

INSPECTION REPORT

BLACKHALL COLLIERY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Blackhall Colliery, Hartlepool

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114201

Headteacher: Mr M Younger

Lead inspector: Mr R Gill

Dates of inspection: 16th – 18th May 2005

Inspection number: 266440

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:	3 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	340
School address:	Middle Street Blackhall Colliery Hartlepool
Postcode:	TS27 4NA
Telephone number:	0191 5864049
Fax number:	0191 5868352
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr W Greenwell
Date of previous inspection:	21 st June 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Blackhall Colliery Primary School is situated on the coast to the east of Durham. The majority of the 340 pupils come from the immediate locality, but a few travel from further afield. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs, mostly with learning difficulties, is above that found nationally. There are three pupils with a statement of special educational needs, which is below average. The vast majority of the pupils are from families of white British heritage. There are a few pupils who are learning English as an additional language. When they start school, children's attainment is generally well below that of most children of their age. Since the last inspection, the school has gone through a great deal of change and suffered several setbacks. It, like many others in the local area, has been affected by a fall in the birth rate, which has resulted in staff redundancies. Staff illness and absence have had a significant negative impact on the school's budget. A new deputy headteacher and headteacher have been appointed since 1999.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
4074	R Gill	Lead inspector	English History Religious education
13786	S Walsh	Lay inspector	
25352	G Taujanskas	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Music Design and technology Art and design
21243	L Moore	Team inspector	Science Geography Special educational needs
32616	K Crowther	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology (ICT) Physical education English as an additional language

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

3, Harrowby Road,
West Park,
Leeds,
LS16 5HN.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a satisfactory school, which is improving fast and, with very good leadership from the headteacher, has responded well to recent difficulties. The trend in pupils' results in national tests at the end of Year 6 is rising after a period of decline. Pupils achieve satisfactorily, because teaching is sound overall, but good in the nursery and reception classes (Foundation Stage), Year 2, Year 5 and Year 6. Very good aspects, within the satisfactory leadership and management, have created a very positive ethos in which relationships are very good and pupils respond well to high expectations of their behaviour. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- very good leadership by the headteacher and the deputy headteacher has helped the school recover from a very difficult period;
- standards in English and mathematics are not yet high enough;
- pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour exist within a very positive climate;
- some subject leaders do not check thoroughly enough on how well pupils are learning;
- the Foundation Stage gives children a good start to their education;
- teaching does not involve pupils enough in thinking about how to improve their work;
- pupils achieve well in information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education, but unsatisfactorily in design and technology and music.

The school has improved well since its last inspection in June 1999. In particular, the provision in ICT has developed substantially and governors are far more involved in evaluating teaching and the curriculum. The school is recovering well from a period of low morale associated with staff redundancies, high levels of staff illness and absence. Moreover, pupils' achievement has improved despite the recent disruptions, particularly in writing.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	E	E*	C	E
Mathematics	D	E	D	E
Science	E	E	D	E

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average, E - very well below average*

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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The national tests results of 2004 for pupils in Year 6 were average overall. They were below average in mathematics and science and average in English, but pupils achieved well below those in similar schools. Their rate of progress was severely hampered by some disrupted learning in the lower juniors and, despite the much better teaching they received in Years 5 and 6, they could not make up all of the lost ground. In Year 2, pupils' results have usually been well below average in national tests in reading, writing and mathematics.

The judgements made during the inspection show that currently:

- children in the Foundation Stage are not on course to reach the nationally expected levels, except in personal and social development where standards are likely to be average, but they achieve well and improve upon their well below average standards on entry;

- in Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are below average, but average in science. Pupils have achieved soundly, and well in science, to reach these levels;
- standards in Year 6 are below average in English and mathematics, and average in science. Achievement is satisfactory in mathematics and good in English and science;
- pupils attain well in ICT and physical education by the end of Year 6, but unsatisfactorily in design and technology and music.

Pupils' personal qualities are very good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attitudes and behaviour are very good: pupils respond very positively to the school's climate. The ethos, which concentrates on social and moral behaviour, is most influential on pupils' personal development. Attendance is average and punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and very good in the reception class. It is satisfactory overall in Years 1 to 6, but good in Years 2, 5 and 6. There is some unsatisfactory teaching, but the school has a firm grasp on the causes and these are being tackled rigorously. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory, but pupils are not yet involved enough in the targets for their learning. The school looks after pupils well. It works well with parents to enhance pupils' achievements and links very well with the local community. The curriculum is sound and activities designed to broaden pupils' experiences are good. The accommodation is satisfactory and lessons are resourced reasonably well. Teaching assistants have a positive effect on the learning of pupils who have special educational needs.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, who has been very ably assisted by the deputy headteacher, has led the recovery of the school very well. They have had a particular impact on the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils. Governance is good and has improved well since 1999. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties and ensures that the school includes successfully all pupils and promotes racial equality soundly. Senior staff and subject leaders have had a good effect on standards in English, mathematics and science, but in many other subjects there have been too few opportunities for leaders to exert an influence.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are pleased with the school. They appreciate, correctly, the atmosphere in the school and the efforts made to improve it. Pupils have a very good opinion of the school and talk with confidence about their work and personal development. They rightly feel that they are treated as valued individuals.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- improve standards in English, mathematics, design and technology and music;
- develop the skills of evaluation in all subject leaders; and
- involve pupils more in thinking about how their work could be improved.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' attainment in Year 6 is currently below average in English and mathematics and average in science. Pupils achieve well in English and science and satisfactorily in mathematics. By the end of Year 2, pupils are below average in English and mathematics and are average in science. They achieve soundly in English and mathematics and well in science. Children in the reception class are not on course to meet expected levels except in personal and social development, but they are making good progress and achieving well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved in English and mathematics, particularly in pupils' writing, but could be higher still.
- Standards of achievement have been improved in science, ICT and physical education.
- Children in the Foundation Stage are achieving at least well in all areas of learning.
- Attainment is below the national expectation in design and technology and music in Year 6, and achievement is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

