

INSPECTION REPORT

HEATHFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Broadway, Darlington

LEA area: Darlington

Unique reference number: 114204

Headteacher: Mr D A Hayllar

Lead inspector: Ian Nelson

Dates of inspection: 24th - 26th January 2005

Inspection number: 266984

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 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	424.5
School address:	The Broadway Darlington
Postcode:	DL1 1EJ
Telephone number:	01325 252144
Fax number:	01325 252010
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Horton
Date of previous inspection:	19 th April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a large primary and Nursery school for pupils from 3 to 11 years of age. It serves an area of mainly private housing, but also attracts pupils from areas of significant social deprivation. Around 60 per cent of pupils now come from beyond the school's immediate area. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. Eighty-nine (89) pupils have special educational needs, which is broadly in line with the national average. These needs are mainly moderate learning difficulties. Fourteen (14) pupils have statements of special educational need, which is above the average. There has been a special relationship with Beaumont Hill Special School since 1992, with pupils joining those at Heathfield for lessons. The school is also involved in the Leadership Development Strategy. Pupils come from mainly white British backgrounds; there are a few pupils of Asian descent. There are three traveller children on the school roll. Fewer than 2 per cent of pupils speak English as additional language, and only one is at an early stage of acquiring English. Nineteen (19) pupils joined and 27 left the school other than at the start of the school year, which is broadly average. However, around 30 per cent of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils did not begin their schooling at Heathfield. Children start in the Reception class in September or January, depending on their date of birth. The skills and knowledge children have when they are admitted to the Nursery lie within a very broad range but overall are below average, particularly those of boys. The school has gained the following awards in recent years:

- Active Mark 2004.
- Investor in People 2003.
- School achievement award 2002.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2220	Ian Nelson	<i>Lead inspector</i>	Information and Communication Technology; Religious Education.
1104 1	Marvyn Moore	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
2562 3	Ted Cox	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Art and Design; Music; Physical Education.
3131 9	Dot Hunter	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Geography; History.
1976 5	Pauleen Shannon	<i>Team inspector</i>	Foundation Stage; Special Educational Needs; Mathematics; Design and Technology.

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school. The headteacher leads it very well and provides a very clear long-term view for its future, a view which is shared by staff and governors. Pupils achieve well and standards in mathematics and English are above average by the end of Year 6, although, in the main, girls gain better results than boys. Teaching and learning are good overall, except in religious education, where they are inconsistent across the school. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher provides very good leadership and a very clear vision for the future of the school.
- Governors and staff are very successful in their commitment to including all pupils in the whole life of the school, with the result that pupils, including those with special educational needs (SEN), achieve well in their learning.
- Teaching and learning are good overall across the school, so standards in English and mathematics are above average by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning, their behaviour, and their relationships with each other and with the adults with whom they are work are very good.
- Children in the Nursery get a good start because teaching is consistently very good.
- The school has very good links with parents and good links with the community and other schools.
- Too few boys attain the higher levels in English, mathematics and science.
- Provision for religious education is inconsistent across the school, with pupils in some classes not achieving as much as they might, while others achieve well.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The school has successfully tackled the key issues from the previous report, so that governors are now much more actively involved in the school. Provision and standards in information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 3 to 6 are much better; there is a coherent school improvement plan and all statutory requirements are now met. There have been improvements to the building, to the quality of the reports to parents on how well their children are doing, and to systems for giving pupils more responsibility and taking note of their views on school issues. Achievement of pupils in religious education in Year 6 is not as good as at the time of the last inspection.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - in the top 5% of all schools; 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.

Overall achievement is good and standards in English and mathematics are above average by Year 6, while standards in science are broadly average. Pupils make good progress between the tests they take at the end of Year 2 and those they take in Year 6. When children enter the Nursery many lack the skills and knowledge expected of their age. Despite good teaching and achievement in the Foundation Stage, most enter Year 1

without having attained the goals expected of pupils of their age. The admission arrangements mean that some children get more time in the Foundation Stage than others, and this affects results in Year 2. Pupils make good progress and achieve well throughout Years 1 to 6. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading, mathematics and science are broadly average and standards in writing are below average. Pupils with SEN also achieve well, because of the good support they receive. Girls attain higher standards than boys throughout the school; too few of the boys reach the higher levels in the national tests. Three-quarters of the pupils with SEN are boys and this affects the overall standards they attain. Pupils whose home language is not English, and those from ethnic minority backgrounds, achieve as well as other pupils in the school. Pupils achieve well in ICT and attain average standards by Year 2 and Year 6. Achievement in religious education is satisfactory overall, but patchy across the school. Standards by the end of Year 6 are in line with the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good. Pupils' attitudes to their work are very good and they behave very well in lessons and around the school. They take very seriously the responsibilities they are given. They have very good relationships with each other and with the adults in the school. Attendance rates have been improving and are about average. However, they are affected by parents taking pupils on holiday in term time. Punctuality is very good, because pupils enjoy coming to school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good overall. There is some excellent teaching at Year 1, and for pupils with SEN. However, teaching and learning range from excellent to unsatisfactory. The best teaching and learning are in English and mathematics and the least consistent teaching is in religious education. The activities and experiences the school provides to help pupils to learn are good, and they meet all the requirements of the National Curriculum and the Agreed Syllabus for religious education. The overall quality of care is satisfactory, with some distinct strengths. Links with parents are very good and links with the community, including other schools, are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The part played by the governors is now good, and this represents an improvement since the last inspection. They ensure that the school meets its statutory requirements. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the future of the school, which he shares with staff and governors. The school has a clear view of its strengths and areas for development and knows what it needs to do to improve further. It has very good management systems to ensure that it runs smoothly and efficiently on a day-to-day basis.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have very positive views of the school. Parents feel very welcome in school and are very comfortable in approaching staff with concerns or ideas. Pupils feel very safe and secure in school. They appreciate the way staff take their views seriously, and also the fact that systems have been put in place, like the school council, to enable pupils to have a say in the running of the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise the attainment of boys in English, mathematics and science, particularly at the higher levels.
- Improve the consistency of provision in religious education across the school to the level of the best teaching and learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall achievement is **good**, though the changing nature of the school intake has led to overall standards in English, mathematics and science declining slightly over recent years.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils, including those with SEN, achieve well in their learning.
- Girls attain higher standards in the annual national tests in Year 2 and Year 6 than do boys.
- Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 are above average.
- Achievement in ICT by Year 6 is much improved since the last inspection.
- Pupils in Year 6 do not achieve as much as they should in religious education.

