

INSPECTION REPORT

ANNFIELD PLAIN JUNIOR SCHOOL

Annfield Plain, County Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114024

Headteacher: Miss L Tullett

Lead inspector: Mr K Bardon

Dates of inspection: 29th November – 1st December 2004

Inspection number: 266311

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	169
School address:	Front Street Annfield Plain Stanley County Durham
Postcode:	DH9 7ST
Telephone number:	01207 234531
Fax number:	01207 234531
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Hodgson
Date of previous inspection:	7 th December 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Annfield Plain is a small junior school situated in two buildings in an ex-mining village in the north of County Durham. One of the buildings dates from 1875. The number of pupils on roll is falling, and is likely to continue to do so, because of a decreasing birth rate in the area. Most of the 169 pupils live close to the school although a significant minority travel from surrounding districts. The housing in the area surrounding the school is a mixture of smaller, privately owned and rented properties, some of which were built by the council. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average although many of the social and economic indicators of the district are below the national averages. Many of the families in the village have lived there for a long time and pupil mobility is very low. There are similar numbers of boys and girls and an even distribution across year groups. Four pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds but there are no pupils who speak English as an additional language or who are at an early stage in the learning of English. A small number of pupils are in public care. Thirty-five pupils have special educational needs, mainly for learning difficulties, which is average for a school of this size. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The school received an achievement award in 2003 and has also been awarded Investors in People, ActiveMark and Healthy Schools status. Pupils have a very good record in sports competitions and won through to the finals of the national Kwik Cricket competition in 2003. In conjunction with the Return to Learn initiative, the school provides a family learning programme for parents in literacy and numeracy. Since the last inspection the school has had a change of both headteacher and deputy headteacher. Although currently pupils are entering the school with the expected range of knowledge and skills, there have been times in the past when attainment on entry has been below average, as was the case with the present Year 6.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11807	Keith Bardon	Lead inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology , design and technology
8922	Brenda McIntosh	Lay inspector	
8839	Michael Egerton	Team inspector	English, geography, history, religious education, special educational needs
3687	Godfrey Bancroft	Team inspector	Science, art and design, music, physical education

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services

3 Harrowby Road
West Park
Leeds
LS16 5HN

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school with a significant number of very good features. Pupils' achievement is good because they are taught well and given a wide range of interesting opportunities to learn. Standards meet the expected levels and staff take considerable care to ensure that all pupils are included fully in lessons and in the life of the school. Leadership and management are highly effective and give the school clear direction. The ethos of the school is extremely positive and pupils enjoy being part of a warm, caring community. Although the school spends a little above the national average on each pupil's education this represents good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils of all ages achieve well because the school makes carefully considered provision for all aspects of their learning.
- High quality leadership and management ensure that the school has a strong sense of purpose and accurate information upon which to base its decisions
- Lively and well-planned lessons encourage pupils to participate fully and to try hard, although there are times when teachers miss the chance to show pupils the best ways of learning.
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because they are supported very well in their learning.
- The rich curriculum provides all pupils with equal opportunities to learn, although information and communication technology (ICT) is not used often enough in some subjects.
- Pupils are cared for extremely well and thoroughly enjoy school.
- Governors support the school well but rely too heavily on the headteacher's reports for their understanding of how effectively it is performing.
- Although, overall, pupils achieve well in mathematics, their ability to use efficient mental methods when calculating is under-developed.

Since it was last inspected in 1998 the school has made good progress. The issues from the last inspection have been carefully and constructively addressed and the school has improved many aspects of educational provision. ICT, in particular, has seen major development which has broadened pupils' learning. The ethos of the school and pupils' attitudes to learning have strengthened further. Subject managers make a more effective contribution to action planning because they have a clearer overview of the curriculum. Very effective procedures for self-evaluation have been embedded firmly in the work of the school. Appropriate priorities for further improvement have been identified and the school continues to move forward.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement is good. Standards meet national expectations and are often better than those of pupils in similar schools to Annfield Plain Junior.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	D	C	C	B
mathematics	C	C	C	B
science	C	C	B	B

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.

Test results are rising steadily and at a faster rate than they are nationally. Standards in Year 6 are currently around the nationally expected level in English and mathematics and above in science.

Throughout the school pupils achieve well in all three subjects. Weaknesses in pupils' factual writing that came to light in the English tests in 2004 are being addressed and standards are rising. Pupils make good progress in all other areas of English and their stories make a very enjoyable read. Pupils calculate accurately in mathematics but often use long written methods when solving problems rather than employing efficient mental strategies. This slows the rate at which they work and places some limitations on what can be achieved. Pupils achieve very well in art and design and produce work of a higher than average standard. Pupils with special educational needs are taught and supported very well and maintain a very good rate of progress. The tendency for boys to do better than girls in the national tests, particularly at the higher levels of attainment, has been examined closely by the school and steps taken to eliminate the differences. These appear to be working and no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls was detected during the inspection.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good. Pupils of all ages show very good attitudes to learning and work hard. Standards of behaviour are high at all times. Pupils care for each other and get on very well. They develop a strong sense of social responsibility and show respect for the opinions and beliefs of others. Levels of attendance are satisfactory and most pupils arrive at school on time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides its pupils with a good quality of education. The quality of teaching and learning is good and in a decent proportion of lessons it is very good or excellent, particularly in Year 6. Teachers provide interesting activities and set challenging tasks which move pupils' learning along at a good pace. However, on a few occasions teachers miss opportunities to help pupils acquire effective learning techniques, such as how best to remember pieces of information, how to evaluate their own work and how to recognise and use patterns in numbers. Pupils concentrate well and their neat and well-presented work is a pleasure to read. The school provides a stimulating and varied curriculum which is frequently enriched with a wide range of extra-curricular activities and well-chosen educational visits and visitors. The curriculum for ICT has been broadened since the last inspection although, in most subjects, pupils are given insufficient opportunity to use computers to assist their learning. Pupils are provided with a very good level of care and welfare, and staff monitor their academic and personal development closely. The school has good relationships with parents and keeps them well informed about their children's progress. Very effective links are forged with outside agencies, the community and other schools, which enhance pupils' learning

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is very good. The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, makes clear and well-judged decisions and leads the school with quiet strength and vision. The school is managed very well. Procedures and policies are well established and effective and the school runs smoothly day to day. Governance is satisfactory and statutory requirements are met. Governors visit the school regularly and support it fully, but are too reliant on others for their overview of how well it is doing and the quality of education it is providing for pupils.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is popular with parents and they have confidence in the staff and in the management of the school. They like particularly the way in which the school promotes their children's all-round development. Pupils welcome the support, help and advice they get from their teachers and feel that there is always someone they can turn to if they have a problem. They find the school a friendly place to be and enjoy the new things they learn. Pupils are justifiably proud of their school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The following issues are relative to a school that has many strengths and few weaknesses. The most important things the school should do now are:

- Extend the good teaching by making better use of the opportunities that lessons present to teach pupils the most effective ways of learning, including how to use efficient mental strategies in mathematics.
- Make more effective use of ICT as an aid to learning in all subjects.
- Increase the ability of the governors to collect their own information about the school and to develop an independent view of how well it is performing.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects

Pupils' achievement is good. By Year 6 standards are broadly average but often better than those attained by pupils in similar schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in reading, creative writing, speaking and listening, and the quality of pupils' factual writing is rising.
- Pupils work accurately in all aspects of mathematics and achieve well although the methods they use when solving problems are often not the most efficient.
- The good results pupils achieved in the science tests in 2004 are reflected fully in the standards they attain in lessons.
- Although often working below the national average for their age, pupils with special educational needs make considerable gains in their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Well-structured and interesting art and design lessons enable pupils to achieve high standards in the subject.
- Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons and their attainment exceeds expectations.

