

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HOWLETCHE LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Peterlee

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114198

Headteacher: Mr R Hanney

Lead inspector: Ian Knight

Dates of inspection: 23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> May 2005

Inspection number: 267082

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:	368 full-time; 74 attend the Nursery part-time
School address:	Pennine Drive Peterlee County Durham
Postcode:	SR8 2NQ
Telephone number:	0191 5862765
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Graham
Date of previous inspection:	26 <sup>th</sup> April 1999

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Howlatch Lane Primary School is a large primary school serving the town of Peterlee in County Durham. It houses a Resource Base for up to 20 pupils with physical disabilities. Until recently it was involved in the local Education Action Zone. It achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Investors in People status in 2002. The area served by the school is mixed but overall is socially disadvantaged. Almost all pupils are white European – a small number are from Indian, Chinese or mixed backgrounds. A few children in the Foundation Stage are at the early stages of learning English. Fifty-three pupils are identified as having special educational needs, including specific learning needs, moderate learning needs, social, emotional and behavioural needs, speech or communication difficulties, hearing impairment and physical disabilities, which is broadly average. However, the proportion of pupils with a statement of special need is well above average because the pupils attending the Resource Base all have a statement. Attainment on entry to the Nursery is well below average, especially in communication skills.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23031	Ian Knight	<i>Lead inspector</i>	Art and design Design and technology
11358	Vicki Lamb	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
27053	Sheila Bewick	<i>Team inspector</i>	Provision in the Resource Base for children with physical disabilities
14319	Michael Brown	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science Information and communication technology Music Physical education
22990	Christopher Furniss	<i>Team inspector</i>	English Geography History Religious education English as an additional language
19765	Pauleen Shannon	<i>Team inspector</i>	The Foundation Stage Special educational needs Mathematics

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a good school.** Children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well; achievement in Years 1 to 6 is good. Pupils in the Resource Base for pupils with physical disabilities achieve very well. Teaching overall is good, and very good in the Foundation Stage and Resource Base. The curriculum is very good: the school has worked hard to maintain the position of the arts within the curriculum, and provision and achievement in music are very good. Staff really care about their pupils: in turn, pupils respect members of the school community and show very good attitudes and behaviour. The very positive ethos in the school is the result of the headteacher's drive and commitment, shared by other key staff. The school offers good value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher provides very clear vision and direction for the school, based on mutual trust and teamwork.
- The school's very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development results in very good attitudes and behaviour.
- Staff cherish children, and the result is that they develop excellent relationships.
- Children in the Foundation Stage are provided for particularly well.
- Achievement is good throughout the school because of good teaching with high expectations.
- The school's curriculum is very good: provision for music and performance arts is particularly good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in both the Resource Base and the main school is very good.
- The school's use of systems for tracking pupils' progress is not rigorous enough to enable teachers to easily identify areas for improvement.

The school has made good progress since its last inspection. Most of the minor issues it was obliged to address have been dealt with, and teaching and achievement have improved.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average  
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

**Achievement in the school is good.** Children in the Foundation Stage are on track to reach the Early Learning Goals in social, physical and creative development. Standards are below expectations in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. The children entered school with attainment that was well below national expectations, especially in language, and they have achieved very well. Pupils in Year 2 are achieving well: standards in reading and science are in line with expectations. Standards in mathematics, writing and speaking are below expectations, whilst standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are above expectations. Standards in music are well above expectations. Good achievement continues in the juniors: standards are in line with expectations in

English and above expectations in mathematics and religious education. They are well above expectations in science, music and ICT. The other subjects were not a focus of the inspection and no secure judgements can be made. Pupils in the Resource Base, and other pupils with SEN, achieve very well.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, are progressing very well.** Attitudes and behaviour are very good throughout the school; relationships are excellent. Attendance is satisfactory.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching is good.** In the Foundation Stage, teaching and learning are very good. The staff have an excellent understanding of the needs of young learners and make outstanding use of learning support assistants. Children are encouraged very well and very good methods are used. As a result, children make very good progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding. In Years 1 to 6, teaching is good. Pupils are excited by work that is well matched to their needs so that they make good progress. Teachers show high expectations of behaviour, so lessons proceed in an atmosphere of calm industry. Pupils apply themselves very well to their work. Assessment is used effectively to inform teaching, but pupils do not have clear individualised targets to tell them how to improve.

The school provides a very good curriculum that is enhanced very well, for example through the use of 'Golden Time'. Provision for pupils with SEN is very good. The school makes very good provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety, provides good support and guidance and involves pupils well in its work. Links with parents, other schools and the community are all very good.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good overall.** The headteacher provides very good leadership, supported well by other staff. Management in the school is good and the governing body supports and challenges the school well. All statutory requirements are met.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents and pupils alike are supremely satisfied with the school. The response to questionnaires and the meetings was overwhelmingly positive, although a small minority of parents felt they could have more information about the curriculum and their children's progress.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Ensure that the data from assessments are used more rigorously to identify potential areas for improvement in achievement, teaching and learning.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils achieve well in the school. In the Foundation Stage, children achieve very well. Attainment on entry is well below average and standards are below expectations in most areas of learning at the end of the Foundation Stage and in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2. Standards overall are in line with expectations in Year 6, with standards being above expectations in mathematics and well above expectations in ICT and science. Music is a particular strength.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- From a low starting point, children in the Foundation Stage make very good progress and achieve very well.
- Good achievement continues in Years 1 to 6.
- Standards and achievement in music are very good.
- Pupils in the Resource Base achieve very well; other pupils with SEN achieve well.

#### Commentary

1. In the National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 2 in 2004, standards were above average in reading and average in writing and mathematics. If the school is compared only to schools with a similar intake, then a brighter picture is painted: standards were well above average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. Recent results show an improving trend in reading and writing. Mathematics was improving until 2003 but standards fell in 2004. The overall trend is in line with that nationally. One factor in the fall in the mathematics standards was the relatively low proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 3. The school explains that this group of pupils was weaker mathematically than usual, and assessment data confirms this. There are no tests in the other core subject, science, but teachers' assessments indicate that standards were below average nationally and about average when compared to those of similar schools.

2. The table below summarises the test results in 2004. One 'point' represents approximately the progress expected in a term. The expected Level 2 is represented by 15 points and the higher Level 3 is represented by 21 points.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.5 (16.6)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	15.1 (15.3)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.1 (17.3)	16.2 (16.3)

*There were 55 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. In the 2004 National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 6, standards were below average in English, above average in mathematics and well above average in science. When compared to those of schools with similar results four years ago, standards are well above average in mathematics and science, but are below average in English. The school noted the weaker performance in English and found two factors. One concerned pupils in the Resource Base: more such pupils than usual were in Year 6 in 2004 and they find English disproportionately difficult, as the amount of support that can be given in English tests is less than that for mathematics. However, even if such pupils are excluded from the analysis, English standards remain below those of mathematics and science. The school investigated further and discovered that the main

weakness was in writing. Efforts have been made over the last year to improve matters here by adjusting the curriculum. Nevertheless, pupils made more progress than their peers nationally over Years 3 to 6, although it was average as compared with similar schools.

4. Recent results show an improving trend in mathematics and, especially, in science, but no clear trend in English. Overall, the trend of improvement was in line with that nationally.

