

INSPECTION REPORT

Thornhill Primary School

Shildon, County Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114106

Headteacher: Mrs S Clough

Lead inspector: Mrs E Linley

Dates of inspection: 13th – 15th June 2005

Inspection number: 267656

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

© Crown copyright 2005

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	189
School address:	Thornhill Gardens Shildon County Durham
Postcode:	DL4 1ES
Telephone number:	01388 772906
Fax number:	01388 772906
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs A Young
Date of previous inspection:	17 th May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Thornhill Primary School is situated in Shildon, County Durham. The school serves a mixed area that is characterised by a mixture of private and public housing. There are 189 girls and boys who attend Thornhill Primary School and 24.9% of pupils are entitled to free school meals and this is broadly average. Children enter the reception class in the September prior to their fifth birthday and most children have received some nursery or pre-school experience before starting school. When children start in the reception class their attainment is generally below what might be expected nationally. However, because the school is smaller than the average sized primary school, attainment on entry to school varies year on year. This reflects the nature of a small school and the differences seen between year groups of pupils. The school has 31 pupils on its list of special educational need; of these, five have a formal statement of Special Educational Need and this is above the national average. There are no pupils whose first language is believed not to be English. Thornhill Primary School was awarded the Healthy Schools award in 2002, the 'Basic Skills Quality Mark' and a 'School Achievement' award in 2001 and 2003. The school is currently involved in local initiatives such as the 'Time for Children' project.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
27281	Mrs E Linley	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage, science, art and design, design and technology and English as an additional language.
9572	Mrs K Anderson	Lay inspector	
30781	Mrs W Stenton-Richardson	Team inspector	English, religious education, music and special educational needs.
33507	Mrs E Brierley	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, history, geography and physical education.

The inspection contractor was:

Focus Education (UK) Limited
113 – 115 High Street
Uppermill
Saddleworth
OL3 6BD

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	15
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	17
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	28

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective school with very good features. As a result of the headteacher's very good leadership and good leadership, management and teaching overall, pupils achieve well over time. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well during their time in school.
- The leadership of the headteacher and governance are very good.
- Teaching and learning are good overall. However, there is inconsistent use of assessment information to ensure that more able pupils are effectively challenged.
- The curriculum is good overall and its enrichment is very good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Although the school works hard to promote good attendance, attendance is just below the national average.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning, their behaviour and relationships in the school, are very good.

The key issues raised at the time of the last inspection have been addressed in the main, although the use of assessment information to aid teaching and learning remains a focus for development. Similarly, subject leaders' evaluation of monitoring and performance data, to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can, is still inconsistent. Improvements have been made, however, to pupils' behaviour, their attitudes to learning and relationships, all of which are now very good. Other improvements include the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and this is now very good. Since the last inspection, significant investment has been made to improve resources for ICT and this has aided pupils' achievement effectively.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 6 results

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

*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.*

Pupils' achievement is good. Attainment on entry to school is below what might be expected nationally, however, children make a positive start in reception and they achieve well during their year in the Foundation Stage. By the end of reception most children are likely to meet the levels expected of them in their personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development. Pupils achieve well overall in relation to their capability throughout school. By the age of seven, pupils attain standards that are average in reading, writing, mathematics and science and standards attained by the age of eleven are average in English, mathematics and science. This equates to good achievement over time given pupils' varying abilities when they started school. Pupils who have special educational needs similarly achieve well; this is because of the very good quality of provision that is in place for their needs. Although pupils achieve well overall, more able pupils do not always achieve as well as they should. This is because assessment information is not used consistently to aid teaching and learning. This picture of underachievement at the higher levels was reflected in the 2004 national tests for pupils aged seven, in reading and writing, and at age 11, in mathematics and science. When comparing results

to similar schools, and in relation to pupils' prior attainment at age 11, standards overall were well below average in English, average in mathematics and below average in science. This drop in results reflected unforeseen circumstances for the school with staff absences having occurred. Nonetheless, the improvement in the school's results at age seven was above the national trend over the last four years and at 11 was broadly in line with the national trends. Pupils' achievement in ICT is good throughout school and pupils achieve in line with expectations for their age with the exception of in Years 5 and 6 where standards attained are above expectations for many pupils. In religious education, standards achieved match those prescribed by the syllabus in local schools from Years 1 to 5; however, in Year 6, this is not the case, and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. Pupils' personal development is very good and as a result, they have very positive attitudes towards learning and their behaviour is also very good. Attendance is just below the national average and punctuality is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Pupils with special educational needs are taught and supported very well and this is characterised by teachers' very good use of teaching assistants who contribute very well to pupils' learning. Assessment is satisfactory overall. Teachers use an effective range of assessment strategies to track pupils' progress. However, assessment information is not used well enough by all teachers to ensure that the needs of more able pupils are met effectively. Similarly, the quality of marking, to help pupils understand how they can improve their work, is inconsistent. The school provides a good curriculum that is enriched very well to develop pupils' learning. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good overall. However, the use of outdoor provision is not consistently developed to aid children's learning and achievement across the curriculum. The accommodation and resources that support the school's provision are very good overall. The school provides a very good level of care for pupils' welfare, health and safety and this underpins the very good relationships that pupils establish with adults in school. Links with parents, the community and with other schools are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and she is supported well by key staff. The overall management of the school is good. Governance is very good. Governors have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and ensure that all statutory responsibilities are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents expressed very positive views about Thornhill Primary School. They particularly value the very good ethos of the school. Some parents were concerned about bullying. However, evidence indicates that the school deals firmly and well with individual incidents. As a result, pupils' behaviour overall has much improved since the last inspection. Pupils hold very positive views about their school. They enjoy the range of activities that are available for them and are particularly proud of their school's sporting talents.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that information gathered from assessments is used effectively and consistently to meet the needs of pupils who are more able.
- Continue the work to improve attendance.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards achieved are good over time. Children start school with skills that are generally below what is expected of them. However, attainment on entry to school has varied year on year which is typical of a smaller than average school where the size of year groups varies. Most children achieve well in relation to their capability; as a result, by the age of seven and 11 pupils attain standards that meet the national average in reading, writing, mathematics and science.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make a positive start in Foundation Stage and so from a below average starting point the majority of pupils achieve well over time.
- More able pupils do not always achieve as well as they should.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and this reflects the very good leadership of the special educational needs coordinator.
- Pupils achieve well in ICT and so by Years 5 and 6 many attain standards that are above expectations for their age.
- The achievement of pupils in Year 6 in religious education is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