Commentary

1. In 2004, the results attained by Year 6 pupils in the national tests were above the national average in science and broadly average in English and mathematics. In relation to the results they attained in the national tests at age seven, pupils' performance was above that of similar schools in all three subjects. Overall the results pupils attained were higher than in any of the previous five years. However, contained within this positive set of results were a small number of inconsistencies. Pupils performed much better in the reading tests than they did in writing and far more boys than girls attained the above average level in both mathematics and science.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.3 (26.7)	26.9 (26.8)
Mathematics	27.7 (26.8)	27.0 (26.8)
Science	29.6 (29.0)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 45 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Most of the pupils in the present Year 6 first joined the school in 2001, having attained standards in the national tests for seven year olds that were generally below average. In their time at the school pupils' attainment has risen and now matches the nationally expected levels. This represents good achievement. Throughout Years 3 to 6, pupils are achieving well and generally making faster progress than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' achievement in reading and in speaking and listening is good. The majority of pupils read accurately and with understanding, speak clearly and precisely, and listen carefully. Pupils' disappointing performance on the writing tests in 2004 reflected variations in their achievement in the different styles of writing. Pupils compose interesting and lively stories and in this form of writing they achieve well. Their ability to construct factual information is satisfactory but not as good, and it was this style of writing the tests focused upon in 2004. The school has recognised the need to raise attainment in the non-fiction genres of writing

and has taken sensible measures to provide pupils with a better balance. It is a little too early to make a detailed evaluation of the impact these are having but the early signs are promising. Overall, standards in English reflect the 2004 test results and meet the expected level by the end of Year 6.

3. The picture is very similar in all aspects of mathematics, with standards meeting the nationally expected level and achievement being good in relation to pupils' attainment when they first joined the school. Pupils know a sufficient range of number facts and make accurate calculations, but at times they use long and rather cumbersome methods to arrive at an answer rather than efficient mental strategies. The pupils achieve well in the different aspects of science and, by Year 6, standards are above the expected level. Pupils acquire a solid understanding of key ideas and concepts and become competent at investigating things for themselves.

Other aspects of standards and achievement

4. Pupils' good level of performance in the national tests in 2004, in relation to similar schools, continued a trend of improvement which, over the last five years as a whole, has been better than the national trend and the school met or exceeded all the targets it had set in both English and mathematics. Test results have been brought up to the national averages and are beginning to show signs of moving ahead of them. However, in the present Year 6 a larger proportion of pupils have difficulty working up to the nationally expected level and a small but significant number have significant learning difficulties, particularly in English and mathematics. Consequently the school's targets for 2005 are a little lower than the previous year's but provide an appropriate level of challenge for the school.
5. Standards in ICT have improved since the last inspection and by Year 6 meet the levels expected. Pupils use the word-processing facilities of the computer well but they do not yet have a clear understanding of how ICT can help them to learn in all subjects. Pupils' achievement in religious education is good and the attainment of most pupils exceeds the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils receive a rich and varied range of opportunities to learn in art and design and as a result achieve very well, attaining standards that are above the level expected by the end of Year 6.
6. It is not possible from the small number of lessons seen in design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education to make secure judgements of the standards pupils attain. However, the lessons seen, pupils' work and displays around the school left a positive impression of pupils' achievements in these subjects.
7. The provision for special educational needs is very well structured and resourced. As a result pupils with such needs make very good progress towards their individual targets. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs have improved significantly since the last inspection. Very high attaining or talented pupils are identified clearly and all teachers have an up-to-date list of pupils who fall into these categories. Appropriate provision is made for their learning and they achieve well. In 2004 seven mathematically able Year 6 pupils scored 90 per cent or above in the national tests, with the highest scoring 97 per cent.
8. It would seem that the differences in attainment between boys and girls which were very apparent in the national test results in 2004 were, to a large extent, a feature of that particular group of pupils. Pupils of both sexes were closely observed during the inspection and their work examined thoroughly. In addition the school has looked for significant evidence of gender difference and although there is a local culture of higher aspirations for boys, no clear pattern has emerged. The school has put some well-conceived measures in place to address any residual problems and all current evidence points to there being very little significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to school are very good. Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are also very good. These aspects of the pupils' development have all improved since the last inspection. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' very good attitudes help them to learn effectively and achieve well.
- High expectations of behaviour are set and achieved; the school deals very effectively with all forms of harassment.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developed very well, helping them become mature and responsible young people.

Commentary

9. Pupils like coming to school and are very keen to learn. They are inspired to do well because the teachers make learning fun and interesting. Pupils of all ages respond with confidence to the challenges set for them and concentrate very well on their tasks. When contributing to discussions or answering questions pupils are not afraid to make mistakes because they are encouraged to try, and are praised for their efforts even if they get things wrong. When asked if pupils have to work hard, one boy was quick to reply, "Yes we do, but we do not mind because the teachers help us". Pupils with special educational needs have equally very positive attitudes to learning and take a full and active part in lessons and experiences that the school offers. The school involves pupils in 'aiming high' initiatives which are helping to raise their aspirations for future learning and choice of careers. Discussions with groups of girls from Years 5 and 6 revealed that many had their sights set on going to college or university to continue their education.
10. The school gives a very high priority to pupils' personal development. Relationships are very good throughout the school because the pupils have a very good understanding of their responsibilities within the school community. This helps to create a happy learning environment. The teachers set high expectations and successfully promote confidence and very good standards of behaviour through praise and encouragement. Pupils have a very high regard for their teachers and each other. They have a very clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and are actively involved in the formation of class and school rules. During the inspection no incidents of inappropriate behaviour of any kind were seen. Bullying is not perceived to be a problem by pupils but they feel that if any form of harassment does occur, it is taken most seriously and dealt with very effectively by staff. There have been no exclusions during the last school year. This is a success and an indication of the school's strong commitment to inclusion.
11. The ethos of the school, which is strongly influenced by the leadership of the headteacher, gives pupils a sense of purpose and pride in their achievements. Pupils get on very well together and collaborate very well in play and work. They are very friendly, polite and welcoming to visitors. The atmosphere around the school at lunchtime is positive and sociable. Playtimes are quite remarkable as pupils engage themselves amicably in a wide range of sporting activities. Spiritual development is an integral part of the curriculum and assemblies are planned around themes that are relevant to pupils. Class discussions give good opportunities for pupils to listen to varied opinions that may not match their own and they show respect for the differing views and feelings of others. It is very apparent that pupils are in an environment where they feel able to share the most sensitive areas of their lives.
12. Pupils gain a very good understanding of their own cultural traditions and the diversity and richness of other cultures. They show a very good appreciation and respect of others' beliefs,