5. In the table, the expected Level 4 is represented by 27 points and the higher Level 5 by 33 points.

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

<b>Standards in:</b>	<b>School results</b>	<b>National results</b>
English	25.9 (28.2)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	28.1 (28.2)	27.0 (26.8)
science	30.3 (29.8)	28.6 (28.6)

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

6. However, test results do not tell the whole story. They are now a year old and refer only to a few subjects in two year groups. Indeed, some concern pupils who have since left the school. In addition, they give few clues about *achievement*; that is, are pupils doing as well as they should? Inspection evidence can fill some of these gaps.

7. Most children enter the Nursery with skills that are well below the level usually found for children of their age. Most have poor communication skills. This affects their ability to explain their thinking and learning. Consequently, their communication and mathematical skills remain below expectations, as does their ability to explain their knowledge and understanding of the world, despite the very good teaching they receive and the progress they make. They attain the expected skills for their age in their social, physical and creative development. This represents very good achievement for these children.

8. This is consolidated in the infants, and achievement overall is good. Good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well here, even though standards remain below expectations in writing and mathematics. Standards are now in line with expectations in science, above expectations in ICT and well above expectations in music. Consequently, although achievement overall is good, the progress made by pupils and the level of challenge they meet in classes indicate that achievement in music is very good.

9. Continued good teaching in the juniors ensures that pupils continue to make good progress and achieve well. Standards are in line with expectations in English following a successful adjustment to teaching and learning: achievement in English is therefore good. Standards are above the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus in religious education, exceed expectations in mathematics and are well above expectations in science, ICT and music. Consequently, achievement in science, ICT and music is very good.

10. Pupils with SEN achieve well in respect of the targets in their individual education plans (IEPs). A significant minority attain national standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils in the Resource Base achieve very well in relation to their own starting points, previous attainment and their SEN. They are making very good progress in lessons and in their personal development. The standards achieved by each pupil improve year on year. Pupils meet the targets set for them in their annual reviews and IEPs. Some such pupils also attain the national standards in a range of subjects, for example in ICT and English. The most able pupils achieve well across the curriculum.

## **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils have very good attitudes towards school and they behave very well. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils take a very keen interest in school life and the enriching experiences provided for them.
- Pupils are developing a very good set of values, principles and beliefs within a strong moral framework that encompasses an ethos of high expectations of good behaviour and mutual respect.

### **Commentary**

11. Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy school. They are eager to start the day and learn! Their attitudes to school and behaviour are very good and sometimes excellent. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes show real interest in what they are doing. They enjoy sharing resources and playing together.

12. In Years 1 to 6, pupils are very enthusiastic about school. They try their best and are keen to achieve as well as they can. Often, they are excited by their lessons, as well as by special events. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer that are supported by many pupils. A music concert held during the inspection, for instance, produced a flurry of activity and excitement as pupils prepared to perform or listen, keen to join in and to celebrate each other's achievements. Pupils give lively accounts of trips they have made out of school over the years.

13. Pupils respond very positively to the school's ethos of care and friendship to form warm and supportive relationships because they are eager to learn from the consistently good examples that staff provide. Adults in school act as extremely positive role models, encouraging pupils to listen to one another and appreciate their differences. In lessons, pupils work together well in groups and happily share equipment and ideas. Older pupils behave very responsibly towards younger ones. Several in the infants, for example, have trained as buddies, 'Mini-buds', to provide friendship and practical support to younger ones who are feeling lonely or worried, and pupils in Year 5 are beginning the same process. The extremely positive relationships throughout the school form the basis for very good inclusion of all.

14. Pupils in the Resource Base have very good attitudes to learning. They are very well behaved. They have very good relationships with other pupils and with staff, who provide excellent role models. They keep trying when given challenging tasks. Pupils are fully included in all the opportunities school provides. When children from the Resource Base join their peers in classrooms they take their places confidently and are very quickly part of the whole activity. It is a mark of the school's success that the few pupils who experience difficulties in forming constructive relationships with other pupils and staff benefit from seeing how well everyone treats one another, and gradually learn to do so themselves. As a result they value themselves and others, and develop self-confidence. During the inspection, there were many examples of more able pupils providing support and encouragement to pupils with more complex needs, for example opening doors or being a partner in physical education lessons. Pupils consider those with additional needs very well, and sensitively offer help whenever it is needed.

15. Other pupils with SEN have very positive and at times excellent attitudes to their learning and behave very well. They respond enthusiastically to the very good additional support from the learning support assistants. In all other lessons they work hard and respond very well to their teachers. Pupils with emotional or behavioural needs are given further support to help improve their attitudes and motivation.

16. Staff are consistent in promoting the school's policies inside and outside classrooms. Consequently, there is a strong code intrinsic to the life of the school which encourages pupils to behave well and work hard. Pupils respond very positively as they are clear about what is expected and believe that rewards and sanctions are fair. They understand right from wrong and show a great deal of respect for other people, living things, and their own and the wider environment. A very few children have particular problems with behaviour and occasionally a few in some lessons do not behave as well as they should, but there is no behaviour that concerns the school enough to lead to exclusion. Pupils say they feel safe and are happy that others behave well, although they say that bullying occurs occasionally. They are absolutely sure that when it does occur the staff deal with it quickly and effectively.

17. Pupils' social development is excellent. This is based on excellent relationships and a team spirit where pupils are happy to take responsibilities, to help with jobs around school and to support each other. Pupils have respect for others. Daily assemblies make an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development as the messages that the school wants to convey are delivered in a spirit of fun by adults, who are excellent role models. Both of the things identified by pupils as needing improvement were related to the environment and this demonstrates how well they appreciate what is done for them and what they can do to bring about change for themselves and others. For example, they are concerned that they need to develop the wildlife garden to provide a better habitat and visual environment and are confident that they will succeed in doing so. Pupils enjoy sharing social events in school with family and friends. These often raise funds for their own developments in school or for local and national charities.

18. All aspects of pupils' personal development show improvement since the last inspection except attendance, and this continues to be satisfactory. The school responds to any concerns about an individual pupil's attendance by contacting parents to emphasise their responsibilities and discuss ways in which school can help resolve any issues. Generally, this results in good improvement. The school has had an episode of sickness that affected very many pupils in the last school year. As well as illness, the school's attendance rate is adversely affected by holidays taken during term time. This year a particular concern is the significant number of pupils taken out of school for holidays prior to National Curriculum tests. The school's range of strategies to respond to unsatisfactory absence and promote good attendance is satisfactory overall. They do, however, focus on resolving issues through the very good relationships that exist between home and school rather than firm action to instil high expectations.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.0	School data	0.3
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.*

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education. Good teaching and learning are supported by sound assessment and a very good curriculum. Very good provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is made. The school provides good support and guidance to its pupils and involves them well in its work. Links with parents, other schools and the community as a whole are very good.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school, and very good in the Foundation Stage. Sound assessment procedures are used well to support teaching.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well because of the very good teaching they receive.
- Lessons engage pupils' attention well so that they want to work hard.
- Learning support assistants are deployed very well to enhance learning.
- Long-term tracking of pupils' progress is not rigorous enough to enable teachers to easily identify areas for improvement.
- Teaching for pupils with SEN is very good.

### Commentary

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 39 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (3%)	13 (33%)	19 (49%)	6 (15%)	0	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. Teaching is very good in the Foundation Stage. Children get off to a flying start and achieve very well. There is a very clear focus on the development of key skills in literacy and numeracy and in personal, social and emotional development. Teaching is characterised by very good relationships and exciting practical experiences. Staff have an excellent understanding of the areas of learning. The support staff and many volunteers make an excellent contribution when working with children in small groups. Assessments are used well to plan for the learning needs of different groups.