1. The school's results in the national tests for seven year olds in 2004 showed that overall standards were below average in reading, writing and mathematics. When compared with similar schools, pupils' performance was average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, overall improvement is reflected in the trends seen over the last four years which have been above the national average in national tests for pupils in Year 2.

Key Stage 1

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.9 (15.5)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	13.8 (12.9)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	15.6 (15.9)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 28 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Key Stage 2

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in [year]

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	24.5 (28.7)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	26.7 (28.4)	27.0 (26.8)
science	27.9 (29.7)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 19 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. The school's results in the 2004 national tests for 11 year olds showed that standards in English were well below average; they were below average in mathematics and in science.

The results were lower than in previous years owing to circumstances beyond the school's control, caused by staff absence. Significant impact was felt on teaching and learning at that time and as a result, on pupils' achievement. In comparison with similar schools, and in relation to pupils' prior attainment, pupils attainment in the 2004 tests was well below average in English, average in mathematics and below average in science. The trends of improvement over the last four years was also affected by the outcome, however, standards were still broadly in line with the national trend for pupils in Year 6. Inspection evidence shows an improvement on the standards achieved in 2004. Achievement at the higher levels, however, remains an issue for the school as more able pupils do not achieve consistently as well as they should.

3. Given that children start school with skills that are below what might be expected nationally, however, and that many pupils who are older started school with skills that were well below expectations, the majority of pupils achieve well over time. Their good achievement is helped by the positive start they make in their first year in school. Good teaching and learning overall in the reception class means that children's skills are well developed. As a result, the majority of children will begin Year 1 with skills that meet expectations for their age across the six areas of learning within the Foundation Stage curriculum.
4. Parents are pleased with their children's achievement particularly for those pupils who have special educational needs. Provision for these pupils has significantly improved since the last inspection. This improvement is as a direct result of the very good leadership. Parents particularly value the quality of provision in place that enables their children to achieve as well as they do.
5. This picture of the headteacher's leadership impacting on pupils' achievement is seen elsewhere, for example, in improving resources for ICT. This investment has impacted on pupils' achievement throughout school. Resources and provision have improved which have aided pupils' achievement, as a result, many pupils in Years 5 and 6 attain above national expectations.
6. This picture of good achievement is also a feature for most pupils in religious education. From Years 1 to 5, pupils attain standards in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and teaching and learning ensure that they achieve well. This is not the case in Year 6 where inconsistent teaching and learning of the agreed scheme of work for pupils of this age has meant that pupils' attainment is unsatisfactory. During the inspection, art and design, design and technology, history, geography, music and physical education were sampled and so no overall judgements have been made on provision and standards in these subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' personal development is very good and is supported effectively by the school's very good provision overall for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are very good. Attendance is slightly below the national average and punctuality is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A minority of parents take their children out of school for holidays and this affects attendance.
- The school's extremely positive approach to behaviour ensures a successful outcome.
- Very good relationships underpin a purposeful and positive working environment.
- Pupils take very seriously their role of living in the school community.

Commentary

7. Pupils enjoy their school. They enjoy talking to visitors about their work and play. Almost all like coming and enter into activities with interest and enthusiasm. Staff work very hard to ensure that pupils are mindful of the needs of others and they consistently demonstrate their very high expectations for pupils to behave very well. Behaviour is very closely monitored in order to identify those who need extra support. This focus reflects the importance of the very good moral and social provision that is in place for pupils' development. Because children help to devise the school rules and review these at regular intervals they know how they are expected to behave and almost always do so. As a result, behaviour is very good overall and pupils develop very positive attitudes to their learning. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
8. Pupils' personal development is promoted very well and is underpinned by the very good relationships that are established between all members of the school community. Pupils respond well overall to the guidance that adults give them and are happy to take on board responsibilities. For example, each class takes responsibility for an area of the school and individual pupils act as librarians and or have the job to water the plants. Helpers carry out a number of jobs in class and at playtimes buddies are available for those who need support. Pupils are enthusiastic about their roles in school and take them seriously.