ideas and culture. Pupils learn about other world faiths and traditions through art, history, geography, and religious education. They are given very good opportunities to visit museums and art galleries and to work with artists in residence to enrich their learning. A range of visitors provides pupils with first hand experiences of other cultures and this helps them to appreciate people for who they are. For example, a lady from Ghana talked to the pupils about colour and differences between people of different ethnic backgrounds.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2003/04 (94.9%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.1	School data	0.0
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

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

- Parents are quick to inform the school when their child is absent and any unexplained absences are followed up rigorously. As a result unauthorised absences are rare. The vast majority of pupils arrive punctually with just a few persistent latecomers.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides its pupils with a good quality of education. Productive teaching and learning are combined with a high quality curriculum, very good care and welfare, and strong links with parents, the local community and other schools.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good. In lessons the teaching ranges from satisfactory to excellent and it is particularly effective in the Year 6 class. Teachers make accurate assessments of pupils' work and use the information these provide well when planning lessons.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy learning and show high levels of concentration and application.
- Teachers provide interesting activities and modify them well to ensure that pupils of differing levels of attainment have work that provides an appropriate challenge.
- Lessons are planned thoughtfully and carefully, although, on a few occasions, opportunities to teach the pupils efficient learning strategies are missed.
- Pupils who have special educational needs receive well-structured support from class teachers, specialist teachers and teaching assistants, which enables them to learn very well.
- Teachers and pupils get on very well and lessons are managed very effectively.

Commentary

- There has been good improvement in the teaching and learning since the last inspection and the inconsistencies and weaknesses that were found in some classes have been eliminated. This reflects the skill with which this key aspect of the school's provision has been led and managed by the headteacher and senior staff.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2	8	12	7	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. One additional short lesson was seen in which there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement about the quality of teaching.

15. Pupils of all ages learn well because they take a pride in their work. This is clearly evidenced by the considerable care and effort pupils of all abilities take to present their work in different subjects neatly and accurately. Their exercise books are a pleasure to read and a testimony to the good habits pupils are encouraged to adopt from the time they first enter the school. Inherent within the teaching is an expectation that pupils will always try to produce their best work. This is not something that pupils have to be reminded of because it is embedded in the ethos of the school. As a result pupils are able to sustain concentration for good lengths of time and once set a task they work hard until it is successfully completed because they are motivated to learn.
16. Relationships between teachers and pupils are extremely positive, and the atmosphere in classrooms is pleasant and businesslike. Pupils have a clear understanding that they are there to learn but appreciate how enjoyable this can be. As a result, class discipline is maintained to a high standard with a minimum of intervention by the teachers, and lessons proceed smoothly. At all times teachers' response to the ideas pupils put forward and the answers they offer is positive and constructive. Even when an answer is incorrect teachers thank pupils for their efforts and carefully move them towards a correct understanding. This builds pupils' self-esteem and gives them the confidence to continuing trying.
17. Teachers give clear instructions and succinct information and ask well-judged questions to keep pupils thinking. Lessons are generally planned well, although there are occasions when opportunities to help pupils acquire effective learning techniques are missed. For example, although teachers' expect pupils to retain information in their heads and to employ number patterns and mental strategies when problem solving in mathematics, too little time is spent teaching pupils the best strategies to use. Similarly there are occasions when pupils are not shown clearly enough how to evaluate their work and how to identify improvements that could be made. These are areas for development and should be viewed within the context of teaching that has a good many strengths.
18. The quality of teaching provided for pupils who have special educational needs is very good. The support pupils are given and the resources provided for their learning are carefully considered and closely matched to their individual needs. Class teachers include all pupils in their lessons and skilfully draw those who have special educational needs into discussions. Close liaison between specialist teachers, teaching assistants and class teachers ensures that the work provided for the pupils is similar to that other pupils are doing but at a level that is appropriate. This provides equality of opportunity and promotes very good achievement.
19. Teachers use day-to-day assessment constructively to guide pupils' learning. At the start of each lesson teachers display and explain the learning objectives that have been set so that pupils have a clear understanding of what they are trying to achieve. Throughout the lesson teachers monitor the progress being made towards these objectives and provide pupils with the support and guidance they need to keep them learning. Thoughtful evaluation at the end of the lesson helps teachers to accurately determine what has been achieved and from this to decide what pupils of differing attainment need to learn in the next lesson.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good. Very good opportunities are provided for enrichment beyond the basic curriculum. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of well-planned opportunities to learn.
- The school provides equality of access and opportunity for all pupils.
- ICT is not used well enough to support pupils' learning in some subjects.
- The educational provision for pupils with special educational needs is very well structured.
- Educational visits and visitors to school make a significant contribution to pupils' learning.
- The accommodation for the teaching and learning of physical education is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

20. The curriculum covers all subjects comprehensively and the strengths found at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and built upon. This is clearly reflected in the breadth of pupils' good achievements and in the enjoyment they show for learning. Significant progress has been made in developing the curriculum for ICT and it now covers all areas of the National Curriculum in sufficient depth. However, with the exception of English and to some extent history, not enough use is made of ICT to support pupils' learning in different subjects. The timetabling of the curriculum is very effective in ensuring that all pupils, including those taught in mixed age classes, have equality of access and opportunity to everything that is taught. The provision made for pupils' personal, social and health education makes a very positive contribution to pupils' very good attitudes to their learning.
21. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The school gives careful consideration to the needs of these pupils and resources their learning very well. Specialist staff are employed and equipment provided to ensure that pupils have every opportunity to learn. The curriculum is modified thoughtfully to ensure that pupils with special educational needs always have work that is similar to that of other pupils but matched to their individual needs. The very good quality of the learning opportunities these pupils receive is reflected in the very good progress they make.
22. Educational visits and visitors make a very good contribution to pupils' learning and the very good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities enhances pupils' learning very well. Amongst the many visitors who regularly visit the school are the 'Silver Band' Falconry, African drummers, students from New College, Durham, who provide a dance, drama and musical production each year, and members of the Viking Re-enactment Society. The rich range of educational visits includes: a residential stay at the Howtown Centre, in the Lake District, for outdoor and adventurous activities; regular opportunities for pupils to study local history at the nearby Beamish Open Air Museum; and visits to Sunderland Association Football Club to use the computer suite. Pupils reflect on these experiences with great pride and pleasure, and the gains they have made in their knowledge and understanding as a result are clearly evident.
23. The provision of resources to support pupils' learning is generally good and enables the curriculum to be taught effectively. The school's accommodation is satisfactory and very good use is made of the available space. However, the school is currently housed in two buildings. This causes inconvenience when pupils have to move between the two buildings and resources have to be transported across the playground during bad weather. The accommodation for teaching physical education is unsatisfactory. The shape of the hall makes teaching dance and gymnastics a bigger challenge than it should be, although teachers cope well. The playing field is some distance from the school and often cannot be used during wet weather.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements for ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety have improved since the last inspection and they are now very good. The strong caring atmosphere in school helps pupils to enjoy their learning. The school provides pupils with very good support, advice and guidance. The way the school seeks and acts upon pupils' views is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The atmosphere of warmth and calm creates a happy environment in which pupils are very well cared for so they can enjoy their learning and achieve well.
- Prompt and very well-targeted help and guidance make a significant contribution to pupils' good achievement and personal development.
- Pupils' views are sought, valued and acted upon and consequently they contribute very well to the development of the school.