20. In Years 1 to 6, teachers take care to choose methods that will excite and engage their pupils. As a result, lessons run smoothly, pupils are motivated to learn, and attitudes and behaviour are very good. These factors come together harmoniously to produce the good levels of achievement seen. For example, in a very good English lesson for pupils in Year 3, pupils were considering the story of Beowulf in order to understand how 'monsters' might be portrayed as having feelings. The teacher's enthusiasm carried the class with him and they excitedly listed the feelings Grendel's mother might have when Grendel is killed. Pupils suggested such ideas as 'annoyed', 'furious', 'humiliated', 'murderous'. Later, the teacher had the class spellbound as he asked them to consider how her feelings changed during the fight with Beowulf. Subsequently, pupils produced writing of a high quality.

21. The school makes very good use of its learning support assistants. Some are attached to the Resource Base and help pupils to integrate and also provide general support in the classroom. Others have a more general brief. They lead small groups effectively, encouraging diffident pupils and acting as an audience for them. As a result, all groups are enabled to make similar progress and achieve well.

22. Whilst individual teachers know their classes well and are able to set work to match individuals' needs effectively, the use of longer-term tracking systems is not rigorous enough. As a result, it is difficult for the school to identify trends or to spot areas that might appear weak and require investigation. The use of such data to provide pupils with clear individualised targets they can work towards, and towards which they can measure their progress, is not well advanced. Consequently, pupils' knowledge of their own learning is only satisfactory.

23. Teaching of pupils with SEN is very good throughout the school. Very good use is made of the learning support assistants in and out of lessons to support pupils in small groups. The pupils with SEN who are not in the Resource Base benefit greatly from the flexible staffing arrangements. Teaching for these pupils is always lively, practical and positive. As a result, they are highly motivated, keen to learn and have good self-esteem. The teaching and learning of Resource Base pupils is also very good. The partnership between teachers and learning support assistants is very good. They plan together and discuss pupils' progress, and this benefits pupils. Learning support assistants have very good skills and take pupils on to the next step in learning at just the right time. This boosts pupils' confidence and helps them enjoy learning. All staff encourage pupils to try hard and pupils respond well to this. Staff have high expectations of pupils and, because of the excellent staff-pupil relationships, pupils trust that the challenge they have been set is achievable and they work very hard towards it. Teaching is adapted to meet pupils' needs. Pupils' individual needs are identified and known by all key staff. Staff closely observe pupils' response to tasks and adjust their plans, if needed, to make work more challenging or to break things down into smaller steps.

### **The curriculum**

Curricular provision is very good throughout the school and there are very good opportunities for the enrichment of pupils' experiences. Accommodation and resources are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school provides very good opportunities to enrich pupils' experiences, especially in the arts.
- Provision for pupils with SEN is very good.
- The school's accommodation and resources are very good, including well maintained outdoor areas.

### **Commentary**

24. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that enables pupils to achieve well. Statutory requirements for the teaching of the National Curriculum are met, as well as those for the teaching of religious education and the provision of a daily act of collective worship. Arrangements for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) are very good, with due attention to sex and relationships education and the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse.

25. The curriculum provided in the Foundation Stage is very good. It is lively, imaginative and vibrant. Staff create a wide range of stimulating, practical learning experiences. There is a very good balance between learning that is initiated by the child and activities planned by staff. Provision for children with SEN and for the very few children who are early users of English is very good.

26. There is very good provision for extra-curricular activities, visits out of school and contributions by visitors to the school. A wide range of extra-curricular activities takes place during the lunch break and after school; these include the choir, the guitar club, keyboard and recorder tuition, football and gymnastics clubs and work with computers. Music is a particular strength of the school, and there is tuition for pupils to learn a wide range of musical instruments. There is a large orchestra, and the choir has an impressive reputation for the quality of its public performances and its success in inter-school music competitions.

27. An innovative aspect of the curriculum is 'Golden Afternoon' which takes place on Fridays. This has a reward and motivational role and is also intended to extend the formal curriculum. Pupils

make guided choices from a range of activities, which include sports such as rugby and hockey, drama, crafts, cookery, French, ICT and tuition in playing a number of musical instruments. Pupils are very enthusiastic about Golden Afternoon and regard the activities as rewards for good behaviour and work during the week. Activities are staffed by school staff, supplemented by contributions from outsiders at no additional cost to the school.

28. There is very good provision for pupils with SEN and they achieve very well. All such pupils benefit highly from the shared use of the Resource Base staff when they work with small groups of pupils combined from the Resource Base and mainstream classes. Great care is taken to promote pupils' academic learning and their self-esteem. There is a very well planned programme of sessions in and out of lessons.

29. The provision for pupils attending the Resource Base is effective, with pupils benefiting from whole class, small group and individual teaching. Staff strive to create just the right opportunities for pupils to learn. Lesson timetables are individually tailored to ensure that pupils are in the best situation to learn, whether this is in a full class or in small group provision. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) plans in great detail to ensure that all support needed for pupils with statements of special educational need is in place. This includes making detailed arrangements so that pupils get the nursing, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy they need. Sometimes, access to after-school clubs is restricted for some pupils with physical disabilities because of the home-school transport arrangements. The school is looking into this so that these activities can be offered to all pupils.

30. A high level of additional equipment is provided for the Resource Base, and used to very good effect. There are additional computers, adapted keyboards and control devices and well-chosen software programs. However, within the Resource Base, wheelchair-users find it difficult to reach the interactive whiteboard.

31. The school's accommodation is generally very good. The school is situated on a sizeable, enclosed site with a large level field that is well suited for outdoor sports and related activities. There are enough hard-surfaced playgrounds, and outdoor Nursery accommodation is good. Adjacent to the school buildings there is a wild area suitable for science investigations, but the pond has now been filled in. Parts of the exterior of the buildings, however, are in need of repair.

32. Interior accommodation is spacious and well maintained, with two large halls, one for each of the junior and infant phases. Classrooms are sufficiently large for their purposes, but artificial lighting is not always adequate. The majority have the advantage of being equipped with interactive whiteboards. Displays of pupils' work are attractive and relevant to pupils' learning. However, the library is small and uninviting and the ICT suite has insufficient space and ventilation to accommodate whole class groups. Resources for music are very good and there is ample suitable provision of rooms for instrumental tuition and practice.

### **Care, guidance and support**

Procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very good. Staff provide good support, advice and guidance. They seek, value and act upon pupils' views to enable a good level of pupil involvement in the school's work and development.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The trusting relationships that staff foster with pupils support the very high level of concern for pupils' well-being that is at the heart of the school's work.
- Very good procedures are established to help pupils settle quickly and happily into school.

## Commentary

33. The school is highly conscious of its duty of care towards pupils and has developed very good procedures to ensure their well-being, health and safety. The school takes very effective steps to ensure that pupils are provided with a clean and safe environment where they are happy and have a trusted adult to turn to for help if they need it. There are comprehensive procedures for the protection of children in line with locally agreed arrangements, and these are well understood by teaching and non-teaching staff. However, a few health and safety considerations were raised with staff and governors during the inspection. Staff are conscientious in getting to know children very well and respond in a warm, encouraging and supportive way to their personal needs. Pupils annually learn good practices from a range of experts, such as fire and police officers, and school nurses visit to demonstrate dental hygiene, exercise and healthy eating. Excellent relationships between the school and health professionals ensure that high quality advice and guidance is given to pupils, parents and staff. In particular, health professionals ensure that school staff are well trained to deliver the care, support and guidance that is necessary to meet pupils' needs, particularly for those in the Resource Base.

