851
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs D. Leigh
Date of previous inspection:	May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Abbey Infant School shares a very large and attractive site with the neighbouring junior school, about a mile from the centre of Darlington. Most children come from the surrounding area. There are currently 243 pupils on roll, the vast majority of whom are white. The school is slightly larger than average in size compared with others of this type, with its pupils currently organised into eight classes. A further reception class will be added in the spring term when those children starting school in January begin their education. The school is very stable, with very few pupils starting or leaving the school other than at the normal time, and currently little staff mobility. The area around the school displays the characteristics of socio-economic advantage. Attainment on entry is generally above average, although there is a fairly wide spread of ability. There are two pupils (0.8% per cent) on the school's register of special educational needs, which is low compared with schools nationally; one of these pupils has a statement of special educational need, which is fewer than found in most other schools. No pupils have English as an additional language.

The school plays an active part in the High Force School Consortium for Initial Teacher Training (SCITT). There is community provision under the family learning programme, like

the 'Helping in School' course for example, and a privately-run evening karate club uses the building. The school achieved Investor in People status in 2000. It received an Eco Schools award in 2003, a Healthy School award and an Inclusive School award in 2004.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
6327	Dr J.N.Thorp	Lead inspector	The Foundation Stage History Music English as an additional language
13459	Mrs E.Mills	Lay inspector	
14842	Mrs S.Cook	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Physical education Special educational needs
16971	Mr R.W.Hardaker	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Citizenship Geography Religious education

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good** school, with some very good features. The headteacher leads the school very well, providing a clarity of vision and purpose and with a clear focus on improvement. The quality of education it provides is good; the commitment to the care and well-being of pupils is very good. Pupils' personal development is very good. Good teaching ensures that pupils' learning and achievement are good. Standards are well above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science by the time pupils leave the school. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average
- The headteacher provides very good leadership
- Very good teamwork contributes to ensuring very good management and governance
- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour and the very good relationships amongst pupils and adults contribute to the positive ethos in the school
- Teaching is good overall; it ensures that pupils' learning is good and contributes positively to the high standards they achieve
- Pupils have insufficient opportunities to work with the computers
- Better use could be made of the outside area for reception children's physical development
- High levels of care and a secure environment enable children to gain confidence and learn
- The school has very good links with other schools, including the neighbouring junior school, and makes a significant contribution to teacher training
- Pupils have too few opportunities to write independently and at length in all subjects
- The school promotes positive attitudes to health and healthy living very effectively

There has been good improvement overall since the previous inspection in May 1999. The improvement in governance has been excellent, so that now governors play a significant role in the strategic management and further development of the school. The outdoor area and resources for children in the Foundation Stage have been improved, although their use could be developed further. Procedures for assessment have been improved, including teachers' skills in assessing the attainment of higher attaining pupils. The quality of teaching has also improved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
Reading	A*	A	A	A
Writing	A	A	B	C
Mathematics	A	A	A	B

*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*

Overall **achievement is good**. Children generally start school with above average attainment. They make good progress in most areas of learning, with the majority achieving the goals they are expected to reach by the end of reception well before then, although progress in physical development is not so good. Pupils continue to make good progress through Years 1 and 2, so by the time they transfer to the junior school the majority achieve standards which are well above average. This is good achievement. The table above indicates that these high standards have been maintained over the last three years. The slightly lower standard in writing, indicated in results in 2004, was the result of fewer pupils achieving the higher level 3 in the test. The school has addressed this issue vigorously and pupils are on track to reach the higher level again this year. Throughout the school pupils' achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory but not as high as in other subjects.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good. High levels of care and very good relationships contribute to pupils' positive attitudes. Behaviour is very good. Attendance is well above average and pupils are punctual to school, which have a positive impact on their learning.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good overall, with some lessons of high quality. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and they manage behaviour well. They encourage positive attitudes and stimulate pupils' interest effectively, which contribute positively to pupils' learning and their developing independence. The outside area is not used as effectively as it could be to promote children's physical development and pupils have too few opportunities to work with the computers. There are clear procedures for assessment and the information gained is used well to enable teachers to set appropriate tasks for the different groups in the class and to track pupils' progress. Very good care and support for pupils ensure that their personal needs are identified and met, and promote their self-confidence. The curriculum is good and there is a very good range of activities to enrich it. Pupils' views are valued. The school's links with parents are very good, and with the community they are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall **leadership and management are very good**. The headteacher provides very good leadership, with a clear vision for development and a commitment to school improvement. She has built up very good teamwork, with the deputy, subject leaders and the school administrator all providing very good support. Management systems are very effective in ensuring the school runs smoothly. The governing body is very well led; governors now fulfil all their legal responsibilities and contribute very effectively to the strategic management and further development of the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The majority of parents have very positive views of the school. Most are pleased with their children's progress and consider its high reputation well deserved. Parents think the quality

of teaching is a strength of the school, contributing positively to the high standards, although some thought more could be done to extend children's independence. They find teachers friendly and approachable and are pleased that their children are so happy at the school. Parents believe the school is always looking for ways to improve. Some would like to see an extension to provision before and after school. Pupils also have very positive views about school. The vast majority enjoy coming to school; they are happy and secure and feel that their teachers help them to learn.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to work with the computers in lessons and in the computer suite
- Extend the range of opportunities for pupils to write independently and at length in all subjects
- Develop the use of the outside area to promote children's physical development

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Overall **pupils' achievement is good**. Standards on entry to the school are generally above average, although there is a fairly wide spread of attainment. Learning is good and children achieve well, with the vast majority achieving the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception well before then.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards on entry are above average overall; learning is good and children make good progress in most areas of learning in the Foundation Stage;
- in the Foundation Stage, children's physical development is satisfactory but not as good as in the other areas of learning.
- overall standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science are well above average by the end of Year 2;
- although standards are satisfactory, pupils have insufficient opportunities to work with the computers, which limits the rate of their progress in ICT.