Commentary

24. Pupils are safe and secure at school, and the very good attention paid to their care, welfare and safety allows them to concentrate on learning. The school lives up to its philosophy in providing an environment that is clean, safe and supportive in order that every child will develop high self-esteem. All staff work hard to make the school a very welcoming, happy place for the pupils. Arrangements for health and safety are very good. Regular risk assessments of all aspects of school are undertaken and records are meticulously maintained. Pupils commented how they feel safe when out of school on visits because they are very well supervised. Daily routines are well planned and pupils are very carefully watched over when at work or at play. At lunchtimes clear systems are well established and this ensures a continuity of pupils' welfare and safety.
25. Pupils and staff take great delight and enjoyment in learning. Pupils find their teachers kind, helpful and fair and feel they are looked after very well. As a result they are happy to attend. Staff are always ready to listen to pupils and offer very good personal support as and when needs arise. A member of staff and the Playground Pals are always on hand to help those pupils who occasionally find playtimes a challenge or who are experiencing difficulties. Relationships throughout the school are very strong so pupils feel secure and know there is always someone to whom they can turn for help. Child protection procedures are very well established and staff are fully aware of what to do if they have any concerns about the children in their care. The school is very good at helping vulnerable children who have anxieties or personal and social problems that may be hindering their education. Close liaison with outside agencies helps to ensure that the children get the support they need. This has a positive effect on their learning and contributes well to their overall personal development.
26. The information about pupils' achievements is used well to set targets for academic and personal development. As a result pupils' achievement is good. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well so they take a full and active part in lessons and other activities. The targets on the individual education plans are very clear and detailed, giving staff a clear understanding of the specific areas of learning to focus upon. There is very good recording of pupils' progress and of continuing or emerging areas of need.
27. Pupils are actively encouraged to contribute towards improving the school. The school regularly seeks their views and acts upon what they say where possible. The school council helps pupils to make a very good contribution to the life in school. For example, the work of the council was instrumental in providing a quiet area and more play equipment in the playground which has helped to improve the quality of playtimes.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents is good. Links with the community and other schools are very good. They enhance the range of learning opportunities for pupils and help them to achieve well. Educational and support programmes for parents are good and effective.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has established good relationships with parents which contribute to pupils' achievement and their very good attitudes to learning.
- Good communication keeps parents well informed about the school and their children's progress.
- The Family Learning courses provide good opportunities for involving parents in their children's learning and enabling them to further their own education.
- The school sees its links with the community and other schools as a rich resource which strengthens and enlivens pupils' learning experiences.

Commentary

28. The school is highly regarded by parents and governors. It rightly enjoys a reputation for high expectations for its pupils who are taught in a caring, happy atmosphere. Pupils, staff and parents work together in a close partnership. This is a community school in the real sense as it is the school that many of the parents and grandparents attended as primary pupils.
29. Parents make a good contribution to pupils' learning and to the life of the school and what it achieves. They accompany school visits, support concerts and other school events and are very supportive of fund-raising activities. Parents support their children well when work is sent home. A small number of volunteers make a regular commitment to help in the classrooms. The school seeks and values parents' views and regularly involves them in its development through consultation. For example, parents had a strong involvement in the formulating of the sex and relationship policy.
30. The school communicates well with parents through a good range of information about the events and their children's progress. There is a regular sharing of information about the pupils' progress through the termly parents meetings, written reports and reviews of progress for pupils with special educational needs. The annual reports are of very good quality and give a clear picture of how well the pupils are progressing in relation to the national expectations for their age, as well as setting targets for future learning. Parents find that the school and staff are approachable and accessible at any time for formal or informal discussions.
31. The school organises a very good range of courses for parents that help them to develop their own skills and this boosts their confidence. The courses are well attended and promote positive attitudes towards learning which have resulted in greater involvement in school life and in some cases the confidence to further their own education. For example, some parents go on to become governors, attend college or gain employment as teaching assistants in schools. The Family Learning courses are successful in giving parents the opportunity to gain a better understanding of what their children are learning and as a result they are able to help them more effectively at home.
32. Partnership activities within the community are very good and strengthen and enliven pupils' learning. Recent initiatives have included tree planting, working with Age Concern and performing for various groups of people at a range of locations within the community. The school is involved in a pilot project which enables the pupils to make use of local sports and arts facilities, which increases their fitness. Visits to local places of interest bring a sense of relevance to work in subjects such as history and geography.

33. Links with other schools provide many interesting and diverse opportunities for pupils to participate in a range of activities and mix with other pupils. There are regular opportunities for the sharing of curricular issues and staff expertise, which have a positive effect on pupils' learning and achievement. The induction arrangements for pupils into Year 3 and transition to the secondary school are well thought out, prepare them well for the next stage of their education and ensure continuity in their learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good overall. The headteacher provides very good leadership and the school is managed very well. The quality of governance is satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision of where the school is now and where she wants to take it in the future.
- The deputy headteacher provides a good role model for staff.
- Everyone in the school is totally committed to providing the very best for every pupil.
- The work of the school is supported very effectively by the well-constructed management plan.
- The governors are very supportive of the school but do not have sufficient procedures in place to evaluate its work for themselves.