1. In 2004, pupils' attainment, as indicated by national test results, at the end of Year 6 was average overall. Results were well below average in Year 2, but pupils achieved satisfactorily compared to those in similar schools. By contrast, pupils in Year 6 achieved well below those in similar schools, because their progress was restricted in the lower juniors and they never fully made up for lost time. Despite some strong teaching in Years 5 and 6 designed to tackle the gaps in their learning, they underachieved and could have done better. Teaching has been consistently better since September 2004 as judged by pupils' improved progress. They are now achieving satisfactorily in English and mathematics throughout the school. Achievement is good in English by the end of Year 6. Standards are still below the national average and in this respect there is further scope for improvement. There is a large proportion of pupils in Year 6 who have special educational needs and this is one reason why standards are not at the national average. These pupils are achieving satisfactorily in a similar way to most other pupils in English and mathematics.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	13.6 (12.8)	15.8 (15.7)
Writing	13.0 (10.5)	14.6 (14.6)
Mathematics	15.8 (15.3)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 48 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.5 (23.3)	26.9 (26.8)
Mathematics	26.6 (25.0)	27.0 (26.8)
Science	28.0 (27.5)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 49 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Attainment in English has been greatly enhanced by improvements in pupils' writing. Many write with confidence, for example using punctuation correctly in relation to their age. Remaining weaknesses, which prevent achievement being better, are associated with a lack of ambition for some higher attaining pupils in Year 1 and some average and higher attaining pupils in Years 1, 3 and 4 not being clear enough about how to achieve higher standards in writing. Pupils speak about the content of their work with confidence, but they are not yet involved in discussing how well they have done and what they could do to improve even further, in relation to any targets set for them. A few teachers, more typically in Year 5 and 6, attempt this kind of dialogue, but it is not common throughout the school.
3. Pupils in Year 6 are currently achieving satisfactorily in mathematics. This is because teachers have concentrated on calculation and arithmetic, but broadened the curriculum to include problem solving. This is more effective in Years 5 and 6 where teachers use electronic whiteboards and can therefore make learning more visually adventurous and stimulating. Teaching groups are organised well so that pupils of similar attainment can work together. This system has been strengthened recently to make sure that pupils were grouped more effectively and make progress at a faster rate.
4. Children in the Foundation Stage appear to be achieving as well as they did in 1999, but the good achievement, at present, is even more significant than it was then. It is only since September 2004 that the nationally recommended curriculum for nursery and reception aged children has been fully implemented. They now play with a real educational purpose in classrooms and outside areas that are meticulously organised for choice and independence. Despite not reaching the nationally expected levels in any area of learning except personal and social development, children are making at least good progress in everything that they do. Occasionally, the peculiar characteristics of the accommodation restrict what they can achieve, but the school already has plans in place to tackle these issues when the Sure Start nursery is opened on the school site in September 2005.
5. Pupils achieve well in science and ICT. These subjects have benefited from improved resources and training for staff. As a result standards are average in science and go beyond them by the end of Year 6 in ICT because pupils have enjoyed more frequent use of computers in the computer room, laptop computers in their classrooms and electronic whiteboards in regular lessons. In science, pupils' skills at investigating and experimentation have been enhanced lately. This has improved standards in all aspects of the subject.
6. Attainment is below expected levels in design and technology and music in Year 6 and meets them in Year 2. This represents unsatisfactory achievement for older pupils. The curriculum is not organised in an even or systematic enough way across the year. Pupils' progress goes in fits and starts. They have gaps in their knowledge and understanding; they cannot recall what has been taught in general and progress in music has been limited by a lack of sufficient instruments to allow a satisfactory diet of experimentation and composition.

7. Attainment meets expected standards in other subjects, but in physical education it is above that normally expected nationally in Year 2 and Year 6. This is because teaching and resources have been so well developed owing to the school's productive links with a Sports Co-ordinators Network. Talented pupils are well provided for in this subject, but they do not achieve well in design and technology and music except at the time of the school's musical production in the summer term. Elsewhere, gifted and talented pupils succeed satisfactorily in general in line with other pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)

Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and behave very well. Their good personal development is helped by good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are very interested in their learning and work hard.
- Very good strategies for promoting good behaviour ensure that behaviour is very good and pupils have very good manners.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- Pupils develop into confident, considerate mature young people.
- Cultural development is satisfactory, but pupils have few opportunities to study the diversity of British culture.

Commentary

8. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are rightly very proud of their school. They are keen to be involved in the life of the school; after-school clubs such as dance and gym are well attended. Levels of commitment are high.
9. Relationships in the Foundation Stage are warm and supportive. Children feel valued and this elicits a very positive response from them. They are very enthusiastic; independence is encouraged and this promotes good learning. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 continue to have very good attitudes to their work. Behaviour is very good and remains so even if, on occasions, the activities are mundane and the pupils are not challenged well enough. Hard work and commitment help older pupils to achieve well.
10. Expectations regarding behaviour are high and staff are firm but fair in the implementation of the school's behaviour management procedures. Very good relationships between pupils and staff ensure that pupils respect staff and want to please them by working hard and doing their best. Pupils of all ages respond very well to the large range of rewards for positive attitudes and academic achievement. They are keen to have their name written in the golden book. Pupils are developing self-discipline and responsible behaviour around school and in the playgrounds is very good. Pupils have very good manners and are very welcoming to visitors. Year 2 pupils behaved very sensibly during an outdoor education trip and the organiser commented on their excellent manners.
11. Pupils report little bullying or fallings out and racism is rare. There are a small number of boys with limited powers of concentration who find it difficult to stay on task. When they are well supported they make good progress, but occasionally when there is insufficient adult support their behaviour can slow the learning of the rest of the class. Generally, these individuals are well managed by class teachers and they are successfully learning to develop their social skills through specific small group work.

12. Spiritual development is good. Through religious education lessons pupils are encouraged to understand a variety of religious beliefs. Tolerance and respect are consistently promoted, as are empathy and compassion towards others. Pupils are encouraged to appreciate the beauty of nature, for example through painting local seascapes or carefully measuring the growth of bean plants. Boys in the Foundation Stage were fascinated as they carefully observed snails. However, pupils have insufficient opportunities to appreciate the beauty of music.
13. The school provides a daily collective act of worship and hymns and prayers are a regular feature of assemblies. Pupils are respectful at prayer and respond particularly well to reward assemblies. Assemblies contribute well to pupils' social and moral development, but are less effective at promoting spiritual and cultural development as the lack of reflection, insufficient use of music and limited pupil involvement can make some assemblies a little dull.
14. Social development is very good. Pupils of all ages are keen to take responsibility and show good initiative. Younger pupils volunteer to help their teachers by carrying out small jobs like tidying reading books, and older pupils become playground 'buddies' where they enjoy providing help and assistance to other children. There are many opportunities for pupils to work together and they are often asked to discuss in pairs, which also develops their speaking and listening skills. There are numerous visits and a residential experience that help pupils to develop their social skills. Pupils develop into confident individuals who relate very well to each other.
15. Moral education is very good. The school provides pupils with a clear moral code regarding behaviour and pupils respond very well. They are keen to get rewards for good behaviour. Staff provide very good role models and there are very good relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils thrive in an atmosphere of mutual respect and learn to think through the consequences of their actions. They develop self-confidence and self-respect but still retain a healthy regard for the needs and interests of others.
16. There are many opportunities for pupils to understand their own local culture. Interesting visits help children understand the history of the area from the Romans and the establishing of Christianity to the more recent mining tradition. Racial tolerance is well promoted in discussion and in a few lessons such as religious education and art there is reference to other cultures. However, pupils have fewer opportunities than usually seen to experience the rich diversity of cultures in modern Britain.

Attendance

17. Attendance rates have improved slowly and are very similar to the national average. Most parents ensure that their children attend school regularly and quickly contact the school if their children are absent. The school is good at monitoring attendance and is aware of a very small number of pupils whose erratic attendance is having an adverse effect on their learning. Punctuality is good; most pupils arrive on time and ready to learn.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2003/4

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.5	School data	0.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

There were no exclusions from school in the last reporting year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a sound quality of education that includes satisfactory teaching and learning. The assessment of pupils' work is adequate overall, but unsatisfactory in one aspect. There is a sound curriculum which is enhanced well by activities beyond the classroom. Pupils receive good care, support and guidance and the school has a good partnership with parents and other schools. The school's links with the local community are very good. The school acts well in seeking pupils' views and acting on them to improve the school.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are sound overall. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching ensures that pupils are achieving well in ICT, and English by the end of Year 6.
- The few examples of unsatisfactory teaching occur in lessons that expect too little of pupils.
- Good teaching in the Foundation Stage enables children to make consistently good progress.
- The assessment of pupils' work is sound, but pupils are not yet involved enough in the process.