Attendance

Although the school works hard to promote good attendance, attendance is just below the national average.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (94.5%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.6	School data	0.1
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.

Exclusions

Although the school has imposed a number of exclusions for pupils who have problems with maintaining appropriate behaviour, pupils' attitudes to school life and their behaviour overall are very good.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	182	9	1
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2		
Any other ethnic group	3		

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is good overall. Strengths include good teaching and learning, the very positive partnerships established with parents, the community and with other schools and colleges together with the school's very good care for pupils' health, welfare and safety.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good and assessment is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assessment information is not used consistently in lessons to ensure that the needs of more able pupils are met effectively.
- Imaginative teaching and a brisk pace make learning fun.
- Teaching assistants contribute effectively to teaching and learning throughout the school, particularly for pupils who have special educational needs.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of pupils' conduct.
- Specialist teachers make a significant contribution to pupils' achievement by sharing their expertise and by making learning fun.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 26 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	8	10	7	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.

- Teaching throughout the school is good overall. Where teaching is consistently good or better as in Reception, Years 2 and 4, lessons are imaginative and move at brisk pace. A very good example of this is seen in the teaching of science where the Year 4 teacher's expertise and enthusiasm for teaching generated a buzz that permeated the room. This created a momentum to the lesson and so the pace of teaching and learning was brisk. Similarly, where the school uses subject specialists to teach their subject, as in design and technology, pupils' achievement is significantly enhanced. An example of this was observed in Year 5 where a teacher from the secondary school and a teaching assistant from the primary school, had planned a lesson – one of a series – on designing and packaging nutritional bars. This excellent lesson was characterised by subject expertise, very good planning, explanation and challenge and, most importantly, was fun. Pupils enjoyed themselves and so their learning and achievement was of a high standard.
- A scrutiny of pupils' work shows that where teaching is satisfactory, it is because work is not consistently matched to the needs of pupils and, particularly, those who are more able. The majority of teachers, however, use very good strategies to encourage pupils to behave well and lessons are characterised by teachers' high expectations of their conduct and very good relationships. Parents agree that their children are well taught.
- The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils receive effective help from teachers and learning assistants in most lessons. They are well directed and know what they are expected to do to ensure that pupils' targets are met. Teachers' are aware of the need to include planning for those with individual education plans and this is an improvement since the last inspection
- Assessment is satisfactory overall. The school has an effective system in place to collect data and record pupils' progress particularly to collate information following the results of tests and end of teaching unit assessments. Assessment information, however, is not used

consistently well by all teachers to meet the needs of more able pupils, particularly in mathematics and science. As a result, they do not achieve as well as they should. Similarly, teachers' marking is inconsistent in quality and so pupils do not always know how best they should improve their work. Teachers' discussions with pupils about their work during lessons, however, are purposeful and they help to contribute well to raising pupils' self esteem and confidence.

The curriculum

The curriculum provided by the school is good. Opportunities for enrichment are very good. The quality of the accommodation and resources is very good.

Main Strengths and weaknesses

- The focus on initiatives such as 'healthy schools', 'anti bullying', 'time for children' and 'talking partners' helps pupils effectively in their personal development
- Reception children do not have sufficient access to outdoor provision.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Planned visits and visitors contribute effectively to the quality of the curriculum.
- Significant investment into resources for ICT have aided pupils' achievement.
- The very good range of extra curricular activities on offer to pupils enhances opportunities for citizenship, cultural and social development.

Commentary

13. The school meets the statutory requirements for both the National Curriculum and for the teaching of religious education. The school has fully implemented the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. The curriculum is organised so that sufficient time is spent on each subject. Planning is good and ensures that pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are taught sufficiently well, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Both parents and pupils agree that the curriculum is well organised and interesting. The staff are particularly proud of the curriculum they offer and very positive about the change to a topic based curriculum in Years 1 and 2 which enlivens learning. They are looking forward to implementing a similar change for older pupils later in the year. A particular strength of the school is the willingness to undertake new initiatives within their curriculum planning. Projects such as 'Time for Children', 'Talking Partners' and 'Getting Along' mean that there are very good opportunities for pupils to develop their personal and social skills.
14. The school provides effectively for a well-planned programme for personal, social and health education. The teaching of sex and relationship education, the dangers of drugs and smoking and the importance of healthy eating feature strongly and pupils learn equally the importance of becoming a good citizen. The school's hard work was rewarded with the Healthy School's award in 2002. The work the school has also done towards 'Anti Bullying Accreditation' shows evidence of their determination to develop good citizens for the future.
15. Provision for the Foundation Stage is good overall but there is limited access to the very good outdoor provision, which means that very valuable opportunities are missed to develop independence and curiosity. As a result, children don't have enough time to make choices about their activities outdoors to further develop their physical and creative skills. However the use of links with local churches enhances children's learning very well as for example in their 'wedding' in chapel and 'reception' afterwards in the classroom.
16. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and pupils have full access to the national curriculum. This is good improvement since the last inspection. Parents are pleased about the learning opportunities provided for all children and pupils speak positively about the curriculum and its enrichment. The school has successfully identified more able and talented pupils but as yet has not clearly defined the strategies to extend learning for these

pupils throughout the school. In lessons, opportunities for more able pupils are sometimes restricted because the tasks they undertake are the same for the rest of the class. This means that they do not always achieve to their full potential.