Commentary

1. When children enter the Nursery, many lack the skills and knowledge expected of their age. At the time of the last inspection attainment on entry was average, so this represents a change in the nature of the intake. Despite good teaching and achievement in Nursery and Reception classes, most enter Year 1 without having attained the goals expected of children of their age. This is partly because the admission arrangements mean that those children born in the summer months have less time in these classes than those born in the autumn. Generally, girls start in the Nursery with more skills and understanding than do boys and, although all children progress well in Foundation Stage, this gap is still present when the children enter Year 1. When given tasks to check their abilities on starting school, the children score least well on knowledge and understanding of the world, literacy, and numeracy, although girls do better than boys. The Nursery and Reception staff work closely together to ensure that Reception work builds on skills acquired in the Nursery.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.8 (16.3)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	13.9 (14.3)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	15.6 (16.5)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 60 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. By the end of Year 2, the pupils' standards are judged to be broadly average in reading, mathematics, science, ICT and religious education, and they achieve well in their learning. Standards in writing are below average mainly because of the proportion of boys who find writing difficult. In the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2004, standards in writing and mathematics dipped below average, mainly because nearly half of the pupils in the year group were summer born, had less time in school than those born in the autumn, and did not attain the standards expected of their age by the end of Reception. Standards in reading were average. Standards compared with those of schools that have a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals were average in reading but well below average in writing and mathematics. However, the school's records of how well pupils are doing shows that these pupils actually achieved well from a low starting point. Girls did better than boys in the national tests, because far more boys than girls have special educational needs which affect their overall attainment, even though they achieve well. The boys do less well at the higher levels than the girls.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.1 (27.4)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	27.8 (29.1)	27.0 (26.8)
science	29.2 (29.7)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 59 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Achievement is good overall in Years 3 to 6; pupils attain above average standards in English and mathematics, and average standards in science, ICT and religious education. Progress in English and mathematics is helped by:

- * Teaching pupils in sets according to their ability.
- * Grouping pupils of similar ability within the sets, so that tasks are well matched to their learning needs.
- * A range of practical and interesting teaching styles that motivate pupils.
- * Regular checks on what pupils have learned and what they need to learn next.
- * Setting clear targets for groups and individuals.

These measures led to standards in the 2004 national tests being above average in English and mathematics compared with those of all schools. Compared with their results in the tests they took at Year 2, these pupils achieved well in mathematics and very well in English. Standards in science were average compared with those of all schools, and pupils achieved well from the levels they achieved at Year 2. Standards over the last four years, compared with those of similar schools, have been above, or well above, average in English, mathematics and science, except for the 2001 English test, when they were average. Standards and achievement in ICT have improved since the last inspection because teachers are more confident, have better resources, and motivate the pupils with the activities they set. Achievement in science is good overall. It could be even better if lessons allowed pupils more opportunities to plan and carry out their own investigations within the given theme and there was less use of uninspiring worksheets. Achievement in religious education is good across the school except at Year 6, where the pupils' books show very little work and teaching seen ranged from satisfactory to unsatisfactory.

4. Overall, standards in the national tests in Year 2 and Year 6 have dropped over recent years. This is because the school is attracting increasing numbers of pupils, around 60 per cent, from beyond its normal catchment area, some from areas of significant social deprivation. It is also attracting increasing numbers of pupils with SEN. Around three-quarters of the pupils identified with SEN are boys and this leads to boys attaining less well than girls, even though their achievement is good from such a low starting point. The school has analysed test results according to the areas that pupils come from to show the impact of the changing nature of the school roll. This analysis shows that pupils achieve well, but that the skills and knowledge they have on starting school are declining.

5. Pupils with SEN achieve well because the school makes good provision for them. The children in the inclusion class, where pupils from Beaumont Hill and Heathfield work together, achieve very well. The excellent commitment to including all pupils in the whole life of the school, whatever their ability, ethnic or social background, means that all pupils are well supported and helped to do their best. Consequently, pupils whose home language is not English and those from ethnic minority and traveller families achieve as well as other pupils in the school.

6. Too few lessons were seen in art, design and technology, history, geography, music and physical education to be able to make judgements on achievement. Where work was

seen, standards were broadly average for the age of the pupils, with some above average art work in evidence.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good. Pupils' attitudes to their work are very good and they behave very well in lessons and around the school. They take very seriously the responsibilities they are given, and have very good relationships with each other and with the adults in the school. Attendance rates have been improving and are about average. However, they are affected by parents taking pupils on holiday in term time. Punctuality is very good, because pupils enjoy coming to school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour create in them a strong desire to learn.
- The school sets high expectations for pupils' conduct.
- Provision for the spiritual development of pupils is good, and that for their moral, social and cultural development is very good.

Commentary

7. Pupils develop into thoughtful and reflective young people because the school makes good provision for their spiritual development. This includes:

- * Themed acts of collective worship, with time for quiet reflection.
- * Visits to places of worship such as local churches and Durham Cathedral.
- * Lessons in religious education and circle time that encourage pupils to discuss matters of importance to them and others.
- * Lessons in art, music and English when pupils get the opportunity to reflect on the works of great artists, writers and musicians.

8. Pupils behave very well, are productive in lessons, and are very willing to be enterprising and take responsibility. They enjoy their learning and are very interested in school life. For example, in a very good Year 5 ICT lesson, pupils worked very well together to programme controlled devices. Pupils are very polite, well behaved and keen to show visitors around their school with pride. At lunchtime and break times pupils behave extremely well. In the playground, pupils of all ages play well together, with older pupils befriending younger ones. There is a complete absence of vandalism and graffiti and the school is virtually litter free. This is because the school makes very good provision for pupils' moral development. The behaviour policy is readily understood by pupils, and the school expects them to conduct themselves very well. The few school rules are drawn up in consultation with pupils and are understood and respected by them. Rare cases of bullying are promptly addressed by staff, and the school is a safe and secure community where pupils feel valued.

9. Relationships among pupils, and between them and adults, are very good. Pupils are socially mature and responsible. They are pleased to be elected as school councillors, and to take charge of the school registers, look after reception at lunch time, help in assembly, and greet new arrivals. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development because of the strong emphasis placed on this area of learning in Nursery and Reception. The school makes very good provision for pupils' social development by:

- * Arranging trips out of school to places of interest.
- * Taking Years 5 and 6 on a residential visit.

- * Giving pupils the opportunity to exercise responsibility and take part in the decision-making process through the school council.
- * Encouraging a healthy lifestyle, including sensible eating and exercise habits.
- * Supporting pupils' desire to raise money for local and national charities.
- * Teaching pupils about personal safety with the help of outside agencies like the emergency services.

10. Pupils appreciate very well their own cultural heritage and that of others because the school is very successful in promoting pupils' cultural development. They study the works of great artists, including Matisse, Cézanne and Van Gogh, and produce work in similar styles. They listen to a wide range of music and have opportunities to play instruments and sing together. Pupils study works of literature in their English lessons. They enjoy visitors to the school such as artists, potters, poets and authors. Pupils learn to appreciate other cultures through geography, art, history, religious education and literacy. One example was where they celebrated a day where each class carried out activities from a different country, which deepened their understanding of other cultures.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.7	School data	0.2
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.