Commentary

1. Children enter the school from a variety of pre-school settings and with wide-ranging attainment, although overall standards are better than average. This remains broadly similar to that reported in the previous inspection. The good provision made for these children, in both reception classes, ensures that they make a good start to their time in school and enables them to make good progress in most areas of learning. The majority achieve the goals children are expected to reach well before the end of reception, which represents good achievement. There is an appropriate emphasis on personal, social and emotional development and staff are skilled in promoting children's language development, both of which contribute positively to supporting learning in other areas. Good teaching ensures that children's learning is particularly good in terms of their mathematical development and their knowledge and understanding of the world, and as a result children make particularly good progress. Opportunities are missed, however, to enable children to work independently in exploring the available space and equipment, which restricts progress in their physical development.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.7 (18.2)	15.8 (15.7)
Writing	15.5 (16.1)	14.6 (14.6)
Mathematics	17.4 (18.5)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 91 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. This table shows that pupils achieved above or well above average standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2004 in reading, writing and mathematics, compared with pupils in other schools. These test results also show, however, that in all three subjects pupils in the school did not do as well as they had the previous year. This is because there was a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs in this year group which adversely affected their results in national tests. This is shown clearly when comparisons are made with similar schools, particularly in writing in which pupils attained standards broadly in line with the average. In reading and mathematics, however, pupils still achieved standards that were higher than those of pupils in similar schools. Although there are some fluctuations in results, as in 2004 when there were more pupils with special educational needs, generally speaking, over the past five years standards have been above or well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. They are improving at a rate in line with that achieved in schools nationally.
3. Pupils achieve well in reading, with the vast majority making good progress and reaching well above average standards by the time they leave the school. This is because teaching is good and because pupils are interested in books and get good support from home. Work seen during the inspection indicates that the school has responded effectively to the reduced numbers of pupils achieving the higher level 3 in 2003, and standards are now again well above average. However, pupils could make progress even more rapidly with more opportunities to write independently and at length.
4. Pupils' learning is good in mathematics and they continue to make good progress, so standards are generally well above average by the time they leave the school. This represents good achievement. In science achievement is also good, with pupils making good progress to attain standards which are well above average. Standards in science have improved since the previous inspection, when they were broadly average.
5. Pupils' achievement in ICT is satisfactory. They make satisfactory progress in reaching standards broadly in line with those expected by the time they leave the school. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to work with the computers and this limits the progress they can make.
6. The very small number of pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because they are well supported by their teachers and support staff. Pupils make very good progress against the targets in their individual education plans.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to work are **very good**. Attendance is **very good**. Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff have very high expectations of pupils' conduct, resulting in a calm, orderly environment where pupils can learn very well;
- pupils and parents appreciate the school's very effective systems to encourage and reward good attitudes and behaviour;
- pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance rates are well above those achieved nationally;
- the school works very effectively to ensure that pupils develop an understanding of their own and other cultures.

Commentary

7. The high standards of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to their work which were noted at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained. Good provision ensures children in the Foundation Stage reach the goals set for them in personal, social and emotional development well before the end of reception. Right from the start very good relationships are established, which enable children to work together well, co-operate, share and take turns. This development continues throughout the school. As a result pupils show very good attitudes to their work, settling quickly to their tasks, listening well to their teachers and working very well with each other when required. This is a result of good teaching and high expectations. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around school. They are polite and well mannered. Although playground behaviour is sometimes a little boisterous and a few parents expressed concerns about this, no instances of misbehaviour were seen during inspection and close supervision limits any inappropriate conduct. In lessons, pupils get on well with each other, sharing resources when necessary and responding very well to the school's promotion of social skills.
8. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good, with great emphasis on encouraging, praising and rewarding good behaviour. Pupils are keen to gain team points and are pleased when awarded stickers for good work and for doing their best. Parents appreciate the school's efforts to promote self-esteem and feel that the school helps their children to grow in confidence. Pupils are given jobs to do which increase as they move through school and they carry these out sensibly and conscientiously. Circle time is used well to encourage pupils to voice their thoughts and to listen to each other. Pupils with special educational needs are fully involved with their peers, both in lessons and in the playground. They are motivated to learn because they feel valued and supported.
9. The school works very well to reinforce moral and ethical messages and to develop pupils' understanding of cultural diversity. Pupils have been involved in the school's success in gaining their Eco School award. They sponsor a child in Uganda and raise money for charities, both locally and abroad. Pupils are introduced to a range of cultures and religions as well as learning about their own cultural traditions through a full programme of visits and visitors.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	3.6
National data	5.1

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1
National data	0.4

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

10. Attendance rates are well above those achieved nationally. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are reluctant to be absent and arrive promptly and ready to work.

Exclusions

11. There have been no exclusions in the last complete school year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education for all its pupils, which it has maintained since its previous inspection. Teaching is good, and at times very good, contributing positively to pupils' good achievement. The curriculum is good and there are very good opportunities provided to enrich it. Provision for pupils' care and welfare is very good. The school has very good links with parents and good links with the community.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** overall. Effective planning enables teachers to provide a good range of activities, which engage pupils in learning well, at appropriate levels. There are **good** procedures for assessment.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good for all children in the Foundation Stage, but more could be made of the outside area to promote their physical development;
- although standards in writing are high, pupils are not given opportunities to write independently and at length often enough;
- teachers provide insufficient opportunities for pupils to work with the computers;
- good relationships and high expectations of behaviour enable teachers to manage their classes well;
- lessons are interesting, tasks are appropriate and well organised and pupils' learning is moved on with good pace;
- pupils with special educational needs are very well taught;
- systems and procedures for assessment are good, and the current development work on a new marking system has the potential to improve it further.

Commentary

12. Teaching and learning are good overall in the Foundation Stage. Some good and very good features were observed in individual lessons in both reception classes. Teachers plan a wide range of activities, which provide children with opportunities to work on self-chosen tasks, to work with adult support and to learn in more formal whole-class lessons. As a result, teachers have good opportunities to work with different groups and individuals, according to the children's needs, and they manage the work of their teaching assistants to support them doing this effectively. As they arrive in the classroom at the start of each day, children are able to choose from the wide range of activities available. Children have successfully learned how to work independently and they can manage resources for themselves well. In these sessions teachers and teaching assistants are good at involving children in discussion; they join in the activities children have chosen, extending their learning effectively. Good classroom routines are very quickly established and this enables teachers and children to concentrate on learning. Good organisation of the various learning activities enables teachers to work with a variety of groupings and they use the available space well. This is particularly effective during indoor activities, but opportunities are sometimes missed to extend children's learning as they work outdoors. At times children are constrained in what they can do outdoors, where they have insufficient opportunities to explore the space and equipment for themselves.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 39 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	4 (10%)	25 (64%)	10 (26%)	0	0	0