17. The school is well decorated, clean and welcoming and the very good range of displays celebrate the curriculum on offer to the children. Though some classrooms are small very good use is made of space in the corridors and the well-stocked library is being developed to become an area where pupils can improve their research skills. Significant investment has been made by the headteacher into resources for ICT. This has improved resources considerably and the ICT suite is a highly effective resource for the teaching of computer skills which is aiding pupils' achievement in the subject.
18. The school makes very good use of visits and visitors to support learning and this contributes to the curriculum's enrichment effectively. From Foundation Stage onwards pupils are given the opportunity to visit a variety of locations, which have supported learning in religious education, history and geography. Visitors to school such as the Buddhist monk have enhanced learning in religious education very well.
19. The wide range of extra curricular opportunities available to pupils is very good and a strength of the school. The school's policy of appointing staff with a wide range of talents is effective as these are utilised to provide a range of clubs run by the enthusiastic staff. As a result pupils can take part in a wide range of sporting activities with some pupils achieving a very high standard by representing the school both locally and at county level. All pupils in Year 3 learn to play the recorder and there is the chance to learn to play the violin or percussion, join the choir, drama club or clubs which cater for other interests such as yoga. The school places importance on opportunities for pupils to perform in drama and musical activities and a large number of children take part. The residential visit to How Town in Cumbria is also successful in promoting many areas of the curriculum including pupils' social development.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides very good care, guidance and support for pupils. School seeks and acts on pupils' views very effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school offers very good pastoral care for all its pupils.
- Effective links are in place with external agencies to offer effective guidance and support.
- Effective systems are in place to gather pupils' views.
- Pupils are given all the help they need to settle into school.

Commentary

20. Pupils receive a very good level of support and care from all staff in the school and this enables them to make good progress and thrive in the supportive and strong atmosphere for care and learning that the school provides. Child protection procedures are effective and routines for dealing with the safety both of the building and on outside visits, first aid and accidents are very well established. Lunchtime supervisors provide a good standard of care at midday and the caretaker and his team ensure a high standard of cleanliness at all times. Pupils feel that school is a happy and safe place to be in and parents appreciate the quality of care that their children receive. All staff at the school know the pupils and relate to them very well, and pupils confirm that they know whom to go to for support and advice.
21. The use of teaching assistants to support pastoral care is very good throughout the school. Teachers know the pupils very well and they very effectively promote and guide pupils' personal development. The school is working hard to check pupils' progress and guidance in their academic life is currently satisfactory overall. The school works very effectively with external services whose expertise help to tailor guidance and support to individual needs so

that each pupil grows in achievement, self-awareness and self-esteem. A particular strength of the school in this context is the 'Time for Children' programme which the headteacher coordinates to ensure that all agencies work together effectively to support those pupils who are most vulnerable. Similarly, reflecting a community need, 'buddies' from Years 4, 5 and 6 have received training to enable them to support pupils who are vulnerable on the playground.

22. An important factor of pupils developing as citizens of their community is their increasing role to consider their contribution towards school improvements. School, class and environmental councils have been established which are very effective in gathering pupils' views and agreeing on projects the head teacher often consults pupils about how best to spend the budget. Consequently, pupils understand how people are elected to represent their community and they are beginning to grasp how collective decisions are made. They are being well prepared to become future citizens.
23. When children start school, they settle well into the new routines and the Foundation Stage staff quickly get to know them very well. As pupils begin their school day many of them take advantage of the breakfast club, which helps them in their learning and also helps to promote good attendance. Pupils are encouraged to think and give their views in class, at play and particularly in their roles as school council members. As a result, pupils develop very effective and trusting relationships with the adults who they work with. Pupils are proud of their school and feel totally involved in its life and work.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has established very good links with parents. Links with the community, other schools and colleges are also very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Every opportunity is taken to welcome parents into school.
- Information to parents is very good.
- The school maintains a high profile in the school community.
- The headteacher plays an important role in local school based initiatives.

Commentary

24. The majority of parents are very supportive of their school and of its work. Parents feel that teachers listen and respond well to their comments. Leaders in school have worked hard to promote very positive relationships with parents and no opportunity is lost to do so. During the inspection, for example, parents joined a Year 2 class assembly and then enjoyed a cup of coffee with staff after the event where concerns or successes can be shared.
25. Some parents expressed concerns about bullying and how it was dealt with, whilst some felt that they were not informed well enough about the progress of their children. Inspection evidence shows that the school deals with any incidents of bullying on an individual basis and works hard to deal with any case with sensitivity and efficiency. Inspectors also find that, through termly meetings, annual reports and informal meetings there are ample opportunities for transfer of information about pupils' progress. Parents are given regular information about the topics each class will be studying and good guidance about ways they can help their children at home. Workshops help parents to understand more about their child's work, for example about 'Jolly phonics', statutory tests and the National Literacy strategy. As a result parents are encouraged to become actively involved in their child's learning.
26. The school has a high profile in the local community. Very good use is made of the community to promote learning. A wide range of visitors in and visits out are used to enhance the curriculum. Examples of such work includes visits to the local supermarket and Methodists chapel by Reception children. Pupils also take part in many community sporting

and cultural events. These include Chester le Street Athletics, rugby tournaments and music at the Shildon Gala. All these experiences help to increase pupils' knowledge of the wider community and develop their different skills.