Commentary

34. The headteacher has had a clear, unwavering vision for the school. Through determination and a sensitive approach to change she has brought the school to its present point where it is held in the high regard by everyone who is associated with it. Her quiet manner has a strong influence on both staff and pupils and has inspired and motivated them. The headteacher is supported strongly and competently by the deputy headteacher and together they make a very effective team which supports and challenges the school and sets high standards for staff and pupils to aspire to. Through high quality teaching and skilful management the deputy headteacher provides a very good model for other staff to aspire to. Overall there has been good improvement in leadership and management since the last inspection.
35. The drive to increase pupils' achievement in every area of learning is at the forefront of the school's aims. Through the careful monitoring of achievement and the development of strategies to overcome identified areas of weakness, standards have been raised and are continuing to improve. The school has a very positive ethos based around an extremely strong sense of care and a solid core of traditional values, which all staff successfully promote. The respect that pupils have for each other and for adults reflects in everything they do and creates a warm and friendly atmosphere that is appreciated by everyone entering the school. The full inclusion of all pupils provides a firm foundation for their successful learning and rapid personal development.
36. The headteacher's vision for the school is shared by everyone. The teaching staff, in a wide variety of ways, all bring something unique to the school and add to its overall strength. They give their full support to the headteacher and share fully her commitment to raising standards. Their contribution and belief in a broad and stimulating curriculum, enriched by additional activities, mean that there are many opportunities where pupils can succeed both in school and outside the school day. Subjects are managed well and the provision for pupils with special educational needs is very well organised and highly effective.
37. The school management plan is a cohesive and comprehensive document which guides and informs school development extremely well. It sets out very clearly the identified priorities for the future. Teachers with management responsibilities evaluate their subject and aspects

regularly and contribute their findings to an annual review co-ordinated by the deputy headteacher. From these and other evaluations the key priorities for development are determined and a school improvement plan constructed with time scales and costings. This ongoing cycle of evaluation, review and action planning, which is understood by all members of staff, provides a secure platform for school development. The school improvement plan is presented to the governing body for discussion and approval and they receive regular reports on the different initiatives and the progress being made. Teachers' personal and professional targets focus constructively on improving teaching and learning and are linked in very closely with the school improvement plan. The school has very recently received the Investors in People award in recognition of the provision it makes for staff support and development.

38. A major strength of the governing body is their total commitment to the school and their overwhelming support for the teachers, pupils and parents. Over the last few years governors have become increasingly involved in all aspects of school life. No longer does the headteacher chair all the meetings, which is now done by the newly appointed chair of governors. Governors have carried out an evaluation of their work and this in turn has led them to a more secure understanding of their role in challenging the school and moving it forward. However, although most governors make regular visits to the school, these do not always have a specific focus and therefore outcomes can only be reported back to the governing body in general terms. This does not provide governors with sufficient information to determine for themselves the strengths of the school and areas for development. With the help of the headteacher governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	470907	Balance from previous year	27451
Total expenditure	478557	Balance carried forward to the next year	19801
Expenditure per pupil	2883		

39. Financial management is very thorough and funds are managed efficiently. Spending decisions are taken carefully and due thought is given to the impact they will have on pupils' education. The careful management of finances enables the school to fund very effective additional support and resources for special educational needs pupils. Continual improvements to the building mean that, in spite of its age, it remains a pleasant environment for pupils to be educated in. Best value principles are applied consistently well to all aspects of school life, ensuring all resources are used efficiently and the school gives good value for money.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good quality teaching promotes effective learning and elicits very positive attitudes from the pupils.
- Pupils read well and communicate effectively with others.
- Pupils write interesting, well-structured stories but the standard of their factual writing is not yet as high.
- Pupils with special educational needs are provided with very well structured and effective support which enables them to make very good progress.
- Standards of presentation are consistently high.
- The subject manager has a clear and secure overview of the subject.

Commentary

40. Year 6 pupils achieved well in the 2004 national tests, reaching standards in English that matched the national average and that were above the average of similar schools. Despite this positive outcome the school was disappointed with the results in writing. The focus of the tests was factual writing and in this aspect of English the pupils, although competent, are not as skilled as they are in the more creative aspects of their work, although the gap is narrowing. This issue is discussed further in a later paragraph.
41. Throughout the school standards of achievement are good in reading and in speaking and listening. By the time pupils reach Year 6 they are skilled in using books to find information and are able to extract key points from their notes in order to formulate further questions. Listening skills are good and at no time during the inspection did a teacher have to repeat information or instructions because pupils had failed to comprehend them. In discussions pupils are confident to give answers and express opinions and sensibly share sensitive issues with each other. When speaking or reading out loud, pupils of all levels of attainment, including those who have special educational needs, do so with clarity and expression.
42. The quality of teaching is good and during the inspection examples of very good and excellent practice were observed. Teachers make very effective use of the beginnings of lessons to find out how much the pupils know and understood and to set the scene for the session. At all times the teachers used praise and encouragement to build pupils' confidence, always making supportive comments, even when the answer was incorrect. Because of these very good relationships, pupils readily contribute to the lessons and feel comfortable enough to point out when the teacher has missed a colon from the text that he has written on the board. As a result of the well-planned and stimulating lessons pupils' learning is good; they achieve well and have very good attitudes to their work. They enjoy being challenged and when working in groups or pairs they do so diligently, supporting each other and being openly appreciative when someone does something well. When asked to read from a text in front of the whole class they do it with confidence and without hesitation.
43. Support for pupils with special educational needs in English is very good and, as a result, they achieve very well. Pupils from Year 6 who had been withdrawn to work with the support teacher were making remarkable progress in structuring paragraphs in order to build up a report. Having constructed their report they read particular paragraphs to the whole group. They read with confidence and with expression, only hesitating at the more complex words such as 'participation'. The activity moved on at a brisk and challenging pace and the teacher had excellent resources to help the pupils in their learning. In all the lessons observed pupils

with special educational needs received sensitive support and were fully included in all the tasks.

44. From Year 3 to Year 6 standards in the presentation of pupils' work are given a high priority. As a result the pupils' books are a pleasure to look at. Letters are formed correctly, words spaced appropriately and care taken in setting out the pages. The quality of the teachers' marking encourages promotes good presentation as the comments not only praise pupils' work but also set high expectations. Displays done by the teachers also reflect the high standards the school expects.
45. Achievement in creative and descriptive writing is good and at times very good. The strong emphasis the school places on this aspect of pupils' writing is paying significant dividends. There are numerous examples in books and on display where pupils have written colourful stories, sensitive poems and created a powerful range of descriptive images. There is every reason to believe that Robert Louis Stevenson would have been proud of the stories written in the style he used. Factual writing, however, has not, until recently, received the same attention and although pupils' writing in this style is of an acceptable standard it is not as effective as in non-fiction styles. The school is well aware of this and a number of carefully considered strategies have been put in place to improve standards. Lessons observed where instructional writing was being taught clearly indicated that the quality was already rising.
46. Subject management is good. The co-ordinator helps the subject to maintain a high profile in the school and has a clear picture of the quality of provision being made for pupils' learning. The systems for checking how well the pupils are achieving are very good and there is a very clear understanding of the future priorities for the subject. Overall there has been good improvement in the subject since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

47. Pupils use their language and literacy skills very well in other subjects. There are excellent opportunities in all subjects for developing speaking and listening skills. Books feature in every aspect of their work and are prominent in every room and there are good opportunities for pupils to develop such skills as note taking, writing and researching. Good use is made of ICT to aid pupils' learning in English and to extend their literacy skills.

MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a well-balanced mathematics curriculum and pupils calculate competently and accurately across all areas of the subject.
- Pupils are taught a good range of calculation strategies but opportunities to extend their mental capabilities are missed.
- Pupils work with enthusiasm and present their work very well.
- Pupils with special educational are provided with very good opportunities to learn.
- Test results are analysed carefully and good use is made of the data.

Commentary

48. Year 6 pupils' performance in the national tests in 2004 was well up to the national average and better than that of pupils in similar schools to Annfield Plain. This year group of pupils contained a number of boys who were particularly high attaining, all of whom attained marks in excess of 90 per cent in the tests. This illustrates the effective way in which teachers identify

pupils capable of high standards and promote their learning. This year's cohort does not have this element and while standards are around the national average, test results are unlikely to be as strong as last year. Even so, this represents good achievement when compared with the standards pupils were attaining when they joined the school as seven year olds. Since 1999 standards have risen steadily and there has been generally good improvement in mathematics since the last inspection.

49. Good achievement is evident in all classes and year groups. Pupils with special educational needs receive carefully structured teaching and support from class teachers and specialist staff. The work they are given is often similar to that of other pupils but modified thoughtfully to provide high but appropriate challenge. Despite working at a level that is often below or at times well below the national average, pupils with special educational needs make significant gains and achieve very well.
50. Pupils learn well because they receive good quality of teaching and are provided with a well-balanced curriculum that stimulates their interest in all aspects of mathematics. They show obvious enjoyment in the subject, apply themselves very well and take considerable pride in their own achievements. Consequently, they develop a good understanding of numbers, a secure knowledge of shapes and measures, and a full appreciation of how to collect and present data in different forms. In certain aspects of the subject the attainment of Year 6 pupils is above average. For example, their understanding of how to interpret co-ordinates is very well developed. Pupils of all ages have acquired the productive habit of laying out their written work very neatly and precisely. This helps pupils to calculate systematically and teachers to identify and respond to any mistakes.
51. Pupils apply standard methods of computation well and many, particularly the higher attainers, calculate with a good level of accuracy. Most pupils choose the correct operations when solving problems and are able to recall a satisfactory range of number facts to help them to calculate. However, when set a problem, many pupils quickly resort to standard written methods or use a similar long procedure in their heads. Only the very highest attainers consider different mental strategies or look for patterns in numbers to give them clues as to how best to proceed. Consequently, when solving problems the majority of pupils work slowly as methods become protracted. Teachers challenge pupils to think for themselves and provide them with good instruction on different ways of working. However, there are times when opportunities to help pupils acquire simple but effective mental techniques, such as how to recognise and use patterns in numbers, are missed. While most elements of mathematics lessons are organised well and there is good pace, the first few minutes, which under the National Strategy for Numeracy are designated for sharp, lively mental work, are not utilised fully. In some lessons this element is absent completely.
52. Subject management is good. The co-ordinator carries out thorough evaluations of the standards pupils are attaining and the progress they are making and from this highlights clearly the areas teaching needs to focus on, in order to address any areas of weakness. For example, problem solving has been correctly identified as a general area in which pupils could do better and the Year 6 teacher has been given details of the aspects pupils found difficult when they took the Year 5 tests.

Mathematics across the curriculum

53. Teachers make satisfactory use of the opportunities other subjects present to extend pupils' learning in mathematics. While investigating in science, pupils make effective use of their numeracy skills to measure, record and interpret numerical data. Adding dimensions enhances the quality of pupils' designs in design and technology and scale and time lines are used to good effect in geography and history. Some links are made with ICT to extend pupils' opportunities to learn. For example, pupils employ a data-handling program to present the information they have collected as a chart or graph and make use of spreadsheets to extend

their number work. However, the range of software available to both teachers and pupils for extension and consolidation of their learning in mathematics is limited.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are taught well and become competent in all aspects of the subject.
- Teachers use questions very effectively to challenge pupils and help them develop a depth of understanding.
- Pupils present their work very neatly and this enhances their learning.
- The school's curriculum covers all areas of science well, although too little use is made of ICT to aid pupils' learning.

Commentary

54. National test results in 2004 and inspection findings show that, by the end of Year 6, standards are above average. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. The quality of teaching and learning is good. This is a similar picture to that found at the time of the last inspection and shows that the strengths reported at that time have been maintained. Pupils have very good attitudes to their learning. This is evident in the pride they show in their work and the way in which they record their scientific investigations and research clearly and neatly. By presenting their work so well pupils are able to recognise the implications of their findings and extract key information easily. The foundation for this good work is laid in Years 3 and 4 where pupils are provided with clear guidance about how to record their work.
55. Pupils' knowledge of key ideas and concepts build well. In Year 3, pupils' good understanding of life processes and living things is clearly evident in the observation records they produce of how bulbs and other plants grow. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are knowledgeable about the essential features of healthy living and understand clearly the components of a healthy diet. In a lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4 the lively approach of the teacher captured pupils' enthusiasm and the good use of questions extended their understanding of the function and care of teeth very well. However, in this lesson higher attaining pupils were not given enough scope to record their findings in their own way and opportunities to extend their independent learning were missed.
56. The theme of healthy living is extended very effectively in Years 5 and 6 with the school bringing in outside presenters to extend the learning opportunities available to pupils. New ideas build successfully on those pupils acquired at a younger age. For example, pupils' understanding of how joints and muscles work is developing well, based on the knowledge of the human body they gained in Years 3 and 4. In a lesson for Year 5, pupils responded very thoughtfully to the challenge of carrying out a fair test to investigate the abrasion resistance of various fabrics. Through good discussion pupils identified the shortcomings in their approach and made sensible suggestions for improvement. Pupils in Year 6 adopted a similarly thoughtful approach, in response to their teacher's skilful questioning when, as part of their work on forces and friction, they considered how to test the quality of grip of the soles of various training shoes. In both cases it was very evident that pupils have a secure understanding of the process of scientific investigation and of the decisions that need to be made to ensure that the data collected is reliable.
57. Subject management is good. The co-ordinator has worked effectively to ensure that a good range of resources is readily available to support pupils' learning well. The school's

arrangements to ensure that all aspects of the science curriculum are covered fully are very good. The planning of the science curriculum ensures that pupils have regular opportunities to successfully investigate, experiment and observe phenomena for themselves and through this first hand learning to acquire new skills and knowledge at a good pace. However, not enough use is made of ICT to support pupils' learning in the subject and pupils do not have a full appreciation of how computers can further enhance their studies.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The provision for Information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory** with a number of good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Leadership and management are very effective and the subject is developing at a good rate.
- Provision is thoughtfully and creatively resourced and the difficulties the accommodation creates are minimised.
- Lessons in ICT provide pupils with a broad range of opportunities to learn but there is insufficient use of computers in most other subjects.
- Pupils recognise the advantages computers can provide for their learning and are enthusiastic about their use.