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

13. Throughout the school teachers have good relationships with their pupils and this has a positive effect on their attitudes to learning and how they respond in lessons. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and they manage their classes well. This has improved since the previous inspection, with all lessons now orderly, enabling pupils to learn and to enjoy their work. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, when there were some unsatisfactory lessons. The headteacher has supported the development of teaching well, ensuring the weaknesses identified previously have been addressed. In this inspection there was no unsatisfactory teaching seen and in more than seven out of ten lessons teaching was good or very good. Teaching of literacy and numeracy is good.
14. Teachers plan an interesting range of activities, which promotes pupils' learning well. Their shared planning ensures consistency across all the classes. At the start of most lessons teachers make the learning objectives clear to pupils; they are good at assessing pupils' earlier learning and building on what pupils already know and understand. This ensures that tasks set are usually well matched to pupils' learning needs and their capabilities. A strong feature of most lessons is the pace at which teachers move learning on. Teachers' instructions and explanations are clear. The good use of resources, including the new interactive whiteboards, supports pupils' learning effectively. However, teachers provide insufficient opportunities for pupils to work with the computers, and this slows the rate at which they make progress in developing their skills. In many lessons there is a strong focus on the use of language to promote and check on pupils' learning. Teachers are skilled at drawing pupils into discussions, make good use of strategies like talking partners, and pose good questions to involve pupils or to extend their thinking. While such oral work is strong, teachers often provide insufficient opportunities for pupils to write independently or at length.
15. Pupils with special educational needs are very well taught. Teaching assistants are well trained and skilled in supporting these pupils so that their learning is built upon in small steps. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to do well. They have good relationships with staff and other pupils.
16. The school has good systems and procedures for assessment. There are clear expectations of what is required, with regular assessments providing good information with which teachers can track pupils' progress in the most important subjects. This enables the school to identify individuals and groups for more careful monitoring and support. The current policy is implemented fully, although assessment in some subjects, including religious education, is not yet fully developed. There is also some exciting development work under way on a new marking scheme, which is currently being trialled and evaluated and which will add to the quality of the school's procedures for assessment.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good**, with very good opportunities provided for enrichment. The accommodation and learning resources are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's planned curriculum successfully meets most of the needs of all pupils;
- the review and self-evaluation of the curriculum have led to significant changes in practice and a much stronger focus on making links across the different subjects;
- the provision for special educational needs is very good;
- the range of visitors to the school and visits made by pupils to places of interest enriches the curriculum very well;
- parental support for homework makes a very good contribution to pupils' standards of reading and mathematics.

Commentary

17. The effectiveness of the curriculum is based on strong leadership by the headteacher, the commitment of the subject leaders and the planning for the development of the curriculum. The way the staff plan together has given them the opportunity to develop and share their knowledge and expertise. The whole curriculum is permeated by the school's caring ethos, which is often reinforced through skilful teaching and careful planning. The school strongly promotes provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship. It is an Eco school and has achieved Healthy School status as well as gaining an award for being inclusive for all pupils.
18. The curriculum provided for children in the Foundation Stage is good. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2 has recently been reviewed, the outcome of which has been that the school has significantly changed its timetable to get a better balance between subjects and to introduce more opportunities for pupils to be creative. For example, there has been an increase in the number of physical education lessons planned each week and a shift away from teaching subjects discretely to focus on ways in which links can be made between subjects. Although a strong emphasis is given to literacy and numeracy, the school has worked hard to develop links between subjects and to increase the chances pupils have to be creative in their work. The school has explored ways of increasing pupils' creativity through drama, dance and art by increasing the time spent on these activities so that standards will rise. For example, standards in art are good and pupils now get the opportunity to learn country dancing. Although the use of ICT is satisfactory overall, there remains the need for more frequent opportunities for pupils to use and have 'hands on' experience of computers. Additionally, despite pupils' good achievement and high standards in writing, there is scope for pupils to write at length more frequently.
19. Careful attention is given to ensuring equal access to the curriculum for all pupils. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Early analysis and diagnosis of needs from entry into school are used to plan carefully appropriate individual programmes for individual pupils. Teachers are ably assisted by trained support staff and as a result pupils are supported competently and consequently make very good gains in their learning and achieve very well. Although the school has few pupils with special educational needs, good assessment procedures enable teachers to identify those pupils they have concerns about and those who are more able. They plan work that specifically addresses these pupils' needs.
20. Homework is consistently set and pupils take home their reading books. There is a high level of support, with parents often hearing their children read daily and ensuring they learn their weekly spellings and complete the mathematics task. This commitment to helping their child at home makes a very valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
21. Pupils' learning in school is greatly enhanced by the large number of visitors that come to the school. Notable recent visitors are the historian who helped Year 1 pupils re-enact a Victorian school day and the visitor who brought in an owl so that pupils could learn about them through first-hand experience. Equally, pupils have many opportunities to make visits to places of interest which link to their current work. For example, pupils have visited Hartlepool

Historic Quay, a farm, Preston Hall and a woodland park planetarium as well as recently visiting Hamsterley Forest and Escomb.

22. The accommodation is well designed and supports the curriculum well, except for the lack of a spare room to dedicate to a computer suite. There is now an outside play area for the reception children, which is an improvement since the last inspection although it could be used more effectively. The school is well resourced and has an adequate number of computers but these are not well sited to allow staff to teach the whole class. The library is very attractive but is not used often enough by pupils to research for information from books.

Care, guidance and support

The school has **very good** procedures in place to ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils. **Good** support, advice and guidance are provided for pupils, and the school has **good** measures in place to involve them in the work of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good relationships which permeate the school are instrumental in ensuring very effective pastoral care for pupils;
- arrangements for children starting school are very good and as a result they settle in quickly; there is a smooth transition for pupils moving to the junior school;
- the school's efforts to promote healthy and safe living are very effective.

Commentary

23. The school continues to provide a safe and caring environment where pupils feel secure. Parents agree that their children are valued and treated as individuals. The very good relationships that exist in school help to ensure that pupils are happy to ask for help when they need it and would share any worries. Staff treat pupils with respect and expect the same in return. Some very good examples of care and concern were seen during the inspection and the school has very good procedures in place to ensure pupils' health, safety and welfare. Personal development is monitored very well and, by Year 2, pupils are confident and self-assured. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and fully part of the school. Detailed records are kept which ensure that their progress, including their personal development, is tracked effectively.
24. Parents of children in reception are very happy with the arrangements prior to starting school. There is a very good programme of visits and these enable pupils to become familiar with the school and its routines, including lunchtime. Consequently children settle quickly and soon become confident. As pupils move through school, staff encourage independence without losing sight of the needs of pupils, and help and guidance are readily available. The school has very close links with the adjacent junior school and transition arrangements are very effective, ensuring that the move is as smooth as possible, described by some parents as 'seamless'.
25. The school places great emphasis on the health, safety and welfare of its pupils and the curriculum includes health, environmental and citizenship awareness. There is a

strong focus on healthy living and pupils are encouraged to walk to school and rewarded when they do so. The 'Walking Train' has resulted in traffic calming improvements near the school. In consultation with parents, the school has introduced healthy school meals. Consequently the school has been awarded Healthy School status.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are **very good**. Links with the community are **good**. Links with other schools and colleges are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have very positive views about the school and support the education of their children in many ways;
- the school's liaison with the local junior school and involvement in teacher training have a very positive effect on pupils' education;
- the school provides very good information for parents and ample opportunities to discuss pupils' progress.