11. Attendance, at 94.2 per cent, has been improving year by year and is satisfactory. The school does not automatically authorise absence. However, a small number of parents take pupils on holiday in term time, although the school actively discourages them from doing so. The school has satisfactory procedures to promote attendance; it has introduced a system to contact parents on the first day of a pupil's absence if the parents do not contact the school with an explanation that morning.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Asian
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
349	5	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
3	0	0
7	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
5	0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

12. There have been two fixed term exclusions, which took place during the previous year. These exclusions were given for very good reasons, in line with the behaviour policy, and are well documented.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education is good. Teaching, learning and assessment are good overall. The activities and experiences the school provides to help pupils to learn are good, and they meet all the requirements of the National Curriculum and the Agreed Syllabus for religious education. The overall quality of care is satisfactory, with some distinct strengths. Links with parents are very good and links with the community, including other schools, are good.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment is **good**. In the lessons seen during the inspection, teaching ranged from excellent to unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in English, mathematics and ICT is consistently good.
- The effective use of assessment information in English and mathematics helps teachers to set work at different levels for different ability groups.
- The teaching in the Nursery is consistently very good.
- There is some excellent teaching in Year 1 and with pupils with SEN.
- Teaching and learning in religious education are very variable.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 51 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (8%)	21 (41%)	18 (35%)	7 (14%)	1 (2%)	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.

13. At the time of the last inspection teaching was said to be good overall, but unsatisfactory in ICT in Years 3 to 6. Assessment was judged to be satisfactory and improving. The quality of teaching has been maintained as good. The school has improved its systems for checking how well pupils are learning, particularly in English and mathematics, so that overall assessment is now good.

14. Teaching seen in the Nursery was consistently very good and that in the Reception classes was good. Teachers provide a good range of activities to encourage the children's personal, social and emotional development, achieving a good balance between teacher-directed tasks and those chosen by the children themselves. This helps the children to settle quickly into school routines and to develop independence by learning how to choose between activities. The support staff work very well with teachers throughout the Foundation Stage to ensure that all children are helped and cared for well. The activities are all firmly based upon the requirements of the Foundation Stage, and upon very good records of how well children are developing. This ensures that all children are given tasks that are well matched to their abilities and move their learning on effectively.

15. Teaching and learning in Years 1 to 6 are good overall, but teaching ranges from excellent to unsatisfactory. Consistently excellent teaching was observed in a Year 1 class. This stems from confidence with the subjects being taught and the teacher's knowledge of what each child needs to do to move the learning forward. Tasks are very well planned for groups of different abilities, so that all pupils are challenged by their work but also get the

right amount of support to succeed. Consequently, pupils are very motivated and keen to take part in discussions and activities throughout lessons. Excellent teaching was also seen with the inclusion class, where pupils with

SEN from Beaumont Hill work with Heathfield pupils. The teacher had such a good grasp of each pupil's needs that she was able to keep all the pupils motivated and enthusiastic throughout the lesson, which she accomplished by providing the right balance of challenge and assistance. As a result, these pupils achieved very well in this lesson.

16. The single unsatisfactory lesson was in religious education in Year 6. There was too little opportunity for pupils to discuss ideas among themselves. Consequently, the pupils did not achieve as much as they could have done with more innovative and inspired teaching. This contrasted with some very good and excellent teaching and learning in religious education, when the effective use of pictures, artefacts and words enabled teachers to convey knowledge and information to pupils in lessons in Year 1 and Year 3.

17. The teaching of English and mathematics is good throughout the school, and often very good. In Years 3 to 6 pupils are taught in sets according to their ability. Within the sets, tasks are planned for groups of different abilities so that all pupils are given work that challenges them and they achieve well. Teaching in ICT was also good and at times very good. Pupils enjoyed using the interactive white board, and the confidence of teachers ensured that pupils learned basic skills quickly and effectively.

18. Teaching of pupils with SEN is good throughout the school. Very good use is made of support staff in and out of lessons. Teaching is always lively and practical. As a result, children are highly motivated and keen to learn. Additional focused sessions by the school's special needs teacher are effective in building on pupils' skills and further developing their self-esteem.

19. The school has good systems for checking how well pupils are learning in English and mathematics. These are used to allocate pupils to sets according to their ability, to set targets for individuals and groups of pupils, and to plan tasks at different levels so that all pupils make good progress. In other subjects, the systems are not as refined or rigorous as those in English and mathematics. There is little evidence of work being set at different levels of difficulty for different groups, even when groups are identified as learning faster or slower than others in the class in a particular subject.

The curriculum

The school plans a **good** range of activities and experiences to help pupils to learn. The school covers all the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education, and there is a good range of after-school activities to promote effective learning.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Good provision for the Foundation Stage gives children a good basis for future learning.
- The wide range of out-of-school activities, interesting visits, sport, and support for learning outside the school day contributes very well to pupils' achievement.
- The school makes good provision for pupils with SEN, and this helps them to achieve well.
- Opportunities are missed to develop skills from one subject through lessons in others.

Commentary

20. The children in the Foundation Stage, including those with SEN, benefit from a good number of adults to help them to learn through carefully planned, enjoyable activities, with the result that they make good progress. The quality and range of most activities and experiences planned for Years 1 to 6 have improved since the last inspection, especially in ICT, where provision is now good.

21. Learning activities are planned to provide pupils in classes in the same year group with similar experiences and to ensure that they build upon previous learning as they move through the school. The newly appointed assistant headteacher is leading a review of planning in order to develop a more integrated and interesting approach to learning, but this is still in its early stages. For example, there is no cohesive overview of the links between different subjects and there is limited opportunity for pupils to develop independence in their learning. Consequently, opportunities are missed to consolidate learning from one subject through using it in another. In science, for example, the over-reliance on worksheets prevents pupils from developing their literacy skills.

22. Staff have worked hard to include themed days, visits and visitors as regular activities to excite and motivate pupils. For example, monumental brasses are brought into school for pupils to use when learning skills in brass rubbing. Visits are made to the Oriental Museum, and there is a commitment to the arts promoted by ensemble visits linking history and music. Year 6 pupils spoke enthusiastically about trips to Beamish and Bede's World, which focused on history and geography. The school teaches French and Spanish, and pupils visit the local French market to extend their knowledge and understanding of the language and culture. French and Spanish are offered in after-school clubs.

23. Pupils take part in a good range of out-of-school activities that contribute to their learning and give them good opportunities to work and play with pupils of different ages. The school has achieved the Active Mark for sport, and boys and girls are involved in activities such as netball, athletics, cricket, basketball, football, table tennis and badminton, successfully taking part in many tournaments.

24. There is a good musical tradition, and pupils are offered opportunities to learn the recorder and to sing in musicals and concerts. Brass, woodwind and keyboard instruments are also taught, by teachers from the local education authority. The well-structured personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is supplemented by pupils' involvement in the local environment, and the school is working towards Eco School status. In addition, the school has close links with the local church, which aids pupils' learning and cultural development.

25. Provision for pupils with SEN is good. They have full access to learning, both in lessons and in out-of-school activities, and the school's links with Beaumont Hill School are very effective in promoting pupils' attainment and achievement. Occasionally, when pupils with SEN are withdrawn for additional support, they miss out on parts of other lessons, such as science. While they benefit from the extra support in English, their achievement in the subject they miss is adversely affected.