Commentary

18. The quality of teaching has improved well since the last inspection and has rallied very well from a period, recently, when pupils' progress was slipping and children in the Foundation Stage got off to a slow start. The proportion of very good teaching has virtually doubled since 1999. This is the result of the injection of vision and expertise provided by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the good use made of advice from the local education authority and the realisation, from all staff, that pupils can reach higher standards. There is some unsatisfactory teaching. This is caused primarily by low expectations and a lack of challenge. These lessons are not symptomatic of a wider failing in teaching and the school has a firm grip on the issues that cause the problem. For example, there are some aspects of teaching in Year 1 that are not allowing pupils to make progress at a fast enough pace. This is already being tackled well by the deputy headteacher who is making sure that planning for lessons contains sufficient rigour.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 44 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	14 (32%)	16 (36%)	11 (25%)	3 (7%)	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

19. There have been many developments in teaching since the last inspection and new teams of staff have been inducted well in methods designed to raise standards. Pupils with special educational needs are taught satisfactorily overall. Their learning is invariably good when they are taught in small groups by trained teaching assistants.
20. Parents and pupils are positive about the way in which teaching has improved since 1999. Successful teaching has several common themes running through it, but the central feature is the way in which lessons involve pupils in purposeful activity that is designed to hasten progress at a fast pace. This kind of teaching is often present in the Foundation Stage where teaching is good overall with very good teaching in the reception class. Here, in particular,

exciting and irresistible activities engage children. The keynote of teaching in the Foundation Stage is the seamless knit between activities taught in a direct way and play activities that are chosen by children and supervised closely by staff so that they can interject at just the right moment to develop an aspect of learning. Children's progress is checked well through regular assessments and carefully kept records. This helps staff to spot, at an early stage, when children need extra help. For example, some children find difficulty in mixing with others and communicating their thoughts and feelings. As a result, special groups have been established to provide quality opportunities for these children to catch up in these aspects.

21. In English learning is accelerated in lessons, which ensure that practice in speaking, listening, reading and writing all play a concerted role in helping pupils to meet their objectives. This is often accompanied by the well-planned use of electronic whiteboards, particularly in Years 5 and 6. The subject expertise of teachers plays a strong part in the process, for example in science, mathematics and ICT. In science and mathematics, teaching has become more versatile in getting pupils to think things through for themselves and solve practical problems. In ICT teaching makes good use of the computers in the ICT room and the laptops that can be set up in classrooms. Pupils are right to be pleased with their achievements in ICT. The improvement in their learning has been good since the last inspection. The curriculum is taught well and the computer room is used effectively. Better teaching has now raised standards to an average level in Year 2 and beyond expectations in Year 6. The older pupils have the added advantage of being able to use electronic whiteboards in their classrooms, which boost learning effectively.
22. Furthermore, successful lessons contain elements of very good conversation between teachers and pupils, for example in religious education or personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). In a Year 1 lesson in which pupils were thinking about the need for rules in school and society, for example, learning was very good because discussion was expertly managed and pupils responded so well in a self-disciplined way.
23. Learning is managed well in many classrooms. They are often displayed with visual prompts designed to stimulate thought and action. The display of pupils' work in many classes generates a great deal of pride in learners and provides good pointers for teaching. Some classes have less pupils' work on display and this limits the general ethos for learning. Pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 are taught for English and mathematics in groups according to their previous attainment. This system is working well, not least for higher attaining pupils, who are achieving at least satisfactorily and well in Years 5 and 6.
24. Good aspects of leadership and management have ensured that all classrooms and lessons have this atmosphere of purposeful teaching and learning. This rubs off on pupils and their attitudes and dedication to learning are very good. This is even true in the few unsatisfactory lessons.
25. Learning is satisfactory and pupils are achieving soundly, partly as a result of the good assessment methods that have been introduced, particularly in the Foundation Stage, English and mathematics. Teachers know where pupils are up to in their learning and what they need to do next. Moreover, the planning of lessons is influenced positively by the information that teachers gather about pupils' learning. The involvement of pupils in talking about their learning – how good it is or how it needs to be improved – is, by comparison, the weakest aspect of the school's methods of assessment. Work is well marked in English with teaching providing useful targets for improvement, but this is not the case in other subjects. Teachers provide useful comments and some ideas about what needs to be improved. The good work in English is not yet part of a consistent strategy, across the school, to inform pupils of their next steps and to involve them fully in the process of improvement.
26. The rapid improvements in pupils' learning in English and mathematics have absorbed a great deal of the school's energy. Much has been achieved in a short time. The school, rightly,

acknowledges that some aspects of pupils' learning remain undeveloped such as in music and design and technology.

The curriculum

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum, with good opportunities for enrichment. The accommodation is good and the provision of resources is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The nursery and reception class have a very good curriculum.
- Teachers plan good links between National Curriculum subjects and visits in order to make learning interesting and relevant.
- The grouping of pupils in literacy and numeracy provides a good curriculum.
- Not all subjects are covered in sufficient depth or regularity to ensure progression in knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Noisy heaters adversely affect learning in many classrooms and the halls.

Commentary

27. The curriculum is satisfactory from Years 1 to 6 and it is very good in the nursery and reception classes. The Foundation Stage curriculum is very well planned to enable children to experience a wide range of interesting, relevant and imaginative activities. Activities are closely matched to children's needs. Staff make very good use of both indoor and outdoor areas, catering for children's different styles of learning.
28. The school makes good use of documentation provided by the local education authority as guidance for each year group, in Years 1 to 6, on what should be taught in each subject and this includes an approximate time allocation to ensure balance. This structure is intended to ensure that the pupils are provided with a broad range of activities that satisfactorily develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in all aspects of the National Curriculum and meet the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. However, the actual taught curriculum does not consistently follow this outline in some year groups and there is an uneven balance between subjects with, for example, insufficient coverage in music and design and technology in some classes. This is most apparent in Year 6 when a concentration on National Curriculum tests at the beginning of the year results in other subjects, such as music, being bunched up at the end of the summer term. Skills are therefore not taught in a step-by-step fashion throughout the year and this means that pupils' progress is hampered and unsatisfactory in design and technology, for example.
29. The school has developed a satisfactory programme for personal, social and health education that reflects the needs of its pupils, including appropriate coverage of sex education and information about drugs and alcohol abuse. Pupils have equality of access and opportunity and receive appropriate help and support in preparation for secondary school.
30. There is satisfactory curriculum provision for pupils who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Teaching staff have drawn up good quality individual education plans for pupils who have special educational needs, which include appropriate targets to be addressed in lessons.
31. Teachers skilfully include links between subjects when planning lessons, in order to make learning interesting, relevant and enjoyable. For example, Year 6 pupils read a play script about Edward Jenner's discovery of the smallpox vaccine, linking reading, role-play and history into their scientific learning. They found this exercise interesting and, as they were actively involved in the lesson, remembered more about the topic afterwards.