Commentary

58. Standards in Year 6 are around the level expected for pupils of this age. Most pupils are comfortable in front of the computer and show an appreciation of how it can help them improve their work. For example, pupils explain how text produced on the computer can be quickly altered in content and mistakes in spelling or grammar corrected. This understanding of how computers can help them in different ways helps to give pupils an enthusiasm for ICT and their attitudes to the subject are very positive. The encouragement that teachers give to pupils to write directly onto the computer and to make maximum use of its facilities is a very constructive aspect of the teaching and learning. The knowledge and skills pupils of different ages show represent good achievement, particularly for the significant minority of pupils who do not have access to computers at home.
59. Since his appointment three years ago the co-ordinator has led subject development with enthusiasm, vigour and expertise and the school has made good progress in ICT. The curriculum is broader and better balanced than at the time of the last inspection and much closer attention is paid to the direct teaching of key skills. However, the task is only partly complete and the school recognises that it will take a little more time before all members of staff are teaching whole-class lessons to a high quality. A significant factor in the overall good teaching and learning is the time the co-ordinator takes to teach alongside class teachers, modelling lessons and passing on some of his considerable skill and experience. This was the case in the one class lesson seen during the inspection. After being given clear and detailed instructions, pupils were set the highly challenging task of producing a poster of information about a Roman soldier in which the text was arranged around an imported picture. Because pupils were given a secure understanding of what they had to do and how to achieve it and could set about the task with understanding and confidence they achieved well. By the end of the lesson many had successfully completed the task to a good standard, gaining considerable kudos in the process.
60. The school puts very careful thought into the provision it makes for ICT. The age and structure of the building make it very difficult for the school to designate a specific area as a computer suite. However, with a carefully balanced number of desktop and laptop personal computers, pupils are provided with a viable alternative, which also has some advantages of mobility.

Pupils from all classes have regular access to computers, with the computer club providing extra facilities, particularly for pupils who do not have a computer at home. The school has recently installed its first interactive whiteboard and has two more ready for installation. This has been an instant success with pupils who eagerly use the board in front of the class to demonstrate to others what they know and can do.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

61. The use of ICT is good in English but under-developed in many other subjects. Pupils receive regular opportunities to write in different styles and to record information using the word-processing facilities of the computer. On occasions pupils use the Internet to carry out research in history and use data-handling programs to help their learning about graphs. However, overall, there is too little use of ICT across the curriculum as a whole and particularly in subjects such as science, geography, art and design and music. While pupils can see the benefits that computers bring to their writing, overall they have too little understanding of how ICT can help them learn on a regular basis.

HUMANITIES

There was insufficient evidence to support overall judgements about provision, achievement or the quality of teaching and learning in **geography** and **history** as only one lesson was observed in each subject. Teachers' planning was examined, samples of work analysed and discussions held with pupils.

62. Teachers' planning shows that there is a sufficiently broad range of activities in both geography and history which meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. In discussion with pupils they could recall, and talked with enthusiasm about, many of the studies they had undertaken in both subjects. It was very clear that regular visits to places of interest, visitors into the school and the use of the local environment enhance their knowledge of history and geography well. Displays throughout the school show the very good use that staff make of interesting artefacts and a large number of attractive books and magazines in order to bring the two subjects to life. The two lessons seen were taught competently and one had a number of very good features.
63. An analysis of pupils' work and planning shows that by the time they reach Year 6 they have covered a good range of topics in **geography**. The youngest pupils have done extensive work on mapping beginning with very simple plans of the classroom before moving on to making their own maps and using maps of the locality. The older pupils produce a wealth of work on settlements where they compare and contrast city dwellings with villages and farms. They study transport and how goods are moved through harbours and ports and all this work has direct links with the work they do in history about invaders and settlers. Very effective use is made of the school grounds to study the local weather and to make careful records of temperature, rainfall and the changes in wind direction. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about this work and could explain that when the wind blew from the north in winter snow was a strong possibility.
64. Work in **history** is presented to the pupils in an equally lively and stimulating way. Studies about invaders and settlers by the younger pupils draw on the materials from Durham LEA Learning Resources and makes good use of an historical time line, indicating who came to Britain and when. The work on Victorians by the older pupils is vibrant and exciting and links well with art and writing. A picture of Victorian street across the whole of a classroom wall build pupils' understanding of what it would have looked like and the kind of shops that were there at that time, such as the cabinet maker, drapers and chandlers. An excellent range of artefacts helps pupils to gain the flavour of life in Victorian times and sound use is made of ICT to aid pupils' research. Subject management is good with the co-ordinator being full of

enthusiasm for the subjects and highly knowledgeable. This is a real asset to other staff who benefit from quality support and guidance.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have good knowledge of Christianity and of other faiths.
- Pupils' work in religious education makes a strong contribution to their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are developed well.
- The use of photocopied sheets limits opportunities for writing.

Commentary

65. By Year 6 pupils have attained a standard that is above that normally expected for pupils of a similar age, and are exceeding the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. From Year 3 through to Year 6 pupils are taught well, their achievements are good and their knowledge is secure. The strengths reported at the time of the last inspection have been retained and built upon.
66. In a Year 6 lesson the introductory activity was a question and answer session where pupils challenged each other with well-structured questions. From their response it was clear that the pupils had a good knowledge of Christianity. This was confirmed later in discussions as they talked confidently about Jesus and his disciples, identifying each one by name. They knew many of the stories and parables Jesus told and the major festivals which celebrate his birth and resurrection. Without any prompting, they described what might be found in a Christian place of worship and why the altar would have a cross on it. Knowledge of other faiths is also good. They understand that the founder of Sikhism was Guru Nanak and know about important aspects of Sikhs' worship and how their way of life may differ from their own.
67. Lessons in religious education make a powerful contribution to all aspects of the pupils' personal development. Year 6 pupils are learning about the gift of Jesus to the Christian world and the teacher begins by introducing a gift box and asks what they would like to find inside it. There are some particularly sensitive and moving responses that reveal a great deal about the quality of their learning and their relationships with each other. This very good lesson examines not only issues that relate to Christmas but to the lives, beliefs and aspirations of the pupils. A display of work shows that pupils have looked carefully at how Christian people serve their neighbours and how we make decisions in our lives that affect other people.
68. In the lessons observed a major feature of the teaching was the opportunity given to the pupils to make spoken contributions. Questions were used very skilfully, not only to enable the teacher to find out how much the pupils could remember, but also to give them the chance to present their own ideas and points of view. In a lesson on St Lucia the pupils listened attentively to the teacher's stories and presentation and then during the discussion answered the questions in a way that showed that the religious significance of the story had been understood.
69. Although there is some constructive writing in the religious education lessons, at other times the recording and answering of questions are done on photocopied sheets. When this occurs opportunities where pupils could improve their factual writing with real purpose are missed. Subject management is very good. The co-ordinator's sensitive approach to the subject enables it to make a rich contribution to the personal growth of the pupils.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

No lessons were seen in **design and technology** and only one each in **music** and **physical education**. It is, therefore, not possible to make detailed judgements about the provision in these subjects. Further information was gained from discussions with staff and pupils, teachers' planning and pupils' work. Assemblies provided additional evidence in music.