26. The school has recruited an appropriate match of teachers and support staff. The relatively new headteacher has developed a cohesive senior management team, who work closely with the rest of the teaching staff and the teaching assistants to make a positive contribution to pupils' learning and achievement. The school's accommodation and resources for learning are good. The amalgamation of the two former schools into one has provided extensive space and there are clear plans to develop this to good effect. The grounds are attractive, well maintained and well used to support pupils' learning. The school enjoys a good level of resources for learning.

Care, guidance and support

The overall quality of care is **satisfactory** and has some significant strengths. Staff know their pupils well and pupils feel safe and secure in school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good access to well-informed support, advice and guidance.
- Induction arrangements are very good.

- The school has very good arrangements for seeking, valuing and acting on the views of pupils.

COMMENTARY

27. The school offers a satisfactory standard of care for pupils' welfare. Health and safety and child protection procedures are satisfactory. The school does not have its own child protection policy but has adopted the policy of the local education authority, which has not been updated since 2002. However, a new policy is in the process of being created and will shortly be ratified by the governing body. The headteacher is the child protection co-ordinator and will shortly attend child protection courses and arrange to train all staff members. Regular health and safety inspections take place, and accidents are correctly recorded. The school has an appropriate number of staff qualified in first aid. Risk assessment is in place throughout the school and for school visits. The fire alarm is tested regularly and fire drills take place at appropriate intervals.

28. Pupils interviewed during the inspection week confirmed that they feel that staff care for them and they know who to go to for help, guidance and advice. The school makes good provision for pupils with SEN; individual education plans (IEPs) are well constructed, with focused practical targets, and parents are involved in annual reviews.

29. The school provides a very high level of support, advice and guidance for its pupils. Staff regularly check pupils' academic and pastoral progress, and meet on a regular basis to discuss any problems pupils may have. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) is a trained counsellor, and pupils with pastoral problems or difficulties go to her for advice and are very well supported.

30. The school is very successful in involving pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views. The recently formed school council is a lively forum where pupils decide agendas, chair meetings and take minutes. Staff have adopted a council recommendation to create a school house system, and each class is responsible for drawing up individual class rules. Pupils spoken to during the inspection week confirmed that their views were valued and taken into account.

31. Induction arrangements are very good. Nursery staff visit children in their homes before they join the Nursery. Parents have ample opportunity to visit the school and all parents are given a comprehensive welcome pack, which includes games, toys and full information on the school's policies and procedures. Reception children start school for mornings only for the first few days, and parents are allowed to stay with their children initially if they wish. As a result of the sensitive and structured induction arrangements, pupils make a very good start to their school life.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are **very good** overall. Parents are very satisfied with the school and hold it in high regard. Links with other schools and with the wider community are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Information to parents about the school and how well their children are doing is very good.
- The school has good procedures to ensure satisfaction and to deal with complaints.
- Links with the community, and with other schools and colleges, are good.

Commentary

32. The school enjoys the full confidence of parents and carers, and this is demonstrated by the fact that the school is fully subscribed and is attracting increasing numbers of pupils from beyond its immediate area.

33. The majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire believed that their children are making good progress, and that teaching is good. They feel that children behave well, and that they as parents are well informed about their children's progress and are comfortable about approaching the school. The inspection findings agree with all these positive views.

34. Parents' evenings are held each term. At these, parents have ample opportunity to meet class teachers and obtain full information on the progress of their children. Annual reports contain detailed information on pupils' progress, on what they have studied in each subject, and on sensible targets for improvement. The school sends out information at the beginning of each term on what pupils will cover, and the headteacher and staff are available at all times to see parents if they have any worries or concerns regarding their children's progress.

35. The school prospectus is a well produced document in a 'parent friendly' style, which gives a good deal of information about the school, its policies and procedures. A termly newsletter informs parents and the community of forthcoming events and news and views about the school. The school regularly carries out surveys of parents' views, asking for their opinions on a variety of issues, and responds actively to their suggestions. Parents are informed of a formal complaints procedure, which is based on the local education authority guidelines. The school has a website, which provides a large amount of information for parents.

36. The headteacher and staff make every effort to include parents in their children's learning. The school is planning to arrange courses to enable parents to help in this way. Parents are made aware of the school's homework policy and are actively encouraged to come and help in school; a very large number do. They hear pupils read, help in classrooms, give talks on their life experiences and help supervise pupils at lunchtimes and breaktimes.

37. The Friends of Heathfield School is a very active association to which all parents belong. They arrange a large number of social and fund raising events, and last year raised over £4,000 for the use of the school. The headteacher attends all meetings in an advisory capacity and the school is very grateful for the group's support.

38. Good arrangements are in place for the transfer of pupils. All receiving secondary schools send their SENCO and senior teachers to the school to discuss each pupil's progress in Year 6, prior to transition. Pupils attend 'taster days' at their chosen secondary school and good arrangements are in place for the transfer of records.

39. Links with the community are good. The headteacher is a member of the Lingfield Community Development Committee. The committee operates a breakfast and after-school club on the school premises, both for school pupils and for other children in the community. The school hosts a holiday club, and the Lingfield Community Partnership has made a grant available to the school of £12,000 to create play facilities and a wooded area. Money is raised by pupils for local and national charities, including Children in Need, Dr Barnardos, Comic Relief, RSPCA, local NSPCC and Red Nose Day. The school has very close links with St. Herbert's Church, and the vicar is a school governor and takes assemblies regularly.

40. The school has strong connections with the local special school and admits some of its pupils on a part-time basis in line with its inclusion policy. The school is part of a cluster of 11 primary schools, and a series of meetings is to be arranged to help further collaboration. Regular meetings take place with the cluster of secondary schools regarding the transfer of pupils.

41. The school has very good links with both Durham and Sunderland Universities, and it takes a number of post-graduate students for their teacher training. The school provides work placements for pupils at the local comprehensive school and college of further education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The role of the governors is now good, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the future of the school, which he shares with staff and governors. The school has a clear view of its strengths and areas for development and knows what it needs to do to improve further. It has very good management systems to ensure that it runs smoothly and efficiently on a day-to-day basis.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides a very clear sense of direction for the future of the school.
- The school has developed a strong senior management team.
- All staff and governors are fully committed to including all pupils, whatever their ability, ethnic or cultural background, in the whole life of the school.