32. Teachers provide appropriate work for pupils of different year groups who are working within the same class. In literacy and numeracy, the good use of grouping pupils by attainment allows teachers to provide suitable support and challenge for pupils' different needs. Good use is made of the high quality support assistants in these lessons to enhance provision. Although the team of support staff are knowledgeable and dedicated to the pupils in their care, there are not currently enough support assistants to ensure sufficient support in the core subjects for all pupils who need this and this affects their overall achievement.
33. The curriculum is enhanced by the good use of visits to interesting locations and visitors to the school, which provide valuable experiences for the pupils and develop their learning from class lessons. The school provides a good range of sport and dance activities outside the school day and pupils enjoy greatly the annual production of a musical play at the end of the summer term.
34. Accommodation is good. The school's large and rambling building is in various stages of repair and decoration. However, it is kept clean and well cared for by the hard-working caretaker and team of cleaners. The school's strategic plan includes a rolling programme of appropriate improvements, including window replacement, roofing, internal decoration, ICT developments and extensive improvements to the Foundation Stage section of the building to incorporate the planned Sure Start provision. Noisy heaters adversely affect learning in many classrooms, where it can be very difficult for pupils to hear answers or presentations by other pupils; in the school halls, the noise from the heaters is so intrusive that it affects the atmosphere of reverence which teachers try to introduce during acts of worship.
35. The staff have made very good use of all available space and very attractive displays make the building welcoming and encourage good learning. The school's extensive grounds are well tended and show great potential for further development. Learning resources are good in English, ICT, religious education and physical education, but are unsatisfactory in music. This affects pupils' progress in music.

Care, guidance and support

Pupils receive a good level of care. The school guides and supports them well. It is very good at listening to and acting appropriately on pupils' views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are looked after well in a caring environment.
- Pupils' views are considered very important.
- Academic work is checked soundly, but pupils are not always helped to assess their own work.

Commentary

36. The school provides a caring setting in which pupils can learn. A significant effort has been made to provide an attractive and safe learning environment. The provision of new toilets is appreciated by pupils and reflects the school's commitment to high levels of care. Proper regard is paid to health and safety and the school has a good level of expertise in matters of child protection.
37. Pupils receive high levels of personal support and a close eye is kept on them, particularly the vulnerable ones. Good induction procedures in nursery and reception classes ensure that children settle in quickly. Relationships are very good. Pupils who need to improve their social skills are taught very well in small groups. Academic progress is tracked soundly and the

school employs a range of useful methods to support pupils at risk of underachieving, but pupils are not fully involved in considering how they might improve their work.

38. Very well designed questionnaires about school life are completed by pupils regularly and this gives senior staff a very good feel for what pupils like and what they would like to change. In addition, pupils are pleased that the headteacher often chats to them about what they would like to see improved. As a result changes have been made to the organisation of playtimes and the provision of play equipment. Pupils know that their views matter and this contributes to the development of high self-esteem.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school enjoys good links with parents and other schools and colleges and very good links with the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Extensive local visits greatly enrich pupils' learning.
- Involvement in the local Excellence Cluster is enhancing links with other schools.
- Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their children's learning, but annual written reports for pupils in Years 3 to 6 do not reflect accurately enough pupils' individual strengths and weaknesses.

Commentary

39. Relationships with parents have improved and a concerted effort is being made to enhance parental involvement especially in the Foundation Stage where significant improvements have been achieved. Parents feel very comfortable about approaching the school and value the efforts that are made to support their children. They generally encourage their children to do well and a good number of parents help on trips and visits and provide useful extra support in the classroom. An active parents' group has been established who are involved in fund raising and organising social activities for the pupils. Regular questionnaires to seek parents' views and the appointment of a parental involvement co-ordinator reflect the school's commitment to fully involving parents in their children's learning. For example, plans for the learning of pupils who have special educational needs are informative and parents are involved well in how their children are progressing.
40. The information parents receive is satisfactory. Good quality regular newsletters help parents form a clear picture of the busy life of the school. Parents have some reservations about the information they receive concerning their child's progress. In addition to two parents' evenings, one at the beginning and one at the end of the year, parents are generally informed if problems occur especially concerning their child's behaviour. Annual written reports for younger pupils are of good quality and clearly inform parents about what their child knows, understands and can do. Last summer's reports for Year 1 children contain particularly good quality summaries of pupils' academic achievements and personal development. Reports for pupils in Years 3 to 6 are computer generated; they are often impersonal, being very similar for different children. The summary of personal development better reflects a pupil's individuality. It was stated in the previous report that parents were concerned about the quality of reports and they have not improved sufficiently in Years 3 to 6.
41. Links with the local community are very good. There is a strong partnership with a local health forum and a lunch club has been established where pupils and older local residents dine together. This has resulted in pupils being involved in further local initiatives to promote healthy living such as the fruit given away at the harvest festival. The local community is now better represented on the governing body. The school makes very good use of local resources

and there are many exciting visits that make history, geography and art lessons more interesting and relevant.

42. The recent very active involvement in Peterlee Excellence Cluster has enhanced links with other local schools, and links with other schools and colleges are now good. The school is open, outward looking and keen to learn from others. Communication with the main receiving secondary school and other local primary schools has been enhanced. Pupils particularly enjoy being taught German and French by teachers from the local secondary school. The school has very good sporting links and takes advantage of activities available in the local sporting community; for example, Year 2 children have just taken part in an exciting day of outdoor activities arranged by local sports co-ordinators.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher, supported very well by the deputy headteacher, is very good. Management is sound overall. Some subject leaders manage and lead well, but others lack the opportunity. The governance of the school is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Senior leadership is beginning to have a very positive effect throughout the school.
- Governance has a more influential understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses than was the case in 1999.
- The teaching in some subjects has not been checked fully as part of a comprehensive system of review.
- Restrictions in the school's budget limit the way that resources can be managed.

Commentary

43. The school has experienced some challenging circumstances since its last inspection and, by virtue of the very clear sighted leadership provided by the headteacher, is recovering strongly. School development was knocked off course, over a three-year period, partly by high levels of staff absence and illness. The effect of this was compounded by the falling birth rate, locally, and by the consequent process of redundancy for teachers, which has sapped morale. Furthermore, the head and deputy headteacher are new in post and the school now has a newly promoted senior management team, whose purpose is to play a dominant role in raising standards.
44. Parents are proud that, during the school's troubled period, a very positive ethos has been maintained. For example, pupils' good behaviour has remained a strong feature of the school, despite a significant minority that find it hard to control their emotions. The efforts to achieve harmony absorbed the school's energies and, as a result, standards remained too low for several years. The new headteacher made it a priority to improve standards and there has been good progress in this respect.
45. The process of raising standards has been tackled successfully on several fronts. The Foundation Stage comprising the nursery and reception classes has been radically upgraded, through very good leadership and management, to make sure that children get the best start possible. High quality educational play is firmly incorporated into learning and the school now keeps a very close track on children to make sure that they are making at least good progress throughout the two years. This kind of enhanced provision has only been in place since September 2004, but it is already having a significant effect on children's education and the aspirations of staff, further up the school, who can see how much more progress children can make when they enter Years 1 and 2. The school has also concentrated on remedying weaknesses in the curriculum. Provision for literacy, in particular writing, has been developed

very well. Good use has been made of advice from the local educational authority in improving the way pupils' work is marked, the expectations of what they can achieve and the way in which they are involved in targets for further improvement. These innovations are good models for other subjects, but there has not been time to use them.