Commentary

26. Parents rightly hold the school in high regard, have a great deal of confidence in the staff and are very appreciative of the school's efforts in the education of their children. They are pleased with almost all aspects of school life and few have any concerns. True partnerships have been established between home and school, which support pupils' learning very well. Staff have established very good relationships with parents. Many parents help out in school, preparing resources and assisting in lessons. Most parents support the school well by listening to their children read, ensuring that homework is done and communicating with the school in their children's home/school reading records. The Parents and Friends Association makes a substantial financial contribution to the school which is used very well to provide additional resources and activities which enrich the curriculum.
27. The school has very good links with the adjacent junior school, to which almost all pupils transfer. The liaison between the two schools involves some valuable and innovative practices, including joint self-evaluation and training. Staff from the two schools work very closely and some members of staff work in both schools. The two schools are heavily involved in the initial training of teachers, which has a positive effect on pupils' learning. The school has been awarded a Leading Aspect award for its collaborative work with the junior school.
28. Parents are very well informed about school issues and the curriculum. Parents of children about to join reception are provided with several opportunities to visit the school along with their children. All parents are sent a termly diary of events and topic work while newsletters keep them well informed about school issues. Menus are provided in advance so that they can help their children to choose lunches. Teachers make themselves available to speak to parents informally at the end of the school day, reporting any concerns and exchanging information. Parents are canvassed for their views and, as a result, workshops have been held to explain aspects of the curriculum. The school provides more formal opportunities to discuss pupils' progress in consultation evenings. Parents appreciate the open, welcoming atmosphere in school and feel that staff are approachable and helpful. This reflects the positive ethos of the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall leadership and management are **very good**. The headteacher provides very good leadership and she is well supported by other key staff. The effectiveness of management is very good. Governance of the school is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides very good leadership; she enthuses all who work under her with her very clear vision and dynamism;
- all adults in the school work together as a very caring team fully committed to the interests of all pupils;
- the headteacher has initiated very good curriculum change and development, some of which has brought the school national recognition;
- under the very good leadership of a very well informed chair of governors, there has been excellent improvement in governance since the last inspection;
- the school plans very well for the future;
- financial management is very strong.

Commentary

29. The headteacher provides very good leadership. She has a very clear vision and high aspirations which she communicates very well to others. She has the full confidence of pupils, parents, teachers, other staff and governors. She strives hard to ensure that all pupils fully enjoy the benefits the school offers. Since taking up her post six years ago, she has initiated significant changes in the school, which have contributed positively to its recent good improvement. She has established a strong sense of purpose and a determination to succeed. She has led from the front, setting a fast pace but still managing to develop a very good sense of teamwork and commitment. As a result morale within the school is high, all staff are part of this strong team and all contribute effectively in their several ways to promoting pupils' learning well. The administrative assistant very efficiently attends to the smooth day-to-day running of the school, supporting the headteacher very effectively.
30. There have been good improvements made in the past six years. Effective monitoring of teaching has enabled the headteacher to identify clear priorities for development and improvement. Very good procedures are in place to support teachers who are new, either to teaching or to the school, to settle in quickly and make an effective contribution to learning. Teachers are encouraged to continually update their knowledge and teaching skills. The overall record of teachers attending training sessions both in school and outside with such objectives in mind is very good. As a result teaching is now good overall and no unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. One area where improvement has been particularly good has been in the teaching of science. The school plays a very effective role in contributing to the training of future entrants to the teaching profession both in the school and in partnership with other agencies. For example, the headteacher, the advanced skills teacher for mathematics and the co-ordinator for religious education are all actively involved in supporting teachers in training.
31. The headteacher has been instrumental in introducing a number of curriculum innovations. Within the school curriculum there is a strong focus on the importance of

healthy living. There is also a strong focus on environmental issues clearly related to each individual's responsibility towards the well-being of all on this planet. Pupils are made aware of their responsibilities concerning these and other issues in a range of subject areas including science, religious education, geography and citizenship. As a result of the success of some of these initiatives the school has received national awards.

32. The leadership and management of the special educational needs co-ordinator are very good. She demonstrates very good leadership, is very well informed and has a clear vision for development, based on sound, inclusive principles. The identification, assessment and support of pupils with special educational needs are very well managed by the co-ordinator.
33. Governance of the school is very good. Improvement since the last inspection is excellent. All concerns expressed in the last report have been fully resolved. Governors have undergone extensive training and show a very strong commitment to both school improvement and improvement of governance. As a result of effective training, very good leadership from the chairperson and very strong support from the headteacher, governors are very well informed and this enables them to make effective strategic decisions. They now have a good knowledge base that enables them to challenge and be critical. They ensure that all statutory requirements are met. They have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They concern themselves with standards and they keep themselves updated with curriculum developments. Many governors are frequent visitors to the school. Those governors with curriculum responsibilities are actively involved in monitoring learning in classrooms. Governors are now actively involved in shaping the future of the school.
34. Governors and the headteacher have a real concern for the well-being of all the staff in the school. Much has been done to try to make working conditions as pleasant as possible. Extensive consultations have taken place about responsibilities placed on staff, the level of support given to enable staff to carry out duties without too much stress and on how to make the working environment at Abbey Infant School as conducive as possible to what is considered to be best practice. To this end the school is at the forefront of recent national developments in this field. As a result of this high level of concern for staff shown by governors and the headteacher morale in the school is high, as is commitment to pupils amongst all staff.
35. Strategic planning is very good. Projects and proposed developments are carefully costed and the implementation of planning is monitored. Most importantly, things that are planned get done. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage, English, mathematics, science, religious education and special educational needs by the respective co-ordinators are good or very good.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	Balances (£)
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Total income	716,703
Total expenditure	688,394
Expenditure per pupil	2540

Balance from previous year	6,395
Balance carried forward to the next	34,704

36. Financial planning and management are very good. The governors and the headteacher have a very good grasp of finances and funding issues. The principles of best value are clearly understood and well applied and all spending is very effectively monitored and controlled. The most recent auditor's report was very complimentary about financial controls. The school is an effective school that gives a good quality of education and provides good value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

At the time of the inspection, two classes of reception age children had begun their education at the school. A third class will be created at the start of the spring term when a younger group of children join the school. Consequently, judgements on provision in each area of learning are based on observations of children currently in the reception classes, along with teachers' planning and records, and of work already completed and on display.

Children enter the school with generally higher than average prior attainment, although there is a fairly wide spread of ability. By the time they enter Year 1 the majority are still working above expected levels in all areas of learning.

The good features reported in the previous inspection remain strengths. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator provides effective leadership, which is ensuring that provision continues to improve. Significant improvement has been made to the outdoor provision, although this is still not used as effectively as it could be to promote children's physical development. There is good teamwork amongst staff working in the reception classes, and their carefully co-ordinated planning ensures consistency across the whole Foundation Stage.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children settle quickly into school because they feel safe and secure;
- teachers and teaching assistants all give high priority to developing good relationships;
- children's achievement in their social and emotional development is good;
- children gain confidence in working independently because they are well supported in doing so.