34. The school has established many routines and special activities which help to extend pupils' understanding and personal skills and, at the same time, help to keep them safe. These include training for staff, for example in circle time, to support them in raising issues for discussion and guidance, whilst pupils are also learning how to be fair and confident participants. This has been further developed through anti-bullying training and the introduction of peer support. Pupils train as buddies and present themselves in the school yard during breaks and lunch time for anyone to seek their help. Pupils in the infants choose a 'Friend of the Week' who enjoys special privileges in return for demonstrating good qualities. The headteacher chooses prefects from the juniors who have proved themselves to be responsible through working hard or behaving well. Consequently, pupils' personal development is excellently supported as they feel safe and valued and are keen to do well. Parents are always welcome in school so that they can easily discuss any aspect of their child's welfare with staff.

35. Foundation Stage staff cherish their pupils. The admission arrangements in the Foundation Stage are very effective. Nursery staff establish secure routines so that children feel safe when they join at the different times of the year. All the staff are very caring and use every opportunity to praise children's independence, develop their confidence and support any children who have SEN.

36. There are very good systems for identifying and assessing pupils with SEN. The targets in their learning plans are precise and helpful. The integration and inclusion of pupils with a range of physical and learning needs is highly effective. The school has excellent partnerships with a range of external agencies to provide well thought out programmes to support pupils who have particular needs or who are less confident.

37. The school's care, support and guidance for pupils attending the Resource Base is excellent. Staff know pupils very well and provide valuable support at the right time. Pupils receive very good acknowledgement for their hard-won steps of progress. This greatly boosts their self-confidence. Excellent support from a range of staff ensures that day-to-day care maintains pupils' comfort and their readiness to learn. Pupils' personal care is very tactfully supported and staff understand very well the effects of long-term medical needs. This means that they balance pupils' needs for support and for work very well. Teachers and learning support assistants work closely with the large health team to ensure that each pupil benefits fully from the inclusive nature of the school. Staff act promptly on the advice from health workers, including speech and language therapists and visiting support teachers and psychologists, to refine their support and teaching.

38. Resource Base pupils have high quality IEPs which outline targets to be aimed for and the support provided. These are carefully reviewed at least once each term with pupils and parents, and details of progress and next steps are recorded. Provision for pupils with a statement of special need is very well matched to their needs as described in their statements.

39. Induction arrangements for young children and their families are very well structured to meet their needs and help children settle into Nursery and Reception as secure, confident learners. Arrangements to welcome and support children who join the school in other year groups are equally well considered and make a very good contribution to their personal development. Children transferring from other schools which could not help them to behave acceptably are particularly successful, as they benefit from the caring ethos and good example of other pupils to learn what is expected and they settle into the school well.

40. As at the time of the previous inspection, the school continues to provide pupils with a strong, caring atmosphere. Overall provision is now very good, with many excellent features.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has established very good partnerships with parents, other schools and colleges and the community.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school works very effectively with parents to support pupils' learning and well-being.
- The school has established a very wide range of mutually beneficial partnerships with many local schools and colleges.
- The school knows the local area very well and has many links that help to widen pupils' horizons and share professional expertise.

### **Commentary**

41. The warm, positive atmosphere and relationships between staff and parents and grandparents lead to very strong links between home and school. Parents are highly appreciative of staff and their work, and feel part of a constructive partnership. They are united in their appreciation of the ethos in the school and the way in which staff reach out to the pupils and to themselves to meet individual and general needs. Parents find staff approachable and helpful and are very supportive of their work on behalf of the children. Almost all attend consultations with teachers to find out how their child is getting on, and work with staff to help pupils who experience difficulties, for instance with their learning, behaviour or attendance. Parents and grandparents provide a lot of support in classrooms and with special events. Their work is very well planned into the timetable and they are given clear guidance by teachers. Several voluntary helpers are trained to support in particular areas, such as reading, and many have given their time and skills over several years. The school runs courses for parents to learn more, whether it is to understand what their children are learning or to develop skills themselves. Parents also support the school significantly by helping to organise social and fundraising events, and these are extremely well attended by the main parent body and other family members.

42. A few parents say that they would prefer to be more involved formally, through consultations and sharing of information, about new developments. The school has a variety of ways of finding out parents' views. These are mainly informal and enable staff to respond quickly should the need arise, for example to resolve queries and concerns. However, formal consultation is not fully developed to give all parents the opportunity to be involved in evaluating the work of the school. Parents receive a good range of information about school life and their children's progress overall, but annual written reports are not as useful to parents as they could be: they do not always contain enough information to let parents know what their children can do and need to do to improve.

43. The staff in the Foundation Stage have established very good relationships with parents. Care is taken to involve parents when children join Nursery and when they move to Reception. The parents' help at home with reading activities is valued. The regular time given within lessons by family members, including parents and grandparents, is highly appreciated and makes a significant contribution to the children's achievement.

44. There are very good links with the parents of children who have SEN. Information is shared at regular review meetings. Pupils who have any SEN are identified early and support is identified from the time they enter Nursery. Teaching staff and the SENCO are approachable and meet informally with parents if necessary. There are very good arrangements in place when pupils enter or leave the school.

45. The school works very effectively with parents of pupils attending the Resource Base. This supports pupils' well-being and learning very well. Very good procedures are in place to keep parents informed and involved. There are many opportunities for parents to talk about their child's needs and progress and, for some pupils, parents are kept informed on a day-to-day basis. Because the school works so hard to build relationships with parents, reviews are very well attended by parents. At reviews, staff discuss the progress made and encourage parents to support their child's hopes, aspirations and next challenges. Parents are given copies of IEPs, most of which contain ideas for how parents can help. This working together benefits pupils. Parents are very positive about the impact that the very good provision has on their child's learning, mobility, social relationships and personal development. Planning for the transfer of pupils in Year 6 to secondary school is very thorough.

46. The school is part of a 'Community of Learning', involving all local schools, and is continuing many initiatives begun within the former Education Action Zone. The school works closely with partner primary and secondary schools to help prepare pupils for the move to the next stage of their education. The school takes part in lots of activities that improve pupils' learning, for instance within sport, ICT and music, and also help them get to know others of the same age who will move to secondary school with them. Information is transferred between school and partner secondary schools in good time to enable staff there to take account of friendships, particular talents or special needs when they organise groups. The school has identified a need to provide more visits in preparation for transition, particularly for pupils with additional needs. Transition topic work is particularly helpful to pupils, as they are able to continue in secondary school work they have begun in primary school. This helps boost their confidence, as do sessions arranged in the spring term when leavers from the previous year share their experiences to help support those following after them. Teachers also benefit from links established with other schools as they are able to share skills and information with colleagues there. The school also enjoys close links with a school outside the immediate area, and these have enabled pupils to extend their science skills and take part in a public concert.