46. The provision for pupils who have special educational needs is good in the Foundation Stage, but satisfactory overall. On the occasions when pupils are withdrawn for special help they often make very good progress. The teaching assistants are very capable and well trained. Pupils greatly enjoy the extra help that they receive and make speedy progress in academic and social ways. The school has doubled the number of its assistants in the last two years so that now there is an average amount of support for teachers and pupils. However, budget restrictions have meant that the pool of staff to help in regular lessons cannot, currently, be enlarged in line with the above average proportion of pupils who need it. Nevertheless, the management for these pupils on a day-to-day basis, within the current capacity, is good.
47. Subject leaders manage and lead with enthusiasm and sometimes have a good grasp of their subject. However, beyond English, mathematics, science and ICT subject leaders have not had many opportunities to check on teaching, learning and pupils' achievements. This means that they are not well placed to judge overall provision or decide how best to improve their subject. The school recognises that this is an area for improvement, but has wisely concentrated on the core subjects, the Foundation Stage and ICT in the first instance.
48. Governors are closely involved in all developments and take an active interest in pupils' progress. Their work has been strengthened well since the time of the last inspection. They speak with authority and insight about the school's achievements. Statutory duties are implemented in full, including the provision of a racial equality policy. There is an appropriate policy for sex and relationships education and for drugs' awareness. Governors have an outward-looking approach that compares the school with others in a similar position.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	859,831.47
Total expenditure	865,061.65
Expenditure per pupil	2450

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	2935
Balance carried forward to the next	-5230.18

49. Finances are managed well. The negative balance is due to temporary issues related to staff illness and absence and this affects the amount of resources available in some subjects, such as music. Spending on pupils is about average and value for money is sound because pupils achieve satisfactorily.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good overall and has improved well since 1999. Children start nursery on a part-time basis when they are three years old and move into the reception classes for full-time education the following year. Only a few children have attended other settings such as playgroups, and many come into nursery with no experience outside home. Children generally start nursery with attainment well below that expected of children of this age. They make good progress and achieve well in all areas of learning, with very good progress in personal, social and emotional development in which most children will reach the nationally expected levels for their age by the end of their year in reception. The good, and often very good, teaching is conducted by two experienced teachers and their well-trained assistants.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children become confident, enthusiastic and well-motivated.
- Staff provide very good role models, helping children to form positive relationships.
- Children quickly become independent learners.
- Staff have high expectations of behaviour.

Commentary

50. As a result of the very good teaching and learning in this area, children achieve very well and most are on course to reach the expected goals by the time they leave reception. They are confident and eager to learn. They listen carefully to instructions about planned activities. Most children find their own resources, such as wellingtons for going outside, and settle quickly to a chosen activity, persevering with it for good lengths of time before choosing something else. Relationships are very good, and children readily turn to adults for help or advice or to tell them something interesting. For example, children brought in items from a visit to the seaside to show on Monday morning. There are high expectations of behaviour and of the expected standards of courtesy and respect. As a result children behave very well. They feel comfortable and ready to learn and as a result achieve very well.
51. Teaching is very well focused on developing children's independence through well-planned activities and interesting and exciting experiences. The classrooms are well organised so children can find and choose activities for themselves. All adults are quick to spot when children need help to further their learning, for example, fetching a picnic basket when children said they were cooking outside. Teaching in the reception class engages children very well and creates a great sense of excitement and enthusiasm about the activities.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Speaking and listening skills are given high priority in all activities.
- Teaching provides a very good quality environment with lots of letters and words for children to recognise and learn from.

- Good opportunities to practise writing are provided at all times.
- The design of the nursery class sometimes limits learning.

Commentary

52. Teaching and learning are good and, as a result, most children achieve well. They are not on course to reach the nationally expected level by the end of reception, but their progress is good. Children are presented with a good range of opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. Staff talk to children about all the activities, helping to develop their vocabulary. Reading is given a high priority and children have good opportunities to choose and read books in class, as well as at planned story times. Staff usefully group children for story time so stories more closely match children's needs. Parents give valuable support by helping with reading sessions and with changing books. Classrooms are full of the printed word, on displays, labels and in everyday activities, such as instructions. As a result children learn the importance of the written word.
53. Opportunities to practise writing are always available, and in the nursery children find special 'light up' pens and enthusiastically try to 'write' their names, some with clearly recognisable letters. Children in reception copy write and learn how their words look in print. Some begin to write sentences themselves, checking the word bank for spellings, but only a few higher attaining children can manage this.
54. The good teaching goes a long way to compensate for children's limited previous experiences. Teaching in the reception class is often very good and provides children with a rich and stimulating environment for learning on which they thrive. Despite mainly good teaching in the nursery class, the design of the classroom works against very good learning. For example, although there are plenty of books in nursery, the layout of the room does not ensure that children always notice them.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planned and informal activities provide many interesting opportunities to practise counting skills.
- Children use different resources to make all sorts of patterns.

Commentary

55. Children achieve well in response to the good quality of teaching and learning; most are not on course to reach the expected goals by the end of the reception year. A good range of activities helps children to understand that numbers correspond with objects. They practise these ideas well both orally and on paper. Nursery children sing a range of rhymes and songs with models, which help them to think about how many are left. Higher attaining children, primarily in the reception class, can add numbers together such as five and three to make eight. They also know some higher numbers. For example, they count proudly to 100.
56. The good teaching is characterised by well-organised activities that capitalise on children's curiosity. Water and sand play, both wet and dry, encourage children to fill and empty large and small containers and learn to use words such as 'full' and 'empty'. Computer programs are used effectively to enhance learning. Table-top games are used to help children learn in a fun way, both indoors and out, such as the matching game with large wooden dominoes. Children make patterns using cubes and with paint such as repeating red and green dots. Bold displays help children to recognise numbers all around the classrooms, in 'washing lines'

and on the 'bus', and to sort and measure, such as the birthday charts for both four and five year olds. Short whole-class teaching sessions for the older children are very effective, well paced and energetic, so children practise counting skills regularly. Very good teaching finds informal ways to introduce numbers into many activities. For example, children were helped to count the number of snails on table in the garden. This resulted in children declaring, "We need more."

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-planned topics help children to learn about things in the past and the world around them.
- Colourful and well-organised classroom displays help to reinforce children's learning. Not particularly evident in text.
- Some awkward permanent fittings in the nursery classroom make it hard for staff to spot the right moment to teach a specific point.

Commentary

57. Most children will not reach the nationally expected levels by the end of their reception year, but their achievement is good. Many opportunities allow children to build and construct, using a range of materials. For example, there are lots of baking and cooking activities. Children are delighted to show the jellies they have made and are eating for a snack, some from filled orange skins. They learn successfully at first hand about how materials can change when mixed and heated or cooked.
58. ICT is used well in learning. Children are confident when working at the computer, using the mouse to control the games they play. Older children have, for example, used a drawing program and drawn their faces and those of their families in various colours. Topics are used effectively to help children understand the world around them. 'Under the sea', the current topic, enables the development of early scientific skills in naming various creatures and their habitats.
59. Good teaching helps to extend children's learning. Teaching assistants, for example, are particularly good at asking children questions, while they are playing, to prompt learning. For example, one child looked at a globe and said she would find Blackhall, so staff helped her narrow it down to England and then the north east area. It is sometimes difficult for staff in the nursery to conduct such impromptu teaching because the classroom is designed in a way that makes it hard to monitor the needs of all children at any one time.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have good chances to use construction and malleable materials.
- The outdoor area, adjacent to the nursery class, provides good chances for imaginative and physical play.
- The opportunities for outdoor play for reception children are less well developed, so they have fewer chances to practise their skills.

Commentary

60. Most children are not on course to meet the expected goals by the end of the year, but they achieve well as a result of the good teaching they receive. Children in the nursery benefit from regular daily chances to play in a large outdoor area and they relish this time. Children can, for example, ride large toys and develop their sense of balance and control.
61. There are plenty of opportunities for children to practise using tools and equipment, which helps to improve hand-eye co-ordination and manipulative skills. The water tray, often filled with colourful water, provides lots of chances for children to fill and empty containers. This gives children in the reception class a mathematical knowledge of capacity as well as skills of physical co-ordination.
62. However, outside the reception classroom there is a fairly small quadrangle which cannot provide for the full range of physical play. Children use the school hall fairly regularly, but overall facilities are not as effective as those in the nursery class.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good opportunities are provided to experience a broad range of materials.
- Role-play areas provide rich opportunities for imaginative play both indoors and out, but children's limited ability to talk imaginatively prevents very good progress.
- Children enjoy singing and exploring sounds.