Commentary

37. This area of learning is given an appropriately high priority right from the start when children enter the school. All the staff are purposeful and skilful in building good relationships, which enables children to settle into school quickly. Good teaching enables them to make good progress in this area of their learning. Achievement is good, as children rapidly grow in confidence and show they can work with good concentration on the various activities planned for them. As a result, the majority of children achieve the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception well before then.
38. In both the reception classes, teachers and teaching assistants successfully reinforce learning to share, taking turns and co-operating with others, which enables children

to develop the skills of working independently. This is shown to good effect as children come into the classrooms each morning, choose from the range of activities available, access the resources needed and work confidently on their own or with a small group of other children without the constant supervision of the teacher or teaching assistants.

39. Teaching is good. There are effective routines that ensure that children feel secure and they come into the reception classes each morning happily and confidently. The effective organisation of teaching and learning throughout the Foundation Stage contributes positively to the opportunities children have to develop their skills and confidence in working independently. All the staff are good role models, successfully helping children to share and work co-operatively. As a result children's learning is good and they interact confidently with both the adults and each other. Children enjoy learning; they are well behaved and this also contributes positively to their social development.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's learning is good and most achieve standards which are higher than those expected by the end of reception;
- the good range of opportunities provided helps to develop children's speaking, so by the end of reception children communicate confidently;
- children have good opportunities to develop their skills in reading, but there are missed opportunities to use books to support their learning in other areas
- children's early writing skills are effectively developed because they are encouraged to write in a range of activities

Commentary

40. Children enter the school with generally better than average language and communication skills and they are provided with good opportunities to develop them further. Teaching is good, with teachers and teaching assistants giving a high priority to extending children's language skills. Children's learning is good and enables them to continue making progress. Consequently achievement is good; the majority achieve the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception well before then.
41. The teachers and teaching assistants reinforce good routines for speaking and listening, so children learn how to listen to each other and take turns in speaking. All the staff provide good opportunities for children to speak, encouraging and involving them with questions, both in groups and as they interact with them individually. Individual children's reports on the things that they have done when taking home Henry the Hedgehog, for example, provide a good opportunity for individuals to speak in front of the whole class. The teachers manage this activity very well, sensitively supporting individuals, which gives children confidence to participate and encourages

those very few who are more reluctant speakers. By the end of reception, children generally communicate confidently and effectively.

42. Listening to stories, sharing books with the teacher or teaching assistants, and rhymes or action songs are all used effectively to help children learn letter sounds and recognise some simple words. With support, some children are already able to match the names of characters from a story to their pictures. There is good use of displayed language in places, which promotes children's recognition of appropriate words and stimulates their interest and curiosity. There is good provision to promote reading, and children handle books appropriately. Children enjoy listening to stories; the use of 'Our Theatre' in which an adult reads the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk* while children act out the parts is particularly effective in stimulating children's thinking about the story line and characters. At times, books are effectively provided to support children's work in other areas, such as the model-making area or role-play, but more could be made of this strategy to extend children's learning in relation to specific activities or tasks.
43. Teachers provide a good range of activities to promote the development of children's early writing skills well, by providing opportunities to include mark-making in the very well equipped role-play post office, for example, where children can write and post letters, make lists or make notes on a telephone conversation. Children make good progress, developing good pencil control as they copy individual letters and sometimes words. Some children can already write their own names appropriately.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching ensures children have a good range of practical activities to promote their mathematical understanding;
- learning is good and children achieve well, reaching expected levels well before the end of reception.

Commentary

44. Teaching is good, with teachers and teaching assistants making good use of a range of practical activities to promote children's mathematical development. This ensures children's learning is good and contributes positively to the progress they make. As a result achievement is good, with the majority of children achieving the goals they are expected to reach by the end of reception well before then.
45. The teachers and teaching assistants provide a good range of practical activities to promote children's understanding and are good at helping them use appropriate mathematical language. Number lines of various kinds, including one in Japanese, effectively reinforce children's understanding of number and counting. The large numbers available for work on the carpet encourage children's understanding of ordering numbers to 10. The majority can count accurately to 20 and beyond and

most are already confident in adding two numbers to 10. There are good opportunities for children to use their developing mathematical skills in the various areas set up in the classrooms, such as the role-play post office or Abbey Bakery for example. Good displays challenge children's thinking, in putting objects in order of size for example. In some lessons, the computer or television programmes are also used very effectively to reinforce children's understanding of sequence and order. Children are able to put objects in order of size, like their beanstalks, using appropriate vocabulary to compare, such as 'longer', 'longest', 'taller' or 'tallest'.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching ensures learning is good, enabling children to achieve higher than expected standards;
- a range of practical activities reinforces children's understanding effectively.

Commentary

46. Teaching is good. Children are provided with a good range of practical opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world, which extends their horizons effectively. Learning is good and children achieve well. As a result, the majority of children achieve the goals they are expected to reach well before the end of reception.
47. The good opportunities teachers create sometimes engender a real excitement in learning. Children are able to manipulate small construction toys well, creating scenes for their imaginary play. Making hedgehogs by planting cress seeds not only provides good opportunities to manipulate the materials, but also helps children understand change as the seeds grow. This has also been effectively linked with further valuable work on hibernation. Their understanding of change is also well reinforced as they consider how they themselves have changed since they were younger by looking at photographs. Good resources support children's making, with a good variety of equipment for fixing. In working with the computers most children are confident, showing good control of the mouse as they move the cursor around the screen. At times, very good use is made of visitors to the school to support children's learning. For example, a visitor from Japan spent time with the class and captured their imagination in teaching them about aspects of life in Japan such as kanji writing.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources to support children's learning outdoors have been significantly improved since the previous inspection, but they are not yet used effectively enough;
- in their physical education lessons, reception children would benefit from more opportunities to explore space, direction, speed and balance for themselves.

Commentary

48. Overall teaching is satisfactory, enabling children to learn and achieve satisfactorily. As a result the majority of children achieve the goals they are expected to reach by the end of reception.
49. The resources to promote children's learning outdoors have been improved considerably since the previous inspection. There is now a valuable secure space, with a good range of equipment and safe floor surface. Access to this area is restricted, however, with children only able to use it at specific times. The approach to teaching and learning outdoors is limited, resulting in missed opportunities to extend children's physical development. This results in children having too little opportunity to explore and experiment with the resources for themselves. Children in both reception classes have opportunities to work in the hall, although there is a tendency to rush them on to more formal lessons in physical education too quickly, rather than enabling them to explore space, movement and the selection of equipment for themselves. This approach limits their achievement.
50. In the classrooms, children have good opportunities to develop their skills in manipulating equipment such as writing and drawing pencils, paint brushes and scissors. They use the available tools well, to cut and stick their collages, for example. This contributes effectively to children's learning, helping them make progress in developing their hand and eye co-ordination. They control the mouse well when working with the computers.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good opportunities are provided to stimulate children's imagination;
- children enjoy the range of activities provided for them;
- children work well co-operatively and imaginatively at times as they develop their play in the role-play and the puppet theatre or with other resources provided.