27. Because links with other schools are very well established there are good opportunities for head teachers from local schools to meet together on a regular basis. Through the Shildon Schools Partnership the head teacher plays a leading role in initiatives such as the 'Time for Children' project which focuses on pupils emotional well being. This partnership gives teachers from neighbouring schools very good opportunities to exchange views and share ideas. Most pupils transfer to the neighbouring comprehensive. Transition arrangements are good. Pupils make visits to their new school and meet their new teachers before transfer. At present a teaching assistant is working as a link between both schools. A particularly successful feature of this arrangement is the promotion of design and technology within school using the talents and expertise of a teacher from the secondary school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher's leadership is very good and she is well supported by key staff. Management is good overall. Governance is very good and identified aids and barriers to achievement are dealt with effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's aspirations for the school are fully shared by the school's key staff and the governing body.
- The governors maintain very effective links with staff and pupils to aid their monitoring and evaluation of the school's work.
- Co-ordinators do not monitor and evaluate data well enough to ensure that pupils who are more able achieve as well as they can.
- Day to day administration contributes very efficiently to the smooth running of the school.

Commentary

28. Parents' confidence in the leadership of the school is fully justified. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school that has been shared with and understood by parents, staff and governors alike and all are supportive in their different roles. The headteacher works very hard with others to aid pupils in their achievement and in this she presents an excellent role model. For example, the school works hard to combat barriers to learning as identified with those children who have special educational needs and works very well with external agencies to ensure that aids to learning are implemented and effective. This very good provision is much appreciated by parents.
29. Governors are very proud of their school. They visit it on a regular basis to keep abreast of what is going on and to maintain those very important links with the children and staff. They recognise the importance of their roles and through an established committee structure they monitor and evaluate the work of the school as critical friends and ensure that statutory duties and policies are fully in place. A strength of the governing body's work is their understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and their determination to carry through and support actions to aid school improvement.
30. Management of the school is good overall. The training needs of staff are identified and linked to targets for improvement that lead in turn to very effective professional development. Similarly a clear focus on appointing staff who bring subject expertise to the school supports the deployment and balanced workload of staff. Coordinators have worked hard to improve their roles since the time of the last inspection and now monitor teaching and learning more regularly. The regular monitoring and evaluation of data, however, is not sufficiently rigorous. Information gathered is not used well enough to measure pupils' progress against

benchmarks of their achievement or against targets for their development. In this way coordinators do not rigorously ensure that teachers plan to meet the needs of pupils who are more able in lessons.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	483277	Balance from previous year	70545
Total expenditure	506293	Balance carried forward to the next	47529
Expenditure per pupil	2678		

31. Financial management is effective and is aided considerably by the very efficient day to day administration that is carried out by the school secretary. The headteacher and secretary work closely with the governors in respect to the management of funding arrangements. Coordinators also have responsibility for identifying needs and expenditure for their subjects. In this way funds are carefully accounted for and linked effectively with planned priorities for improvement. The larger than average carry forward figure, for example, represents additional grants recently received by the school. Governors are kept fully involved and they support the school very well in ensuring that best value is assured as exemplified in the purchase of resources to aid teaching and learning in ICT. Given pupils' good achievement, together with good teaching overall, a good quality of education and strong pastoral care, the school provides good value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

32. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good overall. The reception class is well organised with effective access to the discovery room which provide stimulating and high quality environments in which children learn. Very good links are established with parents and this aids their children's effective induction into school. Assessments of children's progress are well recorded and used effectively to plan activities that meet children's needs. Although the

Foundation Stage is led and managed well overall, outdoor provision is not used consistently well enough to aid children's learning across the Foundation Stage curriculum.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's personal, social and emotional development is promoted very well across all the areas of learning.
- Children work and play together well.
- The Foundation Stage staff have high expectations of children to behave well and to take responsibility for their actions.

Commentary

33. The very good relationships that exist in the Foundation Stage provide children with a secure environment and ensure that children settle into school life well. Children enjoy the many opportunities that they have to play and work together. The adults who work with children in the Foundation Stage have high expectations of the children to work together and to take responsibility for themselves. For example, in the discovery room, children tidy up after their activities; they put their clothes neatly on their tables when undressing for physical development sessions in the hall and they work together well in pairs when completing shape sorting activities on the interactive white board. Teaching is very good overall. Staff know the children very well and are sensitive to their needs. The majority of children respond to the high expectations of staff by showing very good attitudes to learning and very good behaviour. Praise and encouragement is used very well to develop children's confidence and to ensure that each child tries hard to achieve their best and so all children, including those who have special educational needs, achieve well. As a result, most children will achieve the goal that is expected of them in their personal and social development when they leave reception and many will exceed it.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Foundation Stage team prepare a good range of practical activities that develop children's speaking and listening skills.
- Children sometimes spend too long on the carpet as a class during lessons.
- Parents and older pupils share their language skills and this makes learning fun.