70. Although there is insufficient information to judge achievement, teaching and learning, inspection evidence shows that the curriculum for **design and technology** provides pupils with a wide range of interesting opportunities to learn. In discussion, Year 6 pupils detail enthusiastically the things they have made and the projects they have been involved in. It was very apparent from the manner in which the pupils described how they went about their work that they had been taught good skills and safe practices. For example, when explaining how they cut wood while making a pop-up model, pupils outlined the correct use of bench hooks and G-clamps, referring to both accurately by name. All aspects of the design and make process are evident in pupils' design folders. Pupils sketch their ideas out in detail, making sensible decisions about dimensions and materials. They construct logical action plans to guide the making process and record accurately any changes they had to make to their original ideas. Pupils' ability to evaluate the things they have made is not as well developed as other aspects of their DT and only the very highest attainers recognise this as a guide to future improvement. The curriculum is enhanced by the school's involvement in a local authority engineering project which sees visitors working with Year 5 and Year 6 pupils to form interesting structures from unusual materials.
71. The school has identified **music** as a subject in need of further development and has taken sensible steps to increase the subject expertise available to pupils. A specialist music teacher is employed to take lessons in Years 5 and 6 each week. This is providing the quality of lessons needed to raise standards. In the one Year 5 lesson seen during the inspection the teaching and learning were good, standards were broadly in line with national expectations and pupils were achieving well. The teacher provided pupils with good opportunities to compose, perform and evaluate their music, using a wide range of untuned percussion instruments. Pupils showed a satisfactory ability to maintain the correct pace and rhythm and to perform together as a band. Singing in assemblies is of average standard, with pupils in Years 3 and 4 singing with greater enthusiasm and quality than those in Years 5 and 6. Pupils report that they enjoy performing their music. Their annual Christmas performances are highly regarded by the community. Opportunities to listen to visiting musicians and to perform at local music festivals are enjoyed and appreciated by pupils.
72. Insufficient lessons were seen in **physical education** to make a detailed evaluation of standards, achievement, teaching and learning. However, there were clear indications that the subject is in good health. During every playtime pupils engage in well-organised games of cricket, football, netball and tennis. The skills they apply when playing these games are above average for their ages. One gymnastics lesson, in Year 4, was observed during the inspection. Standards in this lesson were above average. Two pupils led the warm-up and showed considerable knowledge about how to prepare for exercise. Pupils showed good control of their gymnastics movements. They jumped with energy and amplification and controlled their landings safely. The teaching in this lesson was satisfactory. Pupils were provided with good opportunities to acquire and apply skills, but there were not enough opportunities for them to plan and evaluate their work. The enthusiasm of the subject leader and the support of other teachers, parents and visiting coaches enable pupils to experience an excellent range of extra-curricular sports activities. The school holds the national ActiveMark award in recognition of its very effective promotion of school sport. Clubs, which are open to all pupils, include athletics, association football, cricket, netball and distance running. The school has achieved considerable success in local and national competitions. This includes winning the Durham Schools Kwik Cricket Championship and taking part in the national finals at Trent Bridge, Nottingham. All this is achieved with accommodation that makes the teaching and learning of physical education difficult. The hall is small and irregularly shaped and the playing

field is some distance from the school and in poor condition. It does the school and its pupils immense credit that despite these difficulties they achieve all they do.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The skills pupils need to produce high quality work are taught very well.
- The work of well-known artists is used very well to inspire pupils.
- The school's curriculum covers all aspects of the subject comprehensively.
- Very good links are established with other subjects.

Commentary

73. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well and standards by the end of Year 6 are above the level expected for the age group. This is mainly because the quality of teaching and learning and the coverage of all aspects of the curriculum for art and design are very good and have improved significantly since the last inspection.
74. During the inspection pupils in Year 4 produced pencil sketches of replica artefacts from the period of the Viking invasion of Britain. The standard of these sketches was well above average with pupils making very effective use of line and tone. This quality of work was the result of very precise teaching of sketching techniques by a visiting archaeological illustrator. Pupils were enthralled by a stimulating and unusual opportunity to learn that linked very effectively to their work in history.
75. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 made excellent progress when they produced sculptures, using clay, based on their pencil sketches of human faces. The work of local students was used in the first instance to inspire this work. The teacher's subject knowledge for this aspect of art and design is excellent and the lesson provided an ideal balance of correct and precise instruction of modelling techniques with very good opportunities for investigation and experimentation.
76. Throughout the school very good use is made of the work of well-known artists to inspire pupils. Pupils in Year 6 produce high quality, very colourful, pictures of animals based on the work of Van der Steen, and sketches, using charcoal and felt tip pens, in the style of Hogarth. The work produced by pupils in Year 3 is also well above average. This includes reproducing jewellery in the style of Roman times, using vivid colours to portray the sensations of heat and cold. Pupils are very proud of their work and explain the techniques they use with great enthusiasm.
77. Subject management is very good. The co-ordinator has provided clear curriculum guidance that covers all aspects of the subject very well and ensured that a very good range of resources is available to support pupils' learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

78. Only one full and one part lesson were seen in personal, social and health education and citizenship so no judgement can be made on the quality of provision. The school places great importance upon this aspect of pupils' learning, encouraging them to keep safe and well. This makes a good contribution to the pupils' very good behaviour and relationships. Throughout the school pupils have very well planned opportunities to gain a full appreciation of right and wrong. They discuss maturely such issues as bullying, and look at ways of resolving differences and conflicts. Issues such as sex education and relationships and drugs awareness are included appropriately within the curriculum and taught throughout school.

Other aspects are taught through assemblies, discrete lessons and as an integral part of other subjects. Subject leadership is very good and ensures teachers receive the guidance and support they need.

79. The school's very good ethos and the staff's success in supporting individuals provide a very good model for a successful community. Citizenship is actively promoted. Pupils are given many opportunities to play an important part in helping the school to run smoothly and to improve. The school is good at providing pupils with responsibilities to help them build their confidence and self-esteem. 'Playground Pals' help the pupils to develop a sense of responsibility for others and to value the help that other pupils can provide if they have difficulties at playtime. Pupils express their own views through the school council and develop their understanding of democratic decision making. A strong feature of the school council is the way they are involved in resolving minor conflicts between pupils. Pupils are very good at taking their own initiative to organise and run various activities and sponsored events to raise funds for charity and to contribute to the funding of their own ideas for improving the school environment.

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	4
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	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
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	2
The governance of the school	4
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).