Commentary

51. Teaching in this area of learning is good overall, although it was not possible to observe many lessons. Teachers plan a good range of activities, which stimulate children's imagination. Children enjoy the range of opportunities they have. As a result their learning is good and their achievement good, with most children reaching the goals they are expected to achieve well before the end of reception.

52. Children experiment with mixing colours, as they paint or print, for example. They enjoy the various role-play opportunities, using the very good range of props provided well to support their play effectively. These opportunities stimulate good interaction, as children work together in pairs or small groups to explore the situations imaginatively. Good co-operation sometimes leads to children sharing in an imaginative story, as they work in the puppet theatre for example.
53. Children concentrate well as they work at their pictures, collages or models and they manipulate the available tools well. In both classes, children enjoy exploring the sand or water, especially when they use some of the equipment provided for them.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average in all aspects of English and pupils achieve well;
- the actions taken to improve standards in writing have been successful, but there are not enough opportunities provided for pupils to write at length;
- the subject is well led and managed;
- pupils have very good attitudes to the subject and learning is good;
- parental support with reading and spelling contributes significantly to the high standards pupils achieve in reading;
- the library is very attractive but not used often enough by pupils.

Commentary

54. Throughout the school, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in English and by the end of Year 2 standards are well above average. This has been maintained since the previous inspection. Boys and girls are making similar progress. The school's results in reading and writing in the last few years have been consistently well above the national average. When compared with similar schools, standards in reading were well above average and in writing they were above average. Results in 2004 indicate that standards in reading were similar to previous years but the number of pupils achieving the higher level 3 in writing fell. The school responded to this dip immediately and gave writing a high profile. The initiatives put in place have been successful and significantly raised standards, resulting in a very high proportion of current pupils already working at the level expected of pupils by the end of Year 2. One of the most successful initiatives being trialled is the editing of work by pupils themselves. Pupils read their work through and make corrections or add additional sentences when prompted by the teachers' careful marking.
55. Pupils are articulate speakers and listen very well. Teachers give pupils plenty of opportunities to answer questions at length and to discuss aspects of their work. They insist on pupils listening attentively. Standards in reading are high and pupils in Year 2 read fluently, accurately and with growing expression. They know how to use the contents and index pages of non-fiction books and read texts they have not seen before confidently. The very attractive and well-resourced library is insufficiently used by pupils to research for information from books and this is a missed opportunity to promote pupils' good library skills. They are keen to discuss their books, to predict what will happen next and to share their opinions of other books they have read. Pupils achieve well because of the very good teaching and support from parents. In one lesson where the teacher was teaching reading to a group, the teacher helped pupils to fully understand the poem, the rhymes and the patterns of words by skilful questioning. Reading diaries show that nearly all parents are very involved in hearing their children read and pupils confirm how much they enjoy reading at home.
56. Standards in all aspects of writing are also high. Pupils are competent at spelling, write neatly with correctly formed letters, and use punctuation well, with higher attaining pupils using speech marks and exclamation marks correctly. They put their extensive vocabularies to good use and use standard grammar. Teachers have worked hard to improve the quality and range of pupils' writing and have high

expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers' assessments of pupils' writing are very good and show that teachers have a very good knowledge of what pupils should be achieving and their progress. Work in pupils' writing books is of a high standard and pupils write imaginative, well-structured and original extended pieces of writing. However, pupils do not have enough regular opportunities to write independently or at length and sometimes the worksheets they are given to complete in lessons do not require them to write their own sentences. This is a missed opportunity for them to practise their skills.

57. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is consistently good in Year 2. Teachers place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' literacy skills through enjoyable activities. They plan the work well and ensure that it is matched to the needs of the pupils in most lessons. Teachers are skilful in their questioning and give clear instructions. Pupils are managed very well, and as a result, most classrooms are quiet places where they can learn. Very good relationships exist between pupils and teachers, and pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good. They concentrate well in lessons, work hard and try to please. Teachers use the interactive whiteboards very effectively to support learning in English and pupils have opportunities to word process their work but there is scope to make more use of computers in lessons. In a satisfactory lesson the teacher over-directed the higher attaining pupils and did not allow them to develop their own ideas of what to write, and in another the teacher did not give the class any time targets in which to complete the work. As a consequence, the pupils worked more slowly and completed less writing than they should.
58. The co-ordinator is very committed and has developed her role well. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Teachers' planning and lessons are monitored effectively and the co-ordinator is a good role model for teaching. Assessments of pupils' progress are made regularly and effectively used to inform teachers' planning.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Overall pupils' literacy skills are very good, because the development and application of these skills across the curriculum are mostly effective. There are good opportunities for pupils to engage in speaking and listening activities in all subjects and sufficient chances to use their reading skills in subjects such as history, science, design and technology and religious education. However, although the computer is used for word processing, there are missed opportunities for pupils to write using the computer and in most subjects they have too few opportunities to write independently and at length.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most children, including those with special educational needs, achieve well;
- teaching is consistently good;
- good reading and speaking skills enhance learning;
- children enjoy mathematics and have good attitudes to learning;
- the subject is well led and managed.

Commentary

60. Strong leadership and management have led to a continuing impetus in mathematics, which has helped to sustain high standards since the last inspection and maintain good provision. Throughout the school pupils achieve well and current standards in Year 2 are well above the national average in all areas of mathematics. This is in line with the standards Year 2 pupils attained in national tests last year. When compared to schools similar in nature, standards last year in the national tests taken by Year 2 pupils were well above the national average. These high standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.
61. Teaching and learning are consistently good and consequently all pupils achieve well. Teachers have a good understanding of the National Numeracy Strategy. Strengths of teaching and learning include:
 - teaching which interests and motivates children;
 - teachers' high expectations of children;
 - good use of visual resources, clear explanations and good questioning of pupils to make sure they understand;
 - effective support given to pupils with special educational needs, enabling them to make at least as much progress as the other pupils;
 - homework which is used effectively to support pupils' learning.
62. Pupils are interested in numbers and want to do at least as well as their classmates. This interest is being further stimulated by teachers' effective use of resources. In all classrooms they use electronic teaching display boards very effectively. This allows them to give pupils much visual prompting when helping them understand and learn a range of mathematical concepts. This effective use of resources, set alongside clear explanations of mathematical procedures and rules, significantly contributes to good learning. Teachers are skilled at using probing questions in order to further check pupils' understanding and to follow pupil reasoning. Teachers support children with special educational needs well; as a result they make good progress in learning, achieving as well as the other pupils.
63. A number of factors contribute to good learning. Levels of numeracy are very good overall, and this helps when pupils tackle simple mathematical problems. In solving written number problems pace of learning is considerably helped by pupils being able to apply effective reading skills in order to gain an insight into the way to tackle a problem without the need for teacher support in grasping the nature of the problem. Pupils' learning is significantly helped by their ability to articulate ideas and to explain thinking and reasoning. As a result teachers can often quickly put right any misconceptions. Homework is also used effectively to consolidate learning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

64. Children make appropriate use of their very good mathematical knowledge and skills as part of their work in other subjects and this helps them to develop an appreciation of the practical uses of these skills. For example, pupils take measurements in science, they further develop their concept of time in history and they input numerical instructions when programming a floor robot in ICT lessons.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching means pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well and attain high standards;
- pupils enjoy science and demonstrate good attitudes and behaviour;
- good opportunities are provided for pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education;
- practical work helps children to understand new ideas;
- good use is made of pupils' English and mathematical skills;
- the subject is very well led and managed.