Commentary

34. When children begin in reception their skills are below what might be expected of children of this age and a minority have limited language skills. Planned activities therefore focus on developing children's speaking and listening across all the areas of learning. Good examples of this were seen when staff interacted with children, for example, when they prepared sandwiches and cheese straws for the 'wedding reception'. Also the class teacher questioned the children very well to enable them to explain their thinking as they used the interactive white board in an activity to develop their understanding of shapes. Teaching is good overall, with a good emphasis on children reading shared texts and spelling words and sounds. In a lesson observed the teacher used resources well to enliven teaching and learning and capture

children's interest, for example, by looking at large advertising boards and by noticing language such as 'buy one get one free' in preparation for their visit to the Co-op. On occasions, however, children spend too long on the carpet as a class, which lessens the time during the lesson for children to develop further their own independent activities. Nonetheless, children are encouraged from an early age to develop a love of books and of writing. They talk enthusiastically about their reading books and they read many of the words fluently or tell the story by using the pictures to aid them. Children are beginning to write sentences independently and work together to 'write' their own books, for example, 'The Gingerbread Man'. The Foundation Stage team ensure that many additional opportunities are available. For example, by pupils from Year 5 taking on the role of a story teller on a Friday afternoon; also, by the creation of 'story sacks' made by volunteers during workshops that are effectively organised by the Foundation Stage leader. As a result, children achieve well and the majority are likely to reach the early goals expected by the end of the reception class.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Mathematical language is used and developed at every opportunity.
- Teachers plan a good range of practical activities to cover all aspects of mathematical development.

Commentary

35. Every opportunity is taken by staff to promote children's use and understanding of mathematical language. In the role-play shop area children count up to 10 using real pennies. Children use words such as 'circle' and 'bigger' to describe shape and size. They use language to describe position and directions, for example, 'up', 'down', 'left' and 'right'. Photographic evidence shows that children are helped to solve problems and to collect data through practical activities outdoors, for example, 'how many times can I bounce and catch a ball' in a given time. Pupils create simple patterns using ICT and more able pupils write numbers to 20 and begin to relate the word subtraction to taking away. Good teaching is exemplified by the range of practical activities that are planned to cover all aspects of mathematical development. As a result, children become familiar, for example, with a cuboid and very good interaction between the teacher and individuals helps them to understand the differences between two and three dimensional shapes. Children achieve well and so by the time they leave reception the majority will have reached the goals that are expected of them.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers promote cross-curricular links well to aid children's achievement.
- The very good range of practical and first hand experiences used to stimulate children's curiosity make learning fun.

Commentary

36. Staff provide a wide range of exciting, well-structured activities to widen the children's experience and to develop their knowledge and understanding. A key feature of this high quality provision is the opportunities provided to have first hand experiences of events which exemplifies very good teaching overall. For example, children take part in planned May Day festivities and compare their experience with photographs of May Day in Shildon in 1946. Very good cross curricular links are forged as children 'write' about their experiences. Children experience a 'wedding' at the local church and during the inspection, this was an event from which the children gained significantly. They took on their respective roles with enthusiasm and returned to school for the 'wedding reception' accompanied by many parents and friends. Parents clearly greatly appreciate these types of events that enhance their children's knowledge and understanding of the world about them. Visits to church help to develop children's learning of Christianity whilst visits to school, for example, by a Buddhist monk provide first hand experiences of different faiths. Different cultures are experienced when visitors from Japan come to school and children celebrate 'Happy Japanese Day'. Children's curiosity is developed effectively as they explore and investigate materials to find out if they are 'soft' and through ICT, children grow in confidence to use a variety of equipment, for example the 'Walky Talky' and other programmable toys. Children achieve well and the majority are likely to reach the early goals expected by the end of the reception class.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Outdoor provision does not contribute as well as it should to children's physical development.
- A good range of activities is available to develop the children's fine motor skills effectively.

Commentary

37. The Foundation Stage team provide a good range of activities for children to develop their manipulative skills and so they are confident to use pencils, pens, crayons, paintbrushes, scissors and small construction equipment. Children also have the opportunity to explore larger movements and physical skills in the school hall. In a very good lesson, children practiced their running, skipping and hopping as they warmed up to the music 'Portsmouth' and they counted 1 to 8 as they moved about the hall. Very effective questioning by the teacher helped them to evaluate and share their skills in throwing and catching a ball. They worked together in pairs very well and knew that their heart was beating faster after exercise than it had done before.
38. Although the reception classroom has doors that open on to an enclosed outdoor area, the area was not used during the inspection. Photographic evidence shows that on occasions children go outside to use wheeled toys and large apparatus and equipment. Children say that they go out sometimes; however, this is not a planned part of every day and during the inspection a child used a small car, 'little asda deliveries', in a corner of the classroom as part of the role-play area. Nonetheless, children achieve well in their physical development because of good teaching overall. As a result, children are likely to meet the goals that are expected for their age by the time they leave reception.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's creative skills are developed well across the curriculum.
- The integration of imaginative topics into the curriculum provides good opportunities for creativity.