Commentary

42. The work of the governors is good, and is much improved since the last inspection. Governors are all committed to doing their best for the school. They have a clear committee structure to help them to work efficiently and effectively, and a clear understanding of how well the school is doing and what it needs to do to improve. Governors are fully involved in setting the strategic direction of the school and in identifying the priorities for improvement. They play a major role in developing the school improvement plan and in setting the budget to meet the most pressing needs identified. They work closely with the headteacher and support him well. They also question and challenge to ensure that they are fully aware of the issues affecting the school. However, they are not quite systematic enough in reviewing all the school policies on a regular basis to ensure that they comply with the latest legislation. They have very good systems for managing the school finances, so that they carry forward an appropriate amount each year. Governors know they have a duty to get the best value from the school's funds, and regularly challenge the need for particular spending decisions and seek competitive prices. They do not yet compare how their spending on particular items compares with that of similar schools to check if they could be even more efficient in their budget management. The governors work well with the headteacher and staff to ensure that the school provides good value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,076,648.00
Total expenditure	1,080,780.00
Expenditure per pupil	2616.00

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	45,394.00
Balance carried forward to the next	41,262.00

43. Leadership is good overall, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher has a very clear view of how the school should develop. He is committed to developing a school that provides for the local community well beyond the normal school day, and has already established before and after school care. The Nursery was an independent unit and the headteacher has successfully incorporated it into the school. He provides very thoughtful leadership and considers issues carefully. The plans to integrate the Reception classes and the Nursery to create a Foundation Stage unit are typical of the forethought and foresight of the headteacher. He has recognised the changing nature of the school intake and plans to address this by providing the best possible start in the

Foundation Stage. This will lay the foundations for pupils' achievement throughout the rest of the school rather than simply trying to help them catch up once they have fallen behind. The headteacher has appointed a strong senior management team, including a deputy head and an assistant head, who share his vision for the future of the

school. He also enjoys very good levels of support from parents and governors. The subject co-ordinators do a good job. However, the emphasis on English and mathematics recently has left little room for thorough and rigorous checking of the quality of teaching and learning in other subjects on a systematic and regular basis, and this is something the school needs to address.

44. Management is very good. The school has very good systems to ensure its smooth running. Performance management is fully in place and is appreciated by staff. It helps to identify areas for continuing professional development that will take the school forward. This has been particularly successful in ICT, where the new co-ordinator carried out an analysis of staff's skills and confidence and identified ways to improve them. This has resulted in a good improvement for the provision of ICT and a rise in standards and improved achievement, particularly in Years 3 to 6. The school has good systems for checking how well it is doing. The systems for this checking in English and mathematics play a large part in helping teachers to group pupils according to ability and to set the targets that will challenge them and ensure good achievement. The analysis of how well pupils are progressing is very good and extends to tracking pupils by gender, ethnicity, and the ward from which they come. This has enabled the school to identify the reasons for the declining trend in overall standards, particularly among boys, and to devise plans to address these issues, including the development of a Foundation Stage unit to give greater flexibility. These systems are not yet extended to other subjects which have not been a focus of intensive development recently. The leadership and management of SEN are very good. The co-ordinator is a member of the senior management team and helps lead the school's drive for excellent practice to include all pupils in the whole life of the school, whatever their ability. She meets regularly with the learning support assistants and teaching staff and provides support and training as required. The links with Beaumont Hill special school have been maintained and developed since the time of the last inspection. The office and premises staff play a significant role in helping the school day to run smoothly. The good work of lunchtime supervisors ensures that the lunch break is a peaceful and harmonious time, so that pupils return to lessons ready for work.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

45. Provision in the Nursery and Reception classes is **good**. Children are taught well and as a result achieve well. They settle in quickly and enjoy interesting activities. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection, when provision was satisfactory.

46. Most children enter the Nursery with skills that are below those expected for pupils of their age. Because of the school's admission arrangements a significant number of summer-born children have less time in the Foundation Stage than those with autumn birthdays. As a result, many do not attain all their Early Learning Goals. Of the Year 2 pupils in 2004, 46 per cent were summer born and had less time in school than the rest. Although most children achieve well, the attainment of boys is lower than that of girls. The arrangements for checking how well children are doing are very good. They show that many more boys than girls have SEN. The results are used to plan activities that are well matched to children's learning. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is very good. The co-ordinator is highly experienced and is leading the newly formed team successfully in creating a fully integrated Foundation Stage. Overall, teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good because the very good teaching and learning are focused on promoting children's confidence, independence and social skills.
- The support staff make an excellent contribution to pupils' learning.

Commentary

47. Teaching is very good, and as a result children make very good progress and achieve well in developing their social skills. By the end of their time in Reception, a significant majority are on course to achieve their Early Learning Goals. Most children enter Nursery with a wide range of social skills. Admission arrangements are very effective, with very good relationships between staff and parents. Nursery staff establish secure routines so that children feel safe, which helps them to settle easily. All the staff are very caring and use every opportunity to praise children's independence, develop their confidence and support any who have SEN. Children are encouraged to take turns and to listen to each other. Reception staff encourage further independence and children respond very well to being helpers. Staff provide many opportunities for children to learn to co-operate through playing games. As a result, many children work successfully both alone and in small groups. The Reception staff provide stimulating activities, despite limited classroom space. Separate buildings currently prevent a fully integrated Foundation Stage. However, there are good transition arrangements between Nursery, Reception and Year 1. Staff in Year 1 enable children to complete their Early Learning Goals before starting the National Curriculum. This is very effective for the children who join Year 1 with immature social skills. All staff

have high expectations of children's behaviour. When children do not do as expected they are dealt with firmly but fairly, so that they learn how to appreciate the needs of other children. They respond well to this, with the result that by the time they leave the Foundation Stage their attitudes to school and behaviour are very good. Nursery and Reception children enjoy school and show real interest in what they are doing.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because all staff take every opportunity to develop the children's language skills.
- Children with SEN and children whose first language is not English are well catered for and are fully included in all activities.
- Many children have difficulty in expressing their ideas and recording work.

Commentary

48. Children enter Nursery with a wide range of communication skills. Teaching is very good in the Nursery and good in Reception classes. The result is that while most remain below expectation by the end of Reception, a minority are on course to achieve their Early Learning Goals. A significant number of children have difficulty in expressing their ideas. This affects their ability in many areas of learning. Staff work hard to develop children's confidence in speaking. In the Nursery, children are given good opportunities to express their ideas through talk. Reception staff encourage less confident children to talk in sentences, and the more fluent communicators to extend their vocabulary. Support staff make an excellent contribution and are highly effective in helping to extend children's communication skills in very small groups and in the imaginative play areas.

49. Nursery staff lay the foundations for establishing positive attitudes to reading, through sharing attractive big books and familiar rhymes. In a well taught Reception lesson, children's early reading and writing skills were extended through letter and word games following an appealing story, *The Empty Lunchbox*. Staff share books informally throughout the day. However, a few children need more encouragement to choose to look at books independently during choice times. Children are given many opportunities to write for a range of purposes. While every effort is taken to develop the children's writing skills, many have difficulty forming their letters fluently or recording their work independently.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because teaching and learning are focused on developing children's skills through a practical curriculum.

Commentary

50. Children enter Nursery with a wide range of mathematical skills and many have limited experience in using and applying mathematical knowledge. Teaching is very good in the Nursery and good in Reception classes. There is a focus on first-hand practical activities, using attractive resources. Early indications are that by the end of Reception most children will remain below expectation but a significant minority are on course to achieve their Early Learning Goals. All staff take every opportunity to reinforce and extend children's mathematical skills and language. In a very well taught lesson, the Nursery teacher and support staff created a very special atmosphere where children joined in number rhymes with real enthusiasm. Sand and a range of larger mathematical equipment are in constant use, to help children develop their mathematical language. Reception staff build on these practical experiences while encouraging children to record their work.