Commentary

65. Standards are currently well above average in all areas of science. This represents good achievement. The most recent results of teacher assessment, using national tests in 2004, show that overall standards at the end of Year 2 were well above average when compared with all schools and with similar schools nationally.
66. Teaching is good. Lessons are interesting and relevant to the pupils with the result that most respond well and enjoy investigating and finding out about things. In both the observed Year 1 lessons they were fully absorbed when investigating how they themselves and how younger children in a reception class could make small and large toys move. This practical approach is helping them understand scientific concepts. In these lessons they developed a very good understanding of forces by coming to recognise that objects could be moved by exerting both pushing and pulling actions. Their general level of understanding about forces and other physical phenomena is well above the expected level for pupils of this age. In these lessons they used their mathematical understanding to sort, classify and represent toys according to the way they could be moved. Year 2 pupils were learning about ways to keep healthy. Their focus was on healthy eating. They were extending their already well above average knowledge of growth and of how people and animals change over time. They were making good use of their very good reading skills to find information from books about the various properties of a range of foodstuffs and they were also using their writing skills to compile a diagram illustrating the importance of different types of food in a healthy diet.
67. Learning in science is good and makes a very good contribution to the development of pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education. When studying life processes they learn about growth and the importance of healthy eating through a

balanced diet. They also study and learn about environmental issues. They are taught to recognise their responsibilities towards both themselves and others in the way they organise their life styles.

68. The subject is very well led and managed. The effectiveness of teaching and learning is regularly monitored by means of classroom observation. The subject co-ordinator makes sure that teachers have good resources at their disposal and she monitors curriculum provision, enabling her to instigate improvements. Since the last inspection the subject has made good improvement. Teaching has improved and standards have risen. Much has been done to broaden the curriculum. Visitors to school and visits out of school are effectively used to broaden the curriculum and make it relevant and interesting. Teachers have been very well supported and given training in a number of areas. They have become well informed, especially in environmental and health-related issues.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources have been improved considerably since the previous inspection and pupils are very keen to use them;
- staff make good use of the interactive whiteboards, but pupils have insufficient opportunities to work with the computers;
- the co-ordinator is new to the subject but has good plans for reorganising and improving the way the computers are used.

Commentary

69. Pupils attain standards which are broadly in line with those expected by the end of Year 2, and which are similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils understand that events can be controlled using technology and they are gaining adequate experience of working with text, images and simple graphs. They respect the equipment, know their way round the keyboard and understand the value of being able to file and save their work. Pupils enjoy using computers and are very enthusiastic about demonstrating their skills. They are extremely keen to spend more time using computers. Resources have improved considerably and increased training for teaching and support staff has improved their subject knowledge and confidence in teaching basic ICT skills. The school has only very recently acquired interactive whiteboards for nearly all classes. Staff are making effective use of this new equipment to promote learning, not only in ICT but also in other curriculum areas.
70. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. In the two lessons observed teaching was good in one and satisfactory in the other. In the good lesson the teacher used the whiteboard very effectively, allowing pupils to demonstrate how they would save and retrieve work in their individual files. Pupils made good progress in this lesson because the teaching was lively, techniques were well explained and the questioning kept pupils on their toes. In the other lesson in the hall,

the pupils gave instructions to a programmable toy to move in different directions. The teachers explained the tasks well and managed the class very well but the tasks did not allow for the higher attainers to be sufficiently challenged. Teachers do not use the computers in the classrooms as much as they could nor do they use the small computer suite often enough. Although overall achievement is satisfactory, this lack of opportunities restricts the rate at which pupils can make progress.

71. The new co-ordinator is enthusiastic about raising standards and the subject is on the school's plans for development. Currently, each class has two computers, and there is a small suite of computers, which is difficult for staff to use because of the need for adult supervision. The co-ordinator is aware of this and plans to re-organise the computers to enable staff to teach the whole class or at least half a class at the same time. The school has started assessing pupils' work but this is in the early stages of development.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

72. Although pupils' skills are broadly average, they do not get enough opportunities to use the computers in most subjects. Staff do compensate for this to an extent, however, by promoting ICT in many lessons when using the interactive whiteboards. Pupils use a word processor for their writing, make simple graphs in mathematics, have access to the Internet in history and use art packages to design pictures for their calendars.

HUMANITIES

It was not possible to observe any lessons in geography and only three in history during the inspection. Consequently it was not possible to make a secure judgement about provision in these subjects.

73. In **geography**, teachers' planning and the analysis of a very small sample of pupils' work indicate that pupils experience a good variety of appropriate learning activities, enabling them to make progress in developing their skills. They consider environmental issues in some depth. Visits to places of geographical interest add depth to the curriculum. At times good links are made with their work in history, in their visit to Escomb and Hamsterley, for example.
74. In **history**, pupils' completed work on display indicates that they can distinguish between old and new and that they understand change. Their understanding is reinforced with very good use of artefacts, in their work on toys for example, and this supports pupils' learning very effectively. Similarly good work is done with timelines to help pupils understand chronology. Teachers provide good opportunities to extend pupils' learning through visits, both locally or to museums and historic sites.
75. Teaching in the very small number of lessons seen was good overall; in one lesson it was particularly good, with the teacher managing a rich variety of resources and using drama and role-play very effectively indeed to reinforce pupils' understanding of the work of Florence Nightingale. This ensured that not only was pupils' learning very good, they enjoyed the lesson enormously.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know the subject well;
- teachers use a good range of resources very well and this enhances pupils' learning;
- pupils' learning in religious education makes a very good contribution to their personal development;
- the subject is very well led and managed.