Commentary

39. Children's creativity is developed well through opportunities they have to play in sand and water and to cut, stick and paint. Children paint in the style of Van Gogh and complete pastel drawings; photographic evidence shows that their work is valued and displayed to a high quality. Staff work hard to make their lessons interesting by including creative elements in their topics. As a result, children are absorbed in their learning without realising that they are practising skills or knowledge, for example, when they made cheese straws for their class 'wedding reception'. Similarly when they had Japanese visitors, children made cards to celebrate and when Chinese visitors came to school, as part of the Chinese Dragon Boat Festival, they created a 'boat dragon' using small and large equipment. Teaching is good and in a lesson observed, children were provided with good opportunities to suggest instruments they might use to accompany their song 'This is the day'. In preparation for the forthcoming wedding they chose hymns and the instruments to be used. Children achieve well in their creative development and the majority will attain the early goals expected of them by the end of reception.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

The provision for English is **good**.

Main Strengths and weaknesses

- The school places good emphasis on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills.
- Teachers are using the national strategy for literacy effectively and this is helping standards to rise in reading and writing.

- Presentation of work is not as good as it should be.
- A strength of teaching is the staff's ability to question pupils effectively to engage their interest.
- Leadership by the subject co-ordinator is very good and this is having a significant impact on standards.
- More able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged in lessons.

Commentary

40. In Year 6 standards in speaking and listening have improved since the last inspection and the school is continuing to take effective action to improve the communication skills of its pupils. By the time pupils reach the age of 11 they meet the expected standards in speaking and listening and so demonstrate good achievement since they started school. A good range of approaches, for example 'circle time' in personal, social, citizenship and health education, having 'talking partners', drama lessons and opportunities such as speaking in class, in assemblies and in school performances develop pupils' confidence and skills well when speaking to each other or to an audience. Class and group discussions also promote talk well but in some lessons, restricted opportunities for discussion because of too much input from the teacher limits the development of speaking and listening by the pupils. The provision of activities such as the drama club and 'Talking Partners' project are successful in helping girls' confidence. In Year 2, the teacher used a game, 'Just a minute', thus providing very good opportunities for pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills so they meet the national average. This fun activity also helped pupils to gain confidence by enthusiastically retelling the key points of the story of the 'Lighthouse Keepers Lunch' to the rest of their class.
41. Standards of reading have improved over the last few years although a dip was seen in the 2004 national tests for pupils aged seven and 11. The school has worked hard to put in place a range of actions to address the drop in standards. Schemes, such as talking partners, the provision of extra support assistants and booster classes have all helped to improve standards in reading throughout the school. Pupils are encouraged to take books home regularly, the key skills of reading are systematically taught during the daily literacy hour and teaching in these lessons is often good or very good. More able pupils do not always build on what they already know and can do and as a result the number of pupils achieving the higher levels is not as high as it might be.
42. Inspection evidence indicates that standards of reading for both 7 and 11 year olds have improved and are now at the level expected for their age. Pupils come into school with reading skills below or well below the level expected for their age so this represents good achievement over time. During the inspection, for example, pupils in Year 6 were seen to read a difficult text: H.G Wells 'War of the Worlds'. Pupils of all abilities in the class had the confidence to try unfamiliar words, for example, 'pulsating', 'appendage', and 'inarticulate'. Many read with expression and the majority were able to retell the main aspects of the extract they had read.
43. Standards in writing have steadily improved although in the 2004 national tests results were still below the national average at age seven and well below age 11. Writing has been recognised as a priority for the school and improvements are being made; inspection evidence indicates that pupils achieve well and by the age of seven and 11 attain standards that meet expectations for their age. More able pupils, however, are not writing as well as they could. This is because they are not always sufficiently challenged in lessons and work does not often take account of what they can already do.
44. The standard and quality of presentation is inconsistent throughout the school. Inconsistency in the quality of letter formation and in the use of different pens or sometimes pencil in written work of older children detracts from the overall appearance of work in exercise books. Some work is undated which makes assessing progress difficult. Work is marked regularly but does not consistently identify what pupils need to do to reach a higher standard.

45. Teaching is good overall. Teachers are particularly effective at asking questions. This encourages pupils to take a real interest in their work so they listen attentively to adults and each other. During group activity sessions the vast majority of pupils share a high level of cooperation and willingness to share ideas as for example in a Year 1 class where pupils used dictionaries to find words with 'ai' or 'ay' in them. Where teaching is very good, the pace is brisk, the teacher is very confident in the subject and reading or writing skills are effectively promoted. The use of questions tailored to meet the needs of different abilities of pupils is particularly effective as are summing up sessions involving pupils in reviewing what they have learnt in the lesson. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of the support given to them by well trained learning assistants
46. The co-ordinator has a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses in the provision of English and has led the staff to address them systematically. She has observed colleagues teaching, checked on work in books and prepared action plans, for example, to improve writing skills in the school. Management of the subject is good overall. However, because of the insufficient use of the increasing amount of accurate data that is being collected, the level of work offered to pupils particularly to those who are more able lacks sufficient challenge. This means that teachers do not always match learning tasks to the needs of pupils sufficiently well for them to achieve their full potential

Language and literacy across the curriculum.