47. The school is outward-looking and has established many highly productive links with individuals and organisations in the local and wider community. Local experience and knowledge are harnessed within the governing body and Resource Base, and these contribute very well to management and pupils' learning and welfare, for instance. Staff make very good use of the local environment and amenities to provide a wealth of opportunities for children to gain first-hand knowledge and access to a wide range of additional resources. The school uses and celebrates an extensive range of regional features, ranging from those particular to their local community, such as businesses and conservation areas, to ones with national and international acclaim. For instance, pupils take part in projects with local shops, visit farms and Durham Cathedral, and use photographs of the Angel of the North to inspire their artwork. Museums are well used, as are visitors with particular knowledge and skills such as artists, musicians, fire and police officers and footballers. They are all enlisted to extend pupils' learning, help to keep them safe and broaden their horizons.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management in the school overall are good. The headteacher provides very good leadership, supported well by other key staff. Management and governance are good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a vision of a school in which all can achieve their best, and pursues this with vigour.
- All staff share that vision: it colours the work of the whole school.
- The governing body is well organised and challenges and supports the school effectively.
- Long-term strategic planning is not always rigorous enough.
- The school's finances are run well.

### Commentary

48. The headteacher knows all pupils and staff well and really cares about what happens to them. His powerful vision of a school in which every individual is valued highly and receives exactly the right educational experiences is clear. In discussion, he speaks with passion about improving the lot of all pupils. The integration of the pupils in the Resource Base and the new building now taking place to provide a 'Children's Centre' are evidence of this. He also believes in the importance of a rounded curriculum, and this is evident in the high quality provision for music reported elsewhere. However, this single-mindedness means that other areas are not always viewed as priorities. For example, the latest audit on the school's finances repeated earlier recommendations which the school had not implemented because it viewed them as of lesser importance than the day-to-day education and care of its pupils.

49. The headteacher shares his vision with all staff, who also work towards the same ends. All pull in the same direction. The capable deputy headteacher complements him very well as she oversees the provision for the Foundation Stage and the infants, as well as being a very effective sounding board and critical friend to him. The core subjects are all led well, with music and ICT being led very well. The school's work is checked well by the headteacher and subject leaders, although lesson observations are not always closely focused on the school's priorities. However, the use of longer-term assessment data is not yet rigorous enough. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage is very good. The co-ordinator is highly experienced and plans an imaginative coherent curriculum with her team. She ensures that the needs of different ability groups are very well catered for.

50. The leadership and management of the Resource Base and other provision for pupils with SEN are very good. The very good promotion of inclusion throughout the school has helped to develop a very positive approach to raising the achievement of pupils with SEN. The new link governor is keenly developing his role. The SENCO is very knowledgeable and her expertise is being used well to lead and manage the inclusion of the large number of pupils with statements. The Resource Base is organised well. Sensitive planning successfully balances pupils' timetables between personal care, teaching and learning in lessons, working with the therapists and the nurse, and hydrotherapy time. Staff training is well matched to increasing the school's capability to effectively teach pupils with a wide range of needs. Staff are always looking for ideas or additional training to improve how they help and teach pupils with additional needs.

51. The governing body understands its roles well and takes them very seriously. It acts well as a critical friend to the school and works to shape the school's strategic planning effectively. Although governors could be involved in the development of the school's development planning earlier, they are fully involved in monitoring its progress.

52. The school development plan is based on the priorities that the school perceives, but it is not compiled very rigorously. Whilst the priorities it addresses are entirely appropriate, targets are not obviously listed in order of importance and the link between them and the school's aims and vision is not always explicit. The criteria by which the success of the school's actions might be measured are not always sharp enough.

53. The school has prioritised the maintenance of staffing levels and the Resource Base, and this has led to the dwindling of reserves available to the school. The school is aware of this and is preparing to take the necessary action should its budget not increase enough. The principles of best value are understood by the school and used effectively in purchases. However, a number of minor recommendations in the latest audit report have yet to be implemented, and several were recommended to the school several years previously. Nevertheless, the school provides a good quality of education with spending per head that is within the lower end of the average range. Consequently, it provides good value for money.

**Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004**

<b>Income and expenditure (£)</b>	
Total income	1,018,302
Total expenditure	1,067,736
Expenditure per pupil	2,567

<b>Balances (£)</b>	
Balance from previous year	61,434
Balance carried forward to the next	12,000

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

54. Provision in the Foundation Stage is very good. It is a strength of the school. Children are very well taught and as a result achieve very well. They settle in quickly and work from a lively and interesting curriculum. This is an improvement from the previous inspection, when provision was good.

55. Most children enter the Nursery with skills that are well below those expected for children of their age. Communication skills are particularly weak. This affects their ability to explain their thinking and learning. Consequently, despite very good teaching, standards remain below expectations in children's communication and mathematical skills, and in their ability to explain their knowledge and understanding of the world. They attain the expected skills for their age in their social, physical and creative development. Staff cherish children and provide a rich and vibrant learning environment. The assessment arrangements are good. The results are used to plan activities that are well matched to children's learning. The Foundation Stage is led and managed very well. The co-ordinator is highly experienced and plans an imaginative coherent curriculum with her team. Provision for children with SEN and for the very few children who are early users of English is very 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 teaching is focused on promoting children's confidence, independence and social skills.
- The support staff make an excellent contribution to pupils' learning.

#### **Commentary**

56. Teaching is very good. Consequently, children make very good progress and achieve very well in developing their social skills. As a result, by the end of their time in Reception, many are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals. Most children enter Nursery with social skills below the level expected for their age. Admission arrangements are very effective, with very good relationships between staff and parents. Nursery staff establish secure routines so that children feel safe when they join at the different times of the year. All the staff are very caring and use every opportunity to praise children's independence, develop their confidence and support any children who have SEN. In an excellent lesson, all children were highly engaged and enthusiastic when asked to share their learning in the daily review time. Particularly impressive is the contribution of support staff and volunteers who work with small groups. Reception staff encourage further independence and children respond very well to being 'helpers'. The integration of children with SEN from the Resource Base is highly effective. There are very good transition arrangements between Nursery, Reception and Year 1. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour. Children respond well to this and the excellent relationships, and, as a result, by the time they leave the Foundation Stage their attitudes to school and their behaviour are very good. Nursery and Reception children enjoy school and show real interest in what they are doing. They are eager to start the day and learn!

## COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very 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 very well catered for and are fully included in all activities.
- Many children have difficulty expressing their ideas.

### Commentary

57. Children enter Nursery with a wide range of communications skills, most being well below the level expected for their age. Teaching is very good. As a result, by the end of Reception, while the standards of most remain below expectations, a minority of children are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals. A significant number of children have difficulty expressing their ideas. This affects their ability in many areas of learning. Despite this, achievement is very good. Nursery staff work hard to develop children's confidence in speaking through meaningful 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.

58. All staff lay the foundations for establishing positive attitudes to reading, through sharing attractive big books and familiar rhymes. In a very well taught lesson, children's early reading and speaking skills were extended through an appealing story, *Handa's Surprise*. Staff share books informally throughout the day; however, children need more encouragement to choose to look at books independently during free activity times. Many opportunities are provided for children to write for a range of purposes.

## MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

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

### Commentary

59. Children enter Nursery with limited experience in using and applying mathematical knowledge. Teaching is very good. There is a focus on practical activities through attractive resources. By the end of Reception, while the standards of most remain below expectations, a significant minority of children are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals. All staff take every opportunity to reinforce and extend children's mathematical skills and language. For example, Nursery staff use the soft play area to encourage children to build huge three-dimensional shapes. A range of sand and larger mathematical equipment is in constant use so that children can use their mathematical language. Reception staff build on these practical experiences while encouraging children to record their work. In a well-taught lesson, all children were challenged because the work was carefully planned to cater for the different abilities of the children. By the end of Reception, although children achieve very well, many still find difficulty in explaining their thinking and recording their work.

## KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good because teaching and learning are focused on widening children's understanding through an interesting curriculum.
- The curriculum makes a very good contribution to pupils' appreciation of other cultures.