Commentary

76. Good standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. Almost all pupils attain expected standards by the end of Year 2 and a good number exceed them. As a result of good teaching most pupils achieve well.
77. Pupils' learning is good, because there is well-informed teaching on a range of interesting topics. Year 2 pupils learn about how Jewish families celebrate Hanukkah, for example, and Year 1 pupils learn about some of the important features of Buddhism and about Buddhist traditions. In lessons a good range of resources is used very effectively to capture pupils' interest. For example, in one lesson Year 2 pupils were shown a Menorah and listened intently as they were told about its significance. In a quiet moment the teacher lit the candles in and recited a Jewish blessing. The pupils were invited to reflect on the celebration of Hanukkah. This moment helped to heighten the spiritual awareness of some of the pupils. These pupils are able to use their knowledge of other faiths to compare and contrast customs across a range of traditions. In two Year 1 lessons, pupils' interest in Buddhism was kindled when they were shown a range of artefacts associated with the faith, including a prayer mat, incense and a statue of Buddha. The interest of the pupils was demonstrated by the many questions they asked towards the end of the lessons. At the end of both these lessons the pupils were encouraged to adopt a Buddhist poise, incense sticks were lit and appropriate music was played and the pupils were encouraged to meditate for a short period of time. This created a strong spiritual moment which most pupils appreciated.
78. The subject is very well led and managed by a very well informed teacher who supports her colleagues very well. Good standards have been maintained and good improvement has been made since the last inspection. She has seen that a good collection of artefacts relating to the religions and faiths the pupils study is available to give them first hand experience of objects used in worship. She has also led training sessions for teachers to keep them informed both on subject development and on subject content. The subject is very well monitored. The subject manager and the governor with responsibility for religious education both monitor lessons through direct classroom observation. The curriculum meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and is enhanced by a range of visits out of school, for example to the local parish church and to churches further afield, and by visitors to the school. The subject contributes well to the broadening of pupils' cultural understanding.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

It was possible to observe only a very small number of lessons in art, music and physical education during the inspection and no lessons in design and technology. Consequently there was insufficient evidence to support a judgement about provision in these subjects.

79. The curriculum for **art** is good, and the co-ordinator has recently completed an application to be awarded an Artsmark for its work in the subject. Standards in the work seen in art are good and there is evidence of the use of a wide range of media on display. Some work is of a high standard.
80. Pupils' work is highly valued, as demonstrated by the number of pictures that are professionally framed. The work undertaken by members of the lunchtime Art Club in the style of L.S.Lowry are particularly expressive, as are the pictures of flowers undertaken with a local artist. Striking and vibrant paper sculpture fireworks, completed during the inspection, were also of a high standard. The school makes very good use of local artists and artists in residence to enhance the art and design curriculum. One of the features is the amount of work that is based on famous artists. The work of pupils in Year 2 shows some strikingly colourful and beautifully executed pictures in the style of Kandinsky, for example. The school worked closely with the junior school during the art week, when pupils had additional opportunities to participate in art and design activities.
81. In one good lesson observed during the inspection, the teacher made good use of the interactive whiteboard to demonstrate a display of fireworks. Opportunities were provided for pupils to explore new techniques and skills and the teacher used her good knowledge of the subject to explain ideas and to question pupils. As a result, pupils were very keen to work hard and were exceptionally careful when experimenting with paint.
82. In design and technology teachers provide opportunities for pupils to use a wide range of materials to develop their skills. They learn about designing and making a range of products and to provide simple evaluations about their quality and how they might be improved. The candle-holders, recently made by pupils in Year 2, for example, were of good quality and showed care in their construction and design. Pupils' evaluations of their finished holders were honest, well considered and very carefully presented.
83. In **music**, teachers' planning is detailed, with lessons built around a series of themes. Although only a small number of lessons were seen, overall teaching was good. This ensures that pupils enjoy a varied musical curriculum. Pupils enjoyed singing in the lessons observed, including the session in the hall with the whole year group. On these occasions singing is tuneful and of a standard expected of pupils their age.
84. Pupils have appropriate opportunities to perform music, for example in playing instruments as they developed their understanding of dynamics. Opportunities are provided for pupils to listen to music, including at other times than in lessons, but more could be made of these to help them appraise it.

85. After reviewing the curriculum for **physical education** the school decided to increase the time spent available and increased the number of lessons each week from two to three. This means that a full programme of physical education activities can now be made throughout the year.
86. Teaching in the lessons seen was satisfactory. In two of the lessons, pupils showed reasonable agility in using large gymnastic apparatus, and although there was poise in their movements they showed little creativity. In one lesson, the teacher provided good opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their skills and made appropriate teaching points to enhance pupils' performance. Too much time was wasted in this lesson, however, as pupils queued for a turn on the apparatus. In another lesson, there was too little evaluation of pupils' performances or demonstrations of good work, which limited the progress pupils made. In both lessons, however, class management was good and despite pupils having to queue to have a turn on the apparatus pupils behaved themselves well. In lessons in gymnastics, insufficient attention was given to encouraging pupils to have greater control and more precision in their movements. In the country dancing lesson, the instructions for movements were complicated and pupils were not as well behaved, because pupils were not as sure about what they were supposed to be doing.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons in science and religious education contribute well to pupils' learning;
- a good scheme of work helps teachers plan for effective learning in a range of curriculum areas;
- a caring school ethos supports pupils' personal development effectively.

Commentary

87. Close links with science, geography, religious education, daily acts of worship and circle time all enhance overall provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. The school takes the subject very seriously. To this end it is seen to be very important in developing the ethos of the school and providing for pupils' personal development. Regular circle time¹ sessions offer good opportunities for pupils to develop their own views and express them. Although these sessions were of too short a duration to support an overall judgement on teaching, in those seen good learning was taking place. Year 1 pupils are learning to listen to each other and to respect each other's point of view. They are also learning to co-operate more effectively with each other in order to complete joint tasks. During these sessions they are developing their own views and gaining confidence in expressing their own opinions.

¹ Circle time – is an opportunity for the whole class to discuss and reflect on a range of issues, often relating to pupils' personal and social development.

88. Good and sometimes very good teaching in science and religious education lessons makes at least good contributions to learning in this area. In developing an understanding of the traditions associated with Christmas and Hanukkah, Year 2 pupils identify differences and similarities in people's beliefs and lifestyles. This respect for differences and similarities in peoples is also engendered in Year 1 pupils as they are taught about the teachings of Buddha and his search for enlightenment. Pupils begin early to recognise and respect that different groups of people often follow different religious traditions. Lessons in science and geography contribute to pupils' understanding of health and environmental issues. For example, in one good science lesson observed, pupils learnt how to eat healthily and that if they make the right choices they can improve their health and well-being. In preparing lessons teachers are very well supported by a very good scheme of work that outlines appropriate areas for teachers to focus on.
89. Informal support for personal and social development is embedded in the school's daily life. All adults provide good role models and encourage pupils to think about how their behaviour affects others and to develop a sense of responsibility. To this end the school is fully committed to two important initiatives. One focuses on health aspects and the other on the environment. For example, pupils are given incentives to choose healthy options when eating and they are encouraged to walk to school. Pupils are also encouraged to be eco-friendly. For example, wherever possible they are encouraged to recycle reusable resources.

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	2
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 (ethos)	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
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	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	2

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