Commentary

63. Most children are not on course to reach the expected goals for their age by the end of the year. However, their achievement is good as a result of the good quality of teaching and learning that exists. The children's limited capacity for fluent speech used in an imaginative way limits their progress, but good teaching compensates for this well.
64. Children enjoy working with a range of materials. For example, they use chalks to draw on the outdoor walls and pencils to draw. Moreover, children make bold and imaginative paintings; they handle clay and work it successfully with a range of tools.
65. Imaginative play is undertaken regularly. Children are encouraged to invent games for themselves and their friends. Plans for these games are often hatched while children sit and chat on the bench in the nursery playground. Imaginative teaching has provided an underwater 'cave' in the reception class that attracts and enthrals children, who make up a wide variety of games in it, throughout the day.
66. Children sing traditional and more modern songs often using numbers, such as 'Five speckled frogs', with props for the frogs. There are good chances to explore sounds in the outdoor area; for example, reception children regularly bang and tap the various household items hanging on the 'washing line'.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is well led and managed in ways that are raising standards of achievement.
- There is some very good teaching in Years 5 and 6 that is speeding up pupils' progress.
- Teaching provides too few opportunities for pupils to evaluate their learning.
- There are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and marking in Year 1.
- Teaching assistants deliver effective programmes to help pupils who have special educational needs.

Commentary

67. The 2004 results, in national tests, were average at the end of Year 6 and well below them in Year 2. This is not usual as far as Year 6 is concerned. Usually, since the school has suffered its setbacks, pupils at the end of both years have attained well below average results and could have done better, particularly by the end of Year 6. Even in 2004 the average results in Year 6 were not a true indication of pupils' capabilities owing to the disruptions they experienced in previous years. Their rate of progress slowed considerably within the lower juniors and did not recover fully despite the good teaching they received in Years 5 and 6.
68. The school's work in tackling these issues is beginning to pay off. Currently, standards are below average, but pupils are progressing satisfactorily overall with an upswing in Year 2 and in Years 5 and 6, where there is good and sometimes very good teaching of writing that has put pupils' achievement back on track. Achievement is now satisfactory by the end of Year 2 and good by the end of Year 6. The achievement of the very small group of pupils who are learning English as an additional language is good overall since the teaching in the Foundation Stage and Year 6 has a particularly positive effect on their learning.
69. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. The improved provision in English, to a satisfactory level, stems from good leadership and management that have increased teachers' ability to strengthen pupils' writing. Some effective methods are used that help pupils appreciate the need for quick and accurate work. For example, they complete weekly one piece of work in a set time. Progress in this activity is good in terms of sentence construction, spelling, punctuation and the use of paragraphs. Pupils' learning is enhanced because teachers' marking has improved considerably: it is accurate, helpful and broadly consistent across the school, except within Year 1 in which there is a lack of consistency between the two classes. Marking is most effective in Years 2, 5 and 6 and as a result pupils demonstrate very good attitudes towards their work in these classes. In Year 2, for example, imaginary letters from Snow White to the dwarves were lively, entertaining and contained appropriate punctuation including well-placed apostrophes. In Year 6, some superb examples of extended writing are displayed with pride. They contain eye-catching images such as "Pain surrounded me like a vice", showing just how much pupils like writing for an audience.
70. The effect of teaching extends beyond pupils' writing. Reading is taught in a very organised way, for example in Year 2 in which pupils concentrate intently because teaching is so precise and clear in its intentions. Letter sounds and word recognition are taught effectively in Years 1 and 2 and teaching assistants play a strong role in providing for pupils who need extra help. By the end of Year 6, pupils relish reading parts of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example, and discussing how the text differs in its impact from the film.

71. The setting of targets for pupils to achieve in their writing is becoming commonplace and this is having a positive effect on the quality of pupils' work. Many pupils have targets stuck in their exercise books and are clear about what they mean, but this system does not yet apply to reading and consequently pupils are less clear about what their next steps are in this aspect. Lessons generally contain lively discussion in an atmosphere of good humour. The weakness is that pupils are not often required to discuss how well they have achieved in relation to any targets set for them. Pupils who have special educational needs are taught as well as other pupils in the class, but consistently well in the withdrawal groups provided for them. However, those pupils capable of harder work are not taught consistently well in all classes. For example, in Year 1 their progress is spasmodic and depends too much on the individual teacher and not enough on consistent planning and its implementation.
72. The two subject leaders have been active in making sure that the subject has made good progress since the last inspection. Learning has been re-established well after the school's difficult period. The assessment of pupils' work and the use made of the findings have improved well since 1999. Moreover, the weaknesses in the lower juniors are being tackled and pupils' progress is beginning to pick up momentum. The pupils love talking about the 'Writer of the Week' award. It adds an extra dimension to the development of pupils' skill that is valued by parents and pupils.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

73. Pupils use their basic skills of reading and writing satisfactorily in other subjects. Some work, particularly in Years 5 and 6 is good. For example, they write accounts in history that include personal observation about the information, which shows the good development of critical thinking. Equally, in Year 2 pupils wrote with interest about their trip to Beamish Museum and are beginning to answer questions about the past in a clear and well-ordered way. Elsewhere, despite using ICT well for writing pieces of work, achievement is satisfactory overall. Most pupils write factually but do not go beyond that in terms of a personal perspective or evaluation.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is good in Years 5 and 6 due to the high expectations of staff, coupled with a challenging, broad and balanced curriculum, but standards are below average.
- Assessment is satisfactory, but pupils are not well informed about how they need to improve.
- Leadership and management have improved the subject well since 1999.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes.

Commentary

74. Over the past few years, the results of the national tests for pupils in Year 6 have often been well below the national average and below average for pupils in Year 2. Results were just below the national average in Year 6 in 2004. Similarly, current standards are below average throughout the school, but pupils are achieving satisfactorily overall and well in Year 2 and Year 6.
75. Pupils make good progress in arithmetic in Year 2, but not so well in other aspects of the mathematics curriculum. For example, there are too few opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills to solve problems. In Years 5 and 6 pupils progress well because of high expectations of teachers coupled with a challenging, broad and balanced curriculum that

balances factual knowledge well with problem solving. The rate of progress made in Years 5 and 6 is good, but does not quite make up for the loss of momentum suffered by pupils in lower years owing to weaker teaching and staff absence. This means that pupils capable of above average standards might not reach them, but these difficulties are largely resolved and pupils show very positive attitudes to their work in mathematics. As a result, their behaviour is very good and they are able to maintain their concentration for lengthy periods of time.

76. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. When teaching and learning are particularly good, as in Years 2, 5 and 6, lessons are brisk and well planned, which results in pupils making good progress. In a Year 2 lesson, in which pupils recalled pairs that make 20, there was good recapitulation of learning objectives throughout the lesson by the teacher, coupled with effective questioning, thereby consolidating pupils' learning. In such lessons, good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their mathematical vocabulary by explaining the methods they have used to the class. Opportunities for discussion as the pupils work together in pairs and small groups would enable pupils to make further progress in their learning.
77. Where teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise and where planning is thorough, as in Years 5 and 6, teachers are able to explain and demonstrate new mathematical ideas to pupils. Pupils in these year groups are clear about what they are to learn and what is expected of them during lessons. Appropriate and different work is undertaken by different groups. There are occasions when teaching is unsatisfactory, as in a Year 1 lesson, where work was inappropriate for pupils and concepts were too difficult to understand.
78. There is a satisfactory match of support staff to the curriculum. Teaching assistants are often used to teach small groups of pupils who have special educational needs. When this is the case, teaching is often very good and pupils learn well. Opportunities are provided for pupils to use ICT to support their learning, as in a Year 6 lesson on equivalent fractions, where the teacher made good use of the interactive whiteboard to reinforce pupils' understanding.
79. The subject leader plays a central role in the good improvement made since the previous inspection. Leadership has the drive, enthusiasm and capacity to ensure sustained improvement. Procedures for planning and the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress are developed satisfactorily. However, information about what pupils need to do to improve their learning is not always conveyed clearly enough; they are sometimes unaware of the targets they are working towards.

Mathematics across the curriculum

80. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to practise their calculations in other subjects. For example, in science, pupils in Year 6 make careful measurements during investigations and use the information to create graphs to record their findings. Mental calculations are conducted in history to provide a sense of chronology and pupils make careful measurements in design and technology, although there is not frequent enough practice of this skill in Year 6.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good, but lesson evaluations and the marking of pupils' work are not detailed enough.
- Pupils achieve well throughout the school, but on occasions, higher attaining pupils are not given challenging enough work.

- Leadership and management of the subject are good and have improved the subject since 1999.
- Pupils have very good attitudes and behave well.

Commentary

81. Pupils' attainment in Year 6 tests in 2004 was below average. However, standards have improved gradually since 2002, with fluctuations in overall results being directly related to the number of pupils in each year group having special educational needs. Standards in the current Year 6 and Year 2 are in line with the national average in all aspects of the subject, including scientific investigation, which has been a focus of recent development. For example, pupils in Year 6 have a good understanding about micro-organisms and understand terms such as 'contagious' and 'anti-bacterial'.
82. Achievement is good. The majority of pupils, including those having special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, achieve well throughout the school, due to the support they receive from their teachers in lessons. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve particularly well due to the high quality of the teaching in these year groups. Throughout the school, achievement is predominantly good in practical and investigative lessons, where the pupils can learn by their own experience. For example, in a Year 1 class, pupils were encouraged to look carefully at and gently touch their growing runner bean plants, before drawing them on their growth chart. The pupils were captivated by the way their plants had changed since the previous lesson and their exclamations of "Wow!" and "It's really big!" indicated their excitement when experiencing the miracle of growth for themselves.
83. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with very good teaching in some classes within Years 1, 2, 5 and 6. Teaching and learning are better in practical lessons, where pupils can experience for themselves the focus of the lesson. Most teachers skilfully incorporate links with other subjects into their science lessons, making them more relevant to the pupils' experience. For example, Year 6 pupils learnt about Edward Jenner and brought history into their scientific learning. Pupils have very good attitudes towards their work, behave well and enjoy their lessons. This indicates a significant improvement since the school last measured pupils' attitudes in a questionnaire earlier this year, which showed a negative response to science.
84. In the less successful lessons, when teachers ask their pupils to record what they have learned, many give them photocopied worksheets which are unimaginative and of indifferent quality. This affects pupils' progress, particularly the higher attainers, because it results in a loss of interest and a lack of challenge. The achievement of higher attaining pupils is reduced in lessons where their work is insufficiently challenging. Teachers often employ the method of giving all the pupils in the class the same task to complete and then giving additional support to lower attaining pupils. However, not all lessons provide extension activities or ask challenging questions of the higher attaining pupils, resulting in a lower rate of achievement by this group of pupils.
85. Leadership and management of the subject are good, particularly in the way that the curriculum has been organised to ensure balance and coverage across the school. Scientific investigation has rightly been identified as an area for development. Staff training has had a positive effect upon standards in this area. Despite not being able to check on teaching and learning directly, the subject leader has developed a good overview by scrutinising teachers' planning and pupils' work. Improvement since the last inspection is good, but some aspects of assessment are unsatisfactory. Although there is a satisfactory structure to measure what pupils know at the end of each unit of work, teachers' evaluations at the end of lessons do not provide sufficient information to help them plan appropriate work for pupils' different needs in

future lessons. Similarly, although most work is marked, teachers write very few comments to help pupils know how well they have done and how to improve.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and help pupils to achieve well.
- Standards are above average by the end of Year 6.
- Improvement in ICT has been very good since the last inspection
- Pupils are not informed well enough about how they could improve their work.

Commentary

86. Standards in Year 6 are above those expected for their age and in line with them in Year 2. This represents good achievement and a very good improvement since the last inspection. Resources have been radically up-graded in the form of a well-equipped room for computers and several electronic whiteboards being used well in classrooms. Each class has a weekly timetabled session in the computer room and this is used effectively by teachers to develop basic skills. Successful leadership and management have made sure that all staff have received training to develop their expertise and confidence in teaching the subject. As a result, they are able to explain and demonstrate new ideas and techniques precisely so that pupils are clear about what they are to learn and what is expected of them. This was evident in a very good lesson for pupils in Year 6 on learning how to present information on John Lennon. Owing to the teacher's expertise, pupils made very good progress in their understanding of the use of computers. Standards were above average because pupils were so versatile at presenting, on the computer screen, information that they had found.
87. Lessons are planned and managed well to maintain the pupils' interest and concentration. As a result, pupils have a good work rate and are productive. Moreover, there is strong emphasis on pupils working together in pairs on computers, which makes a positive contribution to their personal and social development. Teachers with electronic whiteboards in their classrooms use them well to enhance pupils' learning. Teaching assistants are deployed well in lessons so that all pupils receive a high proportion of direct teaching. This is an important factor in the good progress that pupils make.
88. The subject leader has a clear view of the subject's strengths and weaknesses, which has enabled the school to develop a well-defined plan of action for taking the subject forward. This includes timetabling the use of the computer room to allow pupils to make good use of their ICT skills in other subjects. This was highlighted in a good lesson in the suite by a Year 3 and Year 4 class where pupils discovered information on the Internet about the weather.
89. The curriculum is planned well so that all strands of the subject are effectively covered. Assessment procedures need to be further improved to provide a better recording system to track pupils' progress. Furthermore, evaluations of pupils' learning are not always shared with them, which lead to pupils being unsure of the targets they are working towards. Pupils show a lot of interest and enjoyment when working on computers. They are very well behaved and keen to improve their skills. This has a beneficial effect on the progress they make and the standards they achieve.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

90. There are good opportunities for pupils to use their ICT skills to support and enhance learning in other subjects. Pupils use the Internet well as a means of researching information in subjects such as history, geography and religious education. Pupils are also able to use their word-processing skills to help add interest to their writing in English.