Both teachers provide a good range of number games and activities. The contribution of the learning support assistants is outstanding in motivating the children to learn in very small groups. By the end of Reception, although children achieve well, many still find difficulty in explaining their thinking and recording their work.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

No judgements about teaching and learning, standards and achievement are made in this area of learning, owing to lack of evidence.

Commentary

51. Planning shows that there is a good range of activities for children to develop their senses and widen their understanding of the world. Good use is made of social and snack times to help children learn about being healthy. Children build up their picture of the world through such topics as *People who help us*. In both Nursery and Reception, children have many opportunities to develop their knowledge and curiosity about the world around them. The Nursery has an extensive programme of visitors and regular trips into the local community. An investigative area gives children opportunities to handle and explore objects. Reception staff widen children's knowledge of different cultures by teaching them about special times of the year such as Harvest, Diwali and Christmas. Staff increase children's pleasure and confidence in using computers by giving them daily opportunities to use a range of interesting programs.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because there are plenty of opportunities to develop their physical skills.

Commentary

52. Teaching is very good in the Nursery and good in Reception classes, and pupils achieve well. The majority are on course to achieve all their learning goals by the time they leave Reception. Nursery children have daily opportunities to use a wide range of equipment. The large outside area is well equipped, which helps children develop their physical skills and confidence safely. Reception children have regular sessions in the hall and outside to help them develop their physical skills and learn to respond to music. In a well-taught lesson, children squealed with delight as they learned to listen and share equipment while playing with a large 'parachute' and small balls. All children have access to tricycles and a range of small games equipment. Children develop their manipulative skills by handling dough, scissors and small toys. In the case of some children their hand /eye co-ordination remains weak, which affects their ability to hold and use pencils effectively.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Children achieve well because the staff provide exciting and enjoyable activities.
- The imaginative areas are used well to extend children's creativity.

Commentary

53. Most children enter Nursery with skills below expectation. Teaching is very good in the Nursery and good in the Reception classes, and children achieve well. While most remain below expectation, a minority are on course to achieve their Early Learning Goals by the end of Reception. There are many opportunities for children to develop their creativity and skills. There is daily access to a good range of materials, with many planned opportunities to paint, draw and make models. Staff develop children's skills and creativity through a range of interesting topics and imaginative play. Nursery staff extend children's creativity very well through an attractive and spacious imaginative play area that is changed frequently. Children show real involvement as they play in *Heathfield surgery* or *Heathfield hairdressers*. Staff take care to provide topics and resources to engage the interest of boys and girls. All children have many opportunities to sing rhymes and explore musical instruments informally. Reception children have good opportunities to listen to music and to make their own sounds, which many do with enthusiasm.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and sometimes very good.
- Achievement of pupils, including those with SEN and those whose home language is not English, is good, and standards by Year 6 are above average.
- There are good systems for checking how well pupils are doing.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- Teachers do not always take opportunities to develop writing in other subjects.

Commentary

54. Standards by the end of Year 6 are above average, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Standards in reading are average by Year 2, but they are below average in writing. Reading standards at Year 2 have been maintained at the levels recorded at the last inspection, but standards in writing have declined.

55. Overall, pupils' speaking and listening skills are average. Pupils are given many opportunities to speak and express opinions in assemblies and class discussions, and know they will be listened to with interest and respect. As a result, they speak confidently. However, some make grammatical errors; inaccuracies are also seen in their writing. Most pupils listen carefully. In an assembly about the holocaust they listened with rapt attention and showed a sense of wonder at what they heard. In

a few lessons, however, pupils do not listen carefully enough to teachers' instructions and do not know what to do.

56. Pupils achieve well in reading, and standards in Year 2 are average. Pupils take books home regularly and parents help by hearing them read. Some pupils are members of the local lending library but others say they do not have any books at home. Most pupils recognise and read a large number of commonly used words. However, average and lower attaining pupils lack fluency, usually reading word by word so that it is difficult to get a sense of the story. Higher attaining pupils show good understanding, Their fluency is improving as they pay more attention to punctuation and reading with expression. Pupils, including those with SEN, benefit from being withdrawn for small group sessions. By Year 6, pupils achieve well and their reading is above average. They read authors such as Roald Dahl and J K Rowling, and some have progressed to reading stories by Charles Dickens. All know how to find information by using the index and contents pages and are familiar with the library classification system.

57. The school is to be commended for the above average standards achieved in writing by the end of Year 6, given that most pupils enter school with below average standards. They achieve well, and sometimes very well, by the time they leave. Standards rise because teaching across the school is good; the school analyses and assesses pupils' writing very well and makes very good use of the assessment to plan suitable work. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are taught in ability groups, and work within the groups is further refined to meets the needs of individuals and groups of pupils. By Year 6 pupils are able to construct sound arguments to support their ideas in letters of complaint, and write sensitively when re-assuring someone with a fear of spiders. However, standards at Year 2 are not high enough, mainly because of the proportion of boys who find writing difficult.

58. The teaching seen ranged from satisfactory to very good and was good overall. Teachers know the subject well and have put a great deal of effort into planning interesting work that meets the needs of pupils. Work is planned very effectively for the different ability groups within classes and sets, so that all pupils get work that is hard enough. In some lessons, notably in Years 5 and 6, the enthusiasm of teachers is communicated well to pupils, with the result that they try very hard. Teachers make good use of classroom assistants to support pupils. They use computer programs well to reinforce spelling and grammar work.

59. The subject is well led by a knowledgeable co-ordinator, who has spearheaded the drive to raise standards. Particularly good use is made of assessment in planning work. The subject is well resourced with 'big books' and a good supply of books for group reading and fiction for older pupils. Good use is made of the libraries to carry out research.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

60. English is used well in subjects such as history and geography, where pupils write sympathetically about World War 2. Computers are used well to produce newspaper articles. However, teachers miss opportunities for pupils to write at length in science in Years 3 to 6 because of the excessive use of work sheets.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average by Year 6.
- Teaching is consistently good throughout the school and pupils achieve well.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are well taught through practical first-hand activities.
- Boys attain less well than girls, especially at the higher levels.

- Pupils with SEN are well supported by the teaching assistants.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to solve problems.
- The leadership and management are good.

Commentary

61. Standards are above average by Year 6 and pupils achieve well. This is an improvement since the last inspection, despite an increase in the number of pupils with SEN. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 2. This also represents good achievement, as most pupils join Year 1 without having attained the goals expected of pupils of their age. Girls attain higher standards than boys because too few boys reach the higher levels in the national tests and most of the pupils with SEN are boys. The school has put in place a number of strategies to raise boys' attainment. These include teaching mathematics in ability classes in Years 3 to 6 and using resources and ICT programs that appeal particularly to boys. This is proving effective. For example, in a well-taught Year 5 lesson, made up mainly of boys, all pupils played *Pirate Pete* enthusiastically while learning their tables. The school has identified a few middle attaining pupils who, with more support, could make even better progress towards attaining the higher level, and it is providing measures to help them to do so.