### Commentary

60. Most children enter Nursery with limited knowledge of the world. Teaching is very good. By the end of Reception, while the standards of most remain below expectation, a significant minority of children are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals. There is a very good range of activities for children to develop their senses and widen their understanding of the world. Very good use is made of social and snack times to help children learn about being healthy. Children enjoy a wide range of experiences such as the very well displayed *Now and Then* topic in Reception. There is an extensive programme of visitors and regular trips into the local community. Investigative areas give children opportunities to handle and explore items and develop their curiosity. However, many children have difficulty expressing their ideas or explaining what they have learnt. Staff widen children's knowledge of different cultures very well. Children learn about special times of the year such as Harvest, Diwali and Christmas. Nursery children showed real pleasure and delight when handling items from an outstanding African display. Staff build up children's pleasure and confidence in using computers by providing daily opportunities to use a range of interesting programs.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

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

### Commentary

61. Most children enter Nursery with skills well below the level expected for their age. Teaching is very good and children achieve very well. The majority are on course to achieve the learning goals by the time they leave Reception. Nursery children have daily opportunities to use a wide range of equipment and to develop their skills safely. Reception children have regular sessions in the hall and outdoors to help them extend their physical skills and learn to respond to music. In a very well taught Reception lesson, children squealed with delight as they learnt to listen and to share small equipment. Particularly impressive in another Reception lesson was the excellent support and inclusion of a pupil with a physical disability. Children develop their manipulative skills by handling dough, scissors and small toys. For 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 **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve very well because the staff provide an exciting curriculum.
- The Imaginative areas are used very well to extend children's creativity.

### **Commentary**

62. Most children enter Nursery with skills well below the levels expected. Teaching is very good and children achieve very well. By the end of Reception most are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals. There are many exciting opportunities for children to develop their creativity and skills. In a very well taught lesson, Nursery children thoroughly enjoyed mixing paints and printing with fruits and vegetables. In both Nursery and Reception classes, there are daily opportunities to paint, draw and make models. Staff extend children's creativity very well through spacious imaginative play areas that are changed frequently. Reception children showed real involvement as they learnt to bath a baby doll and look after patients in a 'hospital ward'! Care is taken to provide topics and resources to engage the interest of boys and girls. All children have many opportunities to explore musical instruments informally.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Consistently good teaching and support enable all pupils to learn and achieve well.
- Excellent relationships and very high expectations motivate and stimulate pupils.
- Subject leaders have identified areas of need well and have implemented strategies that are raising standards.
- Although staff know the pupils well, the assessment and tracking process is not focused well enough to enable staff to identify clearly how well pupils are progressing.
- Pupils are not yet consistently given clear targets for improvement to help them to know what to do to move on.
- Literacy is well supported across the curriculum and there are frequent opportunities to develop extended writing in different subject areas.

### **Commentary**

63. The results of the most recent standard national tests available showed that seven year olds were above the national average in reading and about in line with the average in writing. At age 11, pupils were below the national average. Results over the past few years have generally been improving at age seven but have fluctuated at age 11 with a generally downward trend. There is evidence that many pupils in recent years have entered the school with poor language skills. During this inspection standards in speaking and listening were generally found to be below the expected level in Year 2. Pupils listen well and are confident to talk about what they are doing, but their vocabulary is limited and many find it difficult to express themselves clearly. Pupils make good progress so that by Year 6 they are much better at communicating clearly and standards in speaking and listening are at about the expected level. Reading skills are being developed well and pupils in both Year 2 and 6 are at about the level expected. Pupils' writing skills are significantly

weaker than their reading ability and in Year 2 these are below the expected level. Good progress is made, so that by Year 6 they are in line with expectations, though the number of pupils performing at the higher Level 5 is not as high as would be expected. Given the low starting point in terms of what they can do when they come into the school, progress is good and all pupils, including those with SEN, achieve very well.

64. Many pupils enter the school with lower than expected levels of speaking and listening skills, and these are well developed by the teachers. Pupils are encouraged to listen and are given lots of opportunities to express themselves in class discussions, through talking with a partner, in role play and in talking with teachers and teaching assistants. In a Year 2 lesson seen, for example, several pupils were encouraged to read out and talk about poems they had been writing and the teacher skilfully extended the pupils so that one-word responses were expanded. The school develops pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence very well and this helps pupils to become more confident speakers so that by Year 6 they are able to express themselves effectively.

65. Much thought has been given to improving the standard of reading. The 'better reading partnership' scheme has proved very effective in raising the standard of reading of pupils who were finding it difficult, with very good support being given by a number of parents. Pupils are now given a good grounding in how to use books, in particular non-fiction books, to get information. All the Year 2 pupils spoken to were able to explain clearly how to use a contents page, an index and a glossary and to scan for information. This contrasts very well with the previous inspection, when this was a clear weakness. All the pupils spoken to in the school are very positive about reading. The library facilities are no more than adequate, being housed in quite a small area that is not very convenient for most classes. But good use is made of what is there and the number and quality of the books has been improved. The subject leaders clearly recognise the shortcomings of the library and are trying to find ways of improving it. All classes have a reasonable range of fiction books.

66. Writing has already been identified by the school as needing improvement and some strategies are already helping to raise standards. Resources have been improved to enhance teaching of guided writing across the school. The frequency of teaching and learning of writing, especially non-fiction writing, has been reviewed and staff discussions have highlighted opportunities for developing this across a range of subjects. Other plans include more involvement of parents to support, and an information leaflet for parents has already been drafted. A good range of extended writing was observed during the inspection, including poetry, imaginative writing, narrative writing and reporting. It was particularly pleasing to see pupils using their writing skills in a practical way; for example pupils in Year 3 were writing letters about a class garden centre linked with a visit to a museum and garden centre. This makes the learning much more interesting and relevant for the pupils. Handwriting is regularly taught and presentation is sound but there are some inconsistencies. For example, although joined writing is regularly taught in Year 2, it is not actually used in pupils' writing until Year 3. Not all teachers actually use the taught joined script when writing in pupils' books or writing on the whiteboards. This gives conflicting messages to pupils and devalues the importance of good handwriting.

67. The quality of English teaching in the school is good and a significant amount of very good teaching was observed. Relationships are excellent, both between pupils, who work well together, and between staff and pupils. This results in very positive attitudes on the part of the pupils; they enjoy their work and are keen to do well. Teachers engage pupils very effectively and give them very good encouragement, whilst having very high expectations of behaviour. This creates a very positive learning environment. All pupils are very well included so that even those pupils who join classes for only part of the time are really well integrated. Teachers and learning support assistants work effectively together to ensure that all pupils are well supported. The commitment and quality of support given by the learning support assistants play a significant part in helping all pupils to achieve well, especially pupils with special educational needs, who achieve very well and make very good progress towards the targets set for them. Staff know the pupils and assess their progress well on a day-to-day basis. However, teachers do not consistently assess pupils' achievement in terms of National Curriculum Levels. Tracking systems are not yet consistent or focused well enough to enable teachers to monitor easily pupils' achievement over time. This makes it more difficult to target extra help where it is needed. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and make

pertinent comments on their work, but they do not identify clearly enough what pupils need to do to improve, and pupils are not consistently being set specific targets for improvement. The need to improve assessment and tracking has already been recognised by the subject leaders and is part of their action plan.