HUMANITIES

91. Only one lesson was observed in geography and history respectively, therefore it is not possible to make a judgement about provision in these subjects. However, pupils' work was evaluated and discussions were held with the subject leaders and pupils.
92. Standards in **geography** are in line with national expectations in Years 2 and 6 and achievement is satisfactory. The curriculum is taught in appropriate blocks of work and is linked well with other subjects to ensure the relevance of topics. Pupils have positive attitudes, behave well and generally enjoy their lessons, but there is little evidence to show that pupils' independent learning skills are being developed. This indicates a lack of improvement since the previous inspection, which criticised the school for not consistently enabling pupils to develop their own independent learning skills through individual and group research.
93. Pupils attain standards in **history** by the end of Year 6 that are in line with the national expectations, which represents sound achievement. The one lesson seen in Year 6 was taught well. Pupils were generally keen to think about life in the 1950s, '60s and '70s. They watched a video, discussed in groups and looked at pictures to gather information about John Lennon and the formation of the Beatles. The curriculum is enlivened well by a trip to Beamish Museum in Year 2, for example, and visitors, such as an actor in Viking costume or the use of laptop computers to search the Internet. Pupils in Year 6 spoke very animatedly about an exciting project on the Greeks, but their written work does not incorporate evidence from a range of sources, thereby stretching the capabilities of higher attainers. The subject leader manages the curriculum reasonably well, but has too few opportunities to evaluate standards and pupils' achievements.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils know many useful facts about religion, but some lack opportunities to reflect on them in terms of their own lives.
- Good quality resources, artefacts and interesting visitors are used to enhance learning.
- There is no formal system of assessment by which to judge the extent of pupils' achievement.

Commentary

94. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and they are achieving soundly. For example, they know a lot about the Bible, particularly the parables. Pupils wrote a modern day version of the Good Samaritan depicting the victim as a football supporter, for example. On another occasion they wrote their own parable with an entirely modern theme such as safety on the railways. In this way they acquire knowledge about religion and judge the meaning for their own lives, which is an element of the subject that is largely missing from the written work in other classes.

95. Pupils in Year 2 attain average standards and achieve satisfactorily, but they often lack time to think about how the subject matter is relevant to their own lives. In Year 1, pupils studied the difference between Durham Cathedral and their own local church in Blackhall. This series of lessons had been energised by visits to churches and visits made by local clergy. Pupils made stained glass windows that depicted stories about St Cuthbert, for example. They found this difficult because there had not been enough discussion about how windows told a story and how this might apply to their own lives. They knew more about the facts relating to the places of worship, such as the name of a rose window, and not enough about the people who worshipped there and what they might feel like in that situation.
96. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but sometimes very good when learning about a religion incorporates a spiritual, moral and social dimension. This was evident in a very well taught lesson in a Year 3 and 4 class. A Sikh story was so well told and considered, that pupils developed the idea of tolerance to a level that had a considerable beneficial effect on their personal development. Pupils are often very interested in the topics being studied. The story of Joseph and his coat of many colours, in Year 2, was greatly enjoyed as was the dramatic role-play that accompanied it. However, discussion tended towards factual recall rather than an exploration of the feelings that Joseph might have experienced. Part of the problem associated with discussion in lessons is the noisy heaters in some classes that prevent an easy flow of conversation.
97. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. There has been sound progress made from the time of the last inspection when some lessons were not planned well enough. The good level of resources in terms of books and artefacts has been maintained and this allows a wide and varied curriculum to be taught: Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism, for example. Lessons are planned well enough now, but it is in Year 6 that the most work has been accomplished in making sure that pupils absorb and consider religious ideas from their own perspective. The syllabus is firmly in place. The lack of a formal system with which to assess the standard of pupils' work is a shortcoming that prevents the school from judging how well pupils are achieving and putting in place activities to promote better progress. As a result higher attainers are often given the same work as other pupils. Moreover, the checking on teaching at first hand has not yet been undertaken, to the detriment of the subject leader's knowledge about pupils' learning.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

98. Only one lesson was observed in physical education, design and technology and music respectively. Two lessons were observed in art and design. Therefore, it is not possible to make an overall judgement about the provision in these subjects. However, pupils' work and teachers' assessments were evaluated. In addition, discussions were held with the subject leaders and pupils.
99. Standards in **art and design** are average, which represents satisfactory achievement. Pupils in Year 6 can talk about their experiences, such as visiting the nearby beach to make sketches to bring back to school and paint seascapes. Pupils use pastels and charcoal with which to draw, resulting in some eye catching pieces of work such as the drawings of shells and pot plants that are displayed around the school. By contrast, pupils know little about famous artists and their works, with the notable exception of Andy Goldsworthy's sculptures. While the school holds creative weeks each term to support learning in the arts, these rely on staff's individual expertise in the main. There are missed opportunities to use professional artists or talented crafts persons from the locality.
100. Standards in **design and technology** are below average by the end of Year 6, but meet requirements in Year 2. This represents unsatisfactory achievement overall. Pupils enjoy designing photo frames in the lower junior classes and they produce articles closely linked to their original designs. However, the curriculum is not implemented sufficiently well in the

higher year groups to ensure pupils gain the skills they need before the end of Year 6. The school has a very limited budget and this is apparent in the tools for design and technology where the class shares one hot glue gun which is only used under supervision. The co-ordinator has no chances to monitor the effect of teaching and there has been no training for staff since the previous inspection on aspects of the subject.

101. Standards in **music** are below average by the end of Year 6. This represents unsatisfactory achievement overall. Pupils have limited musical knowledge and recall of previous lessons. In Year 6, the teaching of music is saved for after the National Curriculum tests. Pupils are excited about the prospect of performing the musical *Joseph* at the end of term. This is a worthwhile experience for the whole year group, but it will not adequately cover the music curriculum which pupils have missed. There are no extra-curricular music clubs or groups. This means there are no ways for pupils to extend their musical experiences outside lessons. Some pupils are chosen for brass lessons in the juniors, which clearly benefits those who participate. Although the co-ordinator monitors planning there are no chances to monitor, at first hand, the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Resources are limited and rather old. Little has been spent on instruments and other resources in the past few years, and this means there are too few resources available for teachers to deliver whole-class lessons successfully.
102. Standards by the end of Year 6 in **physical education** are above those expected for their age. This represents good achievement. Pupils can take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and are also able to work with a variety of coaches to develop their skills in sports and activities such as dance and gymnastics. There is good involvement in competitive sports with other schools. Many of these activities have been built up by the competent and enthusiastic subject leadership, whose work has had a positive effect on provision, particularly as a result of the school's involvement in the School Sports Co-ordinator project and the judicious use of a variety of grants and New Opportunities funding. In recognition of the quality and extensive range of activities, the school has gained the ActiveMark Gold Award. In the one lesson observed, the expertise of the teacher led to pupils in Year 6 making very good progress in the quality of their dance skills. Resources for the most part are good, but pupils lack a varied range of gymnastics equipment.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE)

Too few lessons were observed in this area of the school's work so a judgement on overall provision is not possible.

Commentary

103. Achievement is satisfactory. The school places importance upon promoting PSHCE through specially planned lessons, discussion times, assemblies and opportunities for pupils to influence decision-making and help others, but there are variations in the quality of provision from class to class. In Years 1 and 2, teaching is satisfactory overall. It is sometimes very good, as for example in a Year 1 lesson about why there have to be rules, in which pupils became increasingly aware about what is right and wrong.
104. PSHCE lessons often make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, particularly in Years 1 and 2. There is strong development of social skills, sharing opinions and good regard to safety. Lessons in religious education often make a good contribution to pupils' personal and social development. There is some repetition in pupils' learning especially in health education with pupils being frequently taught about teeth. Moreover, lessons concerning drug education are sometimes similar in Year 2 and Year 6. In

Years 3 to 6 there are few planned personal and social education lessons and little work is produced; however, there are frequent discussions in class about PSHCE matters.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
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	3
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
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	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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