62. Teaching is at least good, and at times very good and excellent. Teachers provide work that is challenging and, consequently, most pupils achieve well. Teachers throughout the school use the start of each lesson well, with questioning pitched at pupils' different abilities. The end of each session is also used well to check what pupils have learnt. In all classes there is a clear focus on pupils using correct mathematical vocabulary. While most pupils know their targets, marking is not consistently used to help them to identify what they need to do next. Teaching is consistently very good in Year 6, because the pace is crisp and teachers help pupils to understand how they can improve. Satisfactory use is made of homework to reinforce and extend pupils' skills.

63. Pupils with SEN achieve well because teachers use learning support assistants very well to help them in small groups. Pupils in the inclusion class, where pupils from Beaumont Hill work alongside those from Heathfield, make very good progress with their mathematical skills, because teaching is very good. Pupils whose home language is not English also achieve well. Teaching is fun yet focused, so that pupils enjoy their activities and work hard. They are developing their ability to work independently.

64. While the best lessons include opportunities to solve problems and carry out mathematical investigations, this aspect is not always prominent. This has been identified as a school priority. Pupils enjoy applying their mathematical knowledge when they have these opportunities. For example, in an excellent lesson in Year 1, the teacher used the two other adults highly effectively so that children of all abilities could solve problems and develop their skills to predict and estimate.

65. The subject is well led, with a clear action plan and analysis of pupils' work and test papers to identify any weaknesses. The co-ordinator observes lessons and gives regular feedback to ensure good quality teaching and learning throughout the school.

Mathematics across the curriculum

66. Satisfactory use is made of mathematical skills in other subjects. There are appropriate opportunities to measure and calculate accurately in science, geography, history and design and

technology. Examples include recording temperatures in science, plotting information in graph form in geography, and using time lines and dates in history. The school uses computer programs to support mathematical learning, particularly with lower attaining pupils. It is developing its use of interactive whiteboards.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall, with the result that pupils achieve good levels of knowledge and understanding.
- Most pupils are well motivated and interested in their learning.
- Lessons do not place enough emphasis on investigative science activities, and pupils are not given enough responsibility for their learning.

Commentary

67. Standards at Year 2 and Year 6 are broadly average, which is the same as at the last inspection. Pupils start school with below average knowledge and understanding of the world, so this represents good achievement overall. By Year 6 pupils show good understanding and explain scientific ideas well. Girls' attainment is significantly better than that of boys throughout the school, mainly because boys do not attain the higher levels because of the proportion who have SEN.

68. By Year 2, pupils make observations, carry out simple tests and record their findings in different ways when carrying out investigations. By Year 6, the majority of pupils achieve well, but opportunities for independent learning and investigation are missed. Worksheets are used in abundance, there is little evidence of pupils planning and conducting their own experiments, and there is too much emphasis on learning given facts.

69. Teaching and learning are good overall. In the best lessons, teachers tell pupils what they are to learn and what is expected of them, so that pupils respond enthusiastically to the challenge. In these lessons they are actively engaged and involved in investigations, and they explore hypotheses and make deductions. Teaching is brisk, with no time wasted, and good questioning challenges pupils and helps them learn effectively. In Year 2, good links are made with literacy and this helps develop pupils' reading and speaking skills well.

70. In one lesson, in Year 3, where pupils were learning about the need for teeth as part of a healthy lifestyle, they explored ways in which teeth are used. They bit, chew, and tore fruit and carrots and investigated which of their own teeth were best for which process. This challenged their thinking and raised awareness about the food they actually ate and the way in which teeth were grouped. There was real involvement and enjoyment in self-discovery. However, teaching in Year 6 is satisfactory rather than good, because it lacks real investigative work and innovative teaching methods. This slows the pace and prevents some pupils from achieving as much as they might.

71. Teachers check pupils' understanding at the beginning and end of each topic. However, there is little evidence that the results of these checks are used to plan work for different abilities in lessons as a matter of course. There is little evidence of staff setting targets for pupils. Consequently, pupils do not have any real understanding of how they can make better progress. Pupils with SEN who are taught the subject by their specialist support teacher make very good progress in their learning because it is planned for their specific needs. Pupils whose home language is not English achieve well.

72. The subject co-ordinator is new in post and is quickly gaining an overview of the strengths of the subject and the areas for development. He has clear plans for this further development, including a more individual, investigative approach. Work is based on national guidelines but does not link sufficiently with other subjects, such as extending writing opportunities, because of the

reliance on worksheets for recording work in some classes. There is some evidence of ICT being used to reinforce learning but more could be made of these opportunities for all pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Teaching is good throughout the school.
- The subject is well resourced.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good and have led to significant improvements in provision and achievement by Year 6.

Commentary

73. Achievement in ICT is good. Pupils enter the school with skills that are below average. Standards by Year 2 and Year 6 are at least average, and in some aspects pupils attain above average standards within lessons. For instance, a class of Year 2 pupils achieved very well in a lesson on finding information by searching an index and using keywords. Those who finished quickly then produced questions for others to answer, using the same methods. This represents a good improvement since the last inspection, when provision and achievement were judged to be unsatisfactory in Years 3 to 6.

74. Teaching and learning are good overall. Staff confidence has improved and the school has better resources. A programme has been undertaken successfully to identify the skills of staff and to provide support and training where they are needed. As a result, staff now teach all aspects with confidence, so that pupils are very motivated and enjoy their lessons. Teaching in the lessons seen ranged from excellent to good. Teachers confidently teach basic skills so that pupils learn how to log on to the computer, open a program, use it and, where necessary, save or print their work before logging off. They use a good range of software to cover all aspects of ICT and to hold pupils' interest. In the best lessons the work is planned to match the different abilities of pupils within the class, but this is not always the case. The teachers record what pupils have learned and they have their own records of achievement. However, this information is not always used to plan work at different levels, and in some lessons all pupils complete the same tasks at the same level whatever their ability. It is clear from the work on display and in pupils' records of the work covered that the school provides a good range of activities to promote learning in ICT across the school. It covers all the requirements of the National Curriculum.

75. Leadership and management are very good. The co-ordinator has worked hard to identify the problems at Years 3 to 6 and has rectified them. He has a clear view of how to improve provision further and has plans and priorities to ensure continuous improvement in the future, including providing more resources.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

76. Teachers make good use of ICT to assist learning in other subjects. For example, a class of Year 4 pupils used the ICT suite to enhance learning in literacy as they improved their research and note making skills by finding information on Tudors. Pupils throughout the school practise their spellings on computers, and a Year 5 class practised their basic number skills in a numeracy lesson.