68. The subject leaders have had the responsibility for less than a year but give good leadership and manage the subject satisfactorily. They have identified the areas of need well and have already implemented several strategies effectively. They monitor the subject satisfactorily through checking planning and reviewing pupils' work but they have not so far had an opportunity to monitor the teaching directly. Resources are good and are well used, and the high quality of display work enhances the learning environment and stimulates in pupils a desire to do well. The subject has made sound progress since the previous inspection.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

69. Language and literacy are supported well across the curriculum. This has been a focus through the school and there is a lot of evidence to show that teachers regularly give pupils opportunities to write in other subjects. Information and communication technology (ICT) is also used well to support language and literacy. Good examples were seen in the Year 1 'Billy Goats Gruff' display corner and in the books pupils have made, linking English, art and ICT. The Year 5 'Cats and Mice' display is also impressive, combining poetry, music, art and ICT, and there is some very good Year 6 work based on the Titanic, using Internet research and ICT skills.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average by Year 6.
- Teaching is good throughout the school and pupils achieve well.
- Pupils enjoy a practical and interesting curriculum.
- Pupils with special needs are very well supported and achieve very well.
- Leadership is good.
- Some aspects of assessment, such as marking and pupils' self-evaluation, are not fully effective.

### **Commentary**

70. Standards are above average by Year 6, with pupils achieving well. Standards are below 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. Pupils with SEN achieve very well throughout the school as a result of very good provision. While the school has been very successful in enabling the great majority of infant pupils to attain the expected Level 2, few pupils gain the higher Level 3 and this has depressed the overall performance at the end of Year 2. Recent test standards in Year 6 have been consistently above average.

71. The quality of both teaching and learning is good. Indeed there is evidence of some very good teaching in Year 1 and Year 6. For example, in both Year 1 lessons seen, higher and lower attaining pupils made very good gains in their basic number skills. This was because the teaching was clear and focused, with very good use made of practical resources and additional adults to

support pupils. Key strengths of good teaching include very positive insistence on high standards of behaviour, very good use of resources and many opportunities for pupils to talk about their learning. There are very good relationships between pupils and staff. As a result, pupils know their efforts are valued, work hard and have very positive attitudes to learning.

72. Pupils develop their skills through a practical, interesting curriculum. Teaching is fun yet focused. The grouping of pupils by ability from Year 2 onwards is effective in ensuring that work is usually pitched at the correct level. Teachers generally provide work that is challenging and consequently most pupils achieve well. Planning, whilst satisfactory, does not consistently cater for a few middle attainers who, with more targeted support, could make even better progress towards attaining the higher levels. The quality of marking is satisfactory overall. There are examples of good marking where teachers help pupils understand what they need to do next to improve, but this is not consistent throughout the school. The school does not set individual targets for pupils to work towards. This is a missed opportunity for helping pupils to understand any area of weakness they need to work on.

73. Pupils with SEN are very well supported by a team of very knowledgeable learning support assistants and consequently achieve very well. In infant classes, learning support assistants are used highly effectively during registration time to prepare pupils in advance for aspects of their numeracy lessons. In junior classes, pupils have additional time to practise basic skills. A real strength in infant classes is the regular use of volunteers to help children work in very small groups. The integration of pupils from the Resource Base is highly effective throughout the school. Lower attaining pupils benefit greatly from the expertise of the Resource Base learning support assistants when pupils work together. In a highly effective session, the learning support assistant matched the work very closely to each pupil's learning needs. She spent time with each pupil individually and enabled the rest to work independently by providing computer programs matched to their particular level of understanding and skills.

74. Good opportunities are provided in every lesson for pupils to talk about their learning. Teachers use the start and end of lessons well, both to explain tasks and to give pupils the opportunity to share their learning. Occasionally, the pace of lessons slows, because not enough work is planned to fill the time available. All pupils have regular opportunities to apply their skills to a range of mathematical problems. This is an improvement from the time of the previous inspection when this aspect was identified as a weakness. For example, in a very well taught lesson, pupils in Year 6 were able to apply their mathematical knowledge of measuring perimeters to calculate accurately the best value for fencing a swimming pool. Mathematics makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils have many opportunities to work in small groups, share resources and discuss their learning.

75. The subject is well led by two knowledgeable and enthusiastic subject leaders. It is satisfactorily managed. Both subject leaders regularly monitor planning and analyse pupils' work and test papers. However, they have fewer opportunities to observe teaching and learning. While assessments are regularly undertaken to identify areas of weakness, the systems for tracking pupils' individual progress are not rigorous enough to fully inform teachers' planning. Progress since the previous inspection has been good.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

76. Good use is made of mathematical skills in other subjects. There are regular opportunities to measure and calculate accurately, for example recording temperatures in science, plotting information in graph form in geography and using time lines and dates in history. The school uses computer programs well to support mathematical learning, particularly with lower attainers. There are good examples of teachers and pupils using interactive whiteboards and computer programs to assist learning.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good overall.
- The curriculum is broad and relevant.
- Pupils' achievement is very good overall and standards are well above average by Year 6.
- Pupils make good use of scientific vocabulary.
- Leadership and management are good.
- There are inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' marking.

### Commentary

77. The 2004 teacher assessments in science showed that the attainment of pupils in Year 2 was below average for all schools, and average for schools in similar contexts. Inspection evidence shows that the attainment of pupils in the current Year 2 is close to the national average and achievement is good, which represents a satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. The attainment of Year 6 pupils in the 2004 national tests was well above the national average for all schools and also for schools in similar contexts. Inspection evidence confirms that, as a consequence of very good teaching, these standards have also been achieved by the current Year 6 pupils, and achievement is very good for all pupils, including those with SEN. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection.

78. Teaching and learning are good in Years 1 and 2, and very good in Years 3 to 6. In a well-planned lesson with Year 4 pupils, for example, the teacher made skilful use of the interactive whiteboard to demonstrate the components and functions of an electric circuit. Pupils then worked well in pairs, investigating whether objects were conductors or insulators, and recording their results carefully and accurately. Their learning was very effectively consolidated by the teacher's use of carefully phrased questions supplemented by a quiz from a computer program, to which the pupils responded enthusiastically.

79. Examination of completed work shows that pupils apply their investigative skills widely to the study of physical processes, materials and living things. They show a good understanding of key scientific ideas, such as what is meant by a fair test, and are competent in the use of scientific language. However, there is variability in the quality of written feedback which teachers offer their pupils about their work.

80. The curriculum for science is very good and provides pupils of all abilities with a suitable level of challenge. Pupils are given good opportunities to develop their skills of scientific enquiry in the classroom and to extend their experience within the school grounds and through visits out of school.

81. Leadership and management are good. The subject is very well resourced, the scheme of work is up to date, and a revised assessment scheme has recently been introduced. The subject leader is involved in monitoring pupils' written work on a regular basis, but does not currently monitor teaching.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in ICT is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff are confident in the use of ICT to support their teaching.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- Standards and achievement at the end of Year 6 are well above average.
- Assessment of pupils' progress is very good.
- The school has benefited from links with the Education Action Zone.
- The ICT suite is too small for whole class groups.

### **Commentary**

82. The school has kept abreast of developments in this rapidly changing subject through investment in new technology and thorough staff training.

83. Pupils achieve well by the end of Year 2, when standards are above the national average. By the end of Year 6 standards are well above the national average and pupils achieve very well. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

84. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Teachers are adept at the use of the interactive whiteboards and, as a result, their teaching is much enhanced. They have good subject knowledge and are confident in teaching pupils the skills of ICT. In a good Year 2 lesson in the ICT suite, the teacher taught the class how to access programs from the Internet, ably assisted by two learning support assistants. The pupils worked very well in pairs of mixed ability, co-operating and supporting each other sensibly and with respect. Behaviour was very good; they were interested and motivated, and all pupils, including those with SEN, made good progress.

85. The ICT curriculum is broad and addresses National Curriculum requirements well. Assessment procedures are thorough and fully involve pupils through the use of an ICT 'passport'. This consists of a self-auditing profile of ICT skills, completed by pupils and monitored by the teachers.

86. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject leader is enthusiastic, with many plans for further developments in the subject, and has benefited from work with the Education Action Zone. Resources are very good and the school now has a permanent link to the Internet. However, the ICT suite is too small and insufficiently ventilated to comfortably accommodate full class groups.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

87. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used widely to support pupils' learning in other subjects of the curriculum, particularly through the use of the interactive whiteboards. Pupils make extensive use of the Internet for research: in science, for example, they apply their ICT skills to find information about the solar system and the planets. Good use is also made of computer programs to help pupils with SEN develop their understanding in mathematics.

## **HUMANITIES**

88. No lessons were observed in geography and history so it is not possible to make any judgement about quality of provision or about teaching and learning.

89. A review of the work being done through the school shows that the elements of the National Curriculum for geography and history are being covered and standards are at about the expected level at both Year 2 and Year 6. Some good work is produced, especially in history and particularly, though not exclusively, in Years 5 and 6.

90. History and geography support literacy well, with opportunities given to produce extended writing. Examples include the Year 2 work on holidays, the Year 3 writing of letters linked to pupils' visit to Sunderland Museum, and the Year 5 extended writing based on their work on Victorian children. The Year 6 work on the 'Swinging Sixties' is particularly good, with pupils doing a lot of their own research and Internet work. There are good links with other subjects, with examples of links with art and design, design and technology, religious education, music, science, and numeracy. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support geography and history.

## **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The subject provides very good support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Good use of visits and practical experiences make religious education relevant and interesting to pupils.
- There are no consistent assessment procedures for monitoring pupils' progress.

### **Commentary**

91. Only two lessons were observed in religious education and the amount of pupils' written work available to analyse was quite limited, especially in Years 1 and 2. It is not therefore possible to make a secure judgement about standards in the infants. Discussions and a review of work and displays show that all elements of the local agreed syllabus are being covered. Certainly some of the work being done is good, as shown by the Year 1 display about christening and the Year 2 display on Buddhism. Lessons seen and work reviewed in Years 3 to 6 show that standards are above those expected. Good work produced includes the Year 3 work on Sikhism, linked to pupils' visit to the Sikh Association in Sunderland, and the Year 6 work on religious symbols. All pupils make good progress and achieve well.

92. On the evidence available, teaching is good. Relationships are very good and teachers motivate pupils very well through very good use of encouragement and high expectations. Pupils enjoy their lessons and have positive attitudes. All pupils are very well included and integrated into the lessons. Pupils are encouraged to think about how religious beliefs affect people and to relate them to their own experiences. One of the strengths is the way that pupils are given practical experiences to make what they are learning more relevant. Examples of this were seen in the role-playing of a christening ceremony that was shared by Year 1 pupils. This involved the local vicar and the use of an actual font and christening robes. Pupils actually experienced what it was like to be parents and godparents. The visit to the Sikh Association was another good example, and this was followed up in the Year 3 lesson observed, in which pupils had clearly learned and understood a lot and were enthusiastic about designing a Gurdwara. The Year 6 lesson seen followed on from yet another visit, this one to Durham Cathedral. Pupils were being encouraged well to think about the symbolism and meaning of some of the stained glass windows and the parts that remembrance and commemoration play in people's lives. Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is mainly informal and there is no consistent, easy-to-use whole-school assessment process to enable teachers to straightforwardly monitor pupils' progress. There is little evidence of work being targeted at the needs of individual pupils or groups.

93. There are good links with other subjects, such as art and history. Religious education supports literacy well through opportunities for writing and extended writing, as with some of the Year 6 work on symbols. The Year 5 letter writing was effectively tied in to pupils' involvement in charity work, linking religious education, language and personal and social education well and making the subject relevant and practical. During the inspection week, Barnardos visited the school, Year 5 pupils having collected almost £400 to support their work. Religious education supports the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.

94. The subject leader leads and manages the subject well. Although she has not been able to monitor any teaching, she has monitored planning and pupils' work and has a good overall view of the subject and how pupils are progressing through the school. Resources are good and are well used, especially the visits and visitors, which enhance the provision well. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

95. Physical education, art and design, and design and technology were not a focus of the inspection and no judgements can be made about the quality of provision or standards. One lesson was observed in physical education, but none were seen in art and design or design and technology.

96. Pupils experience a broad curriculum in physical education and there are a number of sports teams that compete successfully with local schools in, for example, football, gymnastics and basketball. The football team is at present the reigning county champion.

97. In a satisfactory Year 1 lesson, pupils practised developing their ball-handling skills and applied these when playing a game. Most worked enthusiastically, listened well and followed instructions. The very good working partnership between the teacher and the learning support assistant resulted in pupils with special educational needs participating fully in the lesson.

98. Work on display in art and design and design and technology, as well as other completed work, indicates that all required areas are taught and that pupils take care in their work to produce the best possible finish.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management are very good.
- There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.

### **Commentary**

99. The school is justifiably proud of its provision for music and performance. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are well above expectations and achievement is very good overall. This represents a very good improvement since the last inspection.

100. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school. This is partly due to the timetabling of staffing in the juniors, which enables teachers with strengths in the teaching of music to teach all pupils in the year group. In a good lesson in Year 5, the teacher both led and supported

the pupils, who showed good skills, in playing tuned and untuned percussion instruments to accompany singing by the rest of the class. Encouraged by the teacher, the pupils learned to be self-critical as a means to improvement, and they achieved well.

101. Pupils enjoy music and are confident performers. The school excels in providing a wide range of individual instrumental tuition and opportunities for pupils to join the choir or the orchestra. This is to a large extent due to the very good leadership and management, enthusiasm, and skills of the subject leader, ably supported by talented colleagues from within and outside the school. As a result, the school choir and orchestra have given a wide range of public performances, as well as performances within the school, and have had an impressive record of success in inter-school music competitions. During lunch breaks and after school there are numerous opportunities for pupils to learn to play instruments such as the guitar, the trumpet, the flute, the violin, the recorder and the keyboard.

102. The school is very well resourced for the teaching of music. Accommodation is very good and there are sufficient rooms available for music tuition and practice. The subject also benefits from close links with a local secondary school with Arts status, which provides instruments and tuition for pupils learning to become brass players. The scheme of work is based on national guidelines supplemented by a published scheme, and provides a good progression of learning in the subject.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

103. This was not a focus of the inspection and no secure judgements on standards, teaching, learning or provision can be made. The school sees the development of pupils' personal and social skills as highly important, and this is confirmed in the judgements elsewhere in this report about the school's very positive ethos, in which all individuals are valued. As a result, very good curricular provision is made to ensure that pupils learn to grow in maturity as they pass through the school. This is done through the use of timetabled lessons and 'Circle Time', in which pupils can discuss their thoughts and concerns in a supportive atmosphere. Other sessions make a positive contribution. For example, in a session at the end of the afternoon for pupils in Year 1, the teacher made very good use of stories like 'Not Fair, Won't Share' and 'The Feelings Book' to allow pupils to reflect on the moral and social messages in a mature way.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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