HUMANITIES

In humanities work was sampled in history and geography and inspected in religious education. No lessons were seen in history and geography. In religious education 5 lessons were seen.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision is inconsistent across the school, with the result that pupils in most year groups achieve well but those in Year 6 do not achieve as much as they could.
- There is some excellent teaching in Year 1 but also some unsatisfactory teaching in Year 6.
- The co-ordinator has worked hard to implement the new Agreed Syllabus across the school.

Commentary

77. Achievement is satisfactory overall, but inconsistent across the school. By the end of Year 6 and of Year 2 attainment is broadly average. This is the same as it was at the time of the last inspection. At best, achievement is excellent as a result of excellent teaching and learning, as in Year 1. In most other year groups it is good. However, in Year 6 the pupils' books show a very limited amount of work and some of the teaching is unsatisfactory, which leads to unsatisfactory achievement for these pupils. The work they did was much the same as work done by younger classes. Pupils in Year 6, nonetheless, did show an appropriate knowledge and understanding of religious education when asked.

78. Where achievement is good, pupils learn effectively about the beliefs and customs associated with various religions, including Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, pupils were keen to learn about the Sikh Gurus and knew that the final one was the holy book, rather than a person. They learned about the '5Ks' of Sikhism and their symbolic meanings. Pupils in a Year 5 class considered the meaning behind the parable of the Good Samaritan and what the story can tell us about life and neighbourliness today.

79. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. In the lessons seen during the inspection teaching ranged from excellent in Year 1 to unsatisfactory in Year 6. The unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by a slow pace, a lack of involvement of all the pupils and a lack of interesting teaching methods to ensure good achievement. The excellent teaching included work planned at different levels to match the abilities of the pupils, teaching methods that enthralled pupils and held their attention, excellent methods for helping pupils to develop their ideas, and an excellent use of resources, including support staff. Many of these successful features were also seen in a very good lesson with Year 3 pupils. The teacher made very good use of words, pictures and artefacts to explain the features of Sikhism and provided tasks at two levels to help pupils of different abilities to reinforce their learning. As a consequence, most pupils, including those with SEN, achieved very well in their learning. Although staff record how well different groups of pupils have learned, there is little evidence of this information being used to set work at different levels for different abilities in future lessons as a matter of course.

80. The school provides a good range of activities and experiences that cover all the requirements of the new locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. It has some good resources, and teachers use these effectively to stimulate pupils' interest in their work. For example, there are attractive displays on Hinduism that make very good use of pictures, books, costumes and artefacts.

81. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Although the co-ordinator has a clear view of where the strengths and weaknesses lie in religious education provision, and has done much to implement the new agreed syllabus, she has been less successful in ensuring consistency of provision across the school.

History

82. Pupils' work shows that standards are average by the end of Years 2 and 6. By Year 6, pupils have learned about Ancient Egypt, Romans, Vikings, Tudors, Victorians, Ancient Greeks, Aztecs, Saxons, and life in World War II. Year 6 pupils studying World War II showed good links with literacy in writing letters about the Blitz and in finding information when reading about the evacuation of children, using an old school log book. Pupils in Year 2 relate the events of the Great Fire of London with some accuracy, explaining how the fire began and why it spread so quickly. They are beginning to ask questions and to consider the answers from different points of view. In Year 4 pupils learn about the Great Fire of Darlington and about the growth of the town and the railway.

83. Visits to places of interest such as Eden Camp and history trails in school help to bring history to life and motivate pupils. History is well led and managed by a well-qualified teacher who has a good understanding of the subject. She checks how well pupils are doing and is clear about how the subject can be developed further. Resources are satisfactory.

Geography

84. By Year 6 pupils have a sound knowledge of the continents of the world and the location of the important mountain ranges, such as the Rockies, Andes and Himalayas. They compare flood plains with desert areas, and learn about the impact of the rain cycle. They consider the effects of pollution on the environment. From an early age pupils develop mapping skills, and in Year 2 they clearly enjoy plotting environments based on stories they are reading. They begin to learn about their locality. Visits to places of interest and visitors to school enrich the subject. The teacher with responsibility for geography monitors the subject well and has clear plans for its future development.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Work was sampled in art and design, design and technology, music and physical education. One lesson was seen in physical education and none in the other subjects.

Commentary

Art and design

85. In classrooms and around the school there was a good amount of art work on display. Other work was seen in pupils' sketchbooks. By the end of Year 6, pupils' work is of above average standard. They develop a good understanding of drawing the human body, and higher attaining pupils show movement of the body very well. They make good use of their sketchbooks to learn to use pencils and crayons to achieve shading effects. The teachers' comments show them how to improve their work. However, pupils in other years, such as Year 2, do not use their sketchbooks often enough. Pupils have benefited from working with visiting artists, producing murals in the new part of the school and learning how to make brass rubbings. In Year 1, pupils study the work of artists such as Picasso. Pupils in

Year 2 use computers to produce artwork in the style of Charles Angrand. There was no evidence of three-dimensional work on display or in sketchbooks.

86. In **design and technology**, samples of pupils' work suggest that they attain average standards throughout the school. Evidence supplied by the school shows that it covers the requirements of the National Curriculum in the subject. The weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection, related to planning and assessment, have been satisfactorily addressed. Pupils' skills are systematically built upon. Useful guide sheets help pupils to plan, design, modify and evaluate their work. Good use is made of ICT programs to help pupils design ideas. Pupils are encouraged to be creative and take care with the products they produce. Pupils have good opportunities to use their drawing, writing and mathematical skills while extending their design and technology skills. The co-ordinator gives satisfactory leadership, offering guidance to staff and monitoring standards through a well-kept evidence folder.

Music

87. In assembly, pupils sang lustily and tunefully. Pupils have the opportunity to play the recorder and sing in a choir. Older pupils write their own music and record it. Visiting musicians give performances, and history lessons were brought to life when a musician played Tudor instruments. Music contributes well to pupils' knowledge of other cultures, as when they listen to traditional Zulu music and a South African choir.

Physical education

88. Year 6 pupils learned to jump from a springboard and land correctly after a high attaining pupil demonstrated the technique. Standards achieved were average for this age. The teacher has good subject knowledge but overemphasised the finer points of gymnastic performance, and this slowed down the lesson. Consequently, pupils' behaviour deteriorated. Nonetheless, other pupils talked enthusiastically about their physical education lessons and obviously enjoy them and the many other activities. They have swimming lessons and take part in competitions against other schools in sports such as football, table tennis, rugby and badminton. Pupils receive instruction from players from Darlington Football Club and practise for awards in gymnastics, swimming, football and basketball. The commitment the school makes to physical education was recognised when it became the first school in Darlington to be awarded the Activemark.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

This subject was sampled as not enough lessons were seen during the inspection.

89. This subject is taught as part of the general syllabus and is timetabled for one period per week. In circle time pupils study drug awareness, alcohol abuse, sex education and the beginnings of citizenship. Science lessons also cover healthy lifestyles, and in physical education pupils learn about the need for exercise and its effect on their bodies. The successful teaching of this subject is reflected in the pupils' very good attitudes, conduct and behaviour.

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	1
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	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	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
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).