47. The use of language and literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory overall. Planning extends pupils' language and literacy in other curriculum areas as for example in religious education in most classes, although presentation in these subjects is not always as good as it could be. Where teaching is good or very good staff extend spoken language well in role play, drama or discussion. The library area provides a good resource to extend pupils' reading skills in research opportunities for other subjects. Books from all areas of the curriculum are used well in displays and Provide further opportunities for reading.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective oral and mental starters begin lessons with pace.
- Assessment information is not used consistently well enough to meet the needs of more able pupils.
- ICT is used well to support learning.

Commentary

48. Pupils achieve well in mathematics and the majority of pupils attain standards that meet national expectations for their age. Pupils' good achievement is aided by the quality of teaching which is good overall. Evidence of good and very good teaching was seen during the inspection when, for example, pupils' learning about place value in Year 2 was very effectively supported with a game in the 'Sharkpool' on the computer. Similarly, in Year 4, pupils knew that four tenths equalled 0.4, and that a further 0.6 was needed to make it a whole. Such lessons moved at a brisk pace, which aided pupils' learning.
49. A strength to the teaching of mathematics is the oral and mental sessions at the start of each lesson. This is because of the way in which teachers engage the attention and involvement of all learners, and good use is made of interactive white boards to support learning. As a result,

all pupils, including those who have special educational needs, are enabled to achieve well. Resources to support learning across the school are good, and the staff make effective use of ICT to develop and reinforce pupils' knowledge.

50. Although achievement overall is good, pupils who are more able are not consistently challenged in the tasks they have to do. Similarly, marking, used to identify the next steps needed in order for pupils to make progress, is inconsistent in quality throughout school. The headteacher and coordinator have correctly identified assessment and the needs of more able pupils as areas for development.
51. Leadership and management are good overall; the subject leader has effectively utilised the support of a former link adviser and the headteacher to provide additional guidance and support. For example, having analysed the national test results, the need to raise girls' achievement in mathematics has been identified. As a result, teachers target girls in their questioning in order to ensure their involvement and their understanding in lessons. Other initiatives include a 'drop-in' support session, which is provided twice a week for pupils who are struggling with any aspect of their learning. Despite these strengths, the evaluation of data and its use is not rigorous enough. As a result, assessment information is not used well enough in lessons to ensure that pupils who are more able are challenged to achieve their best.

Mathematics across the curriculum

52. Mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory overall. Effective use is made of ICT in the use of interactive white boards. In the ICT suite, a range of mathematical programs are used well and pupils' competitive instincts are engaged as they try to better their own personal best scores using games to reinforce their learning. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils were also seen to use their knowledge of six-figure co-ordinates to locate places on a map and to plan a route. They understood the principles of scaling in order to reduce size on a map.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assessment information is not used well enough or consistently by teachers.
- Teachers use questioning skills well to promote thinking.
- The use of teaching assistants to support pupils who have special educational needs is very good.

Commentary

53. The standards attained by pupils throughout the school are in line with the national average and overall achievement is satisfactory; pupils who are more able do not always achieve as well as they should. This fact was demonstrated in the 2004 statutory tests for pupils aged 11 when pupils' achievement in science at the higher levels was well below expectations nationally and below in comparison with similar schools. This picture has changed slightly since then as more pupils are now achieving at the higher levels in science in Year 6. However, the issue of challenge for more able pupils remains a recognised area for development by the school.
54. One of the main reasons for this lack of challenge of more able pupils is that assessment information is not used well enough by all teachers to plan activities to meet their needs in lessons. A scrutiny of pupils' work and some lessons show that overall teaching is satisfactory and this again is because pupils of different abilities often do the same tasks. Extension work for the more able often involves them completing more work rather than doing something different from the beginning of the lesson which would challenge them to develop

their skills further.

55. In spite of this area for development, pupils are provided with appropriate opportunities to investigate and develop first hand practical scientific experience and teachers question pupils well during lessons to promote their thinking skills. Pupils clearly enjoy these opportunities for investigation and in a very good Year 4 lesson stated 'This is fun!' Another strength of teaching is that teaching assistants are very well deployed to support learning of pupils who have special educational needs and they contribute effectively to pupils' achievement. An example of this was seen in a Year 3 lesson, where a child with specific learning needs was very well supported, kept on task and so achieved well.
56. The coordinator has a clear vision for his subject and has worked hard to monitor teaching and learning. However, leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory overall. This is because the evaluation of monitoring and performance data is not sufficiently developed. Tracking of pupils' progress is rigorously linked to end of topic or unit assessments and non-statutory tests, but is not used by the coordinator to ensure teachers intervene when required. As a result, progress towards targets and taking action are not as carefully evaluated and acted upon as they should be.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources have improved since the last inspection.
- Information and communication technology is used well to support learning across the curriculum.
- Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject encourages their pupils.

Commentary

57. The school has made significant investment in technology since the last inspection and this has aided pupils' achievement. There now is a well-equipped suite, at least one computer in every classroom and an interactive whiteboard in every classroom. This improved provision has led to increased teacher knowledge and skill and pupils have regular access to discrete teaching in ICT skills.
58. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject, and pupils enjoy using ICT to support their learning. As a result, pupils achieve well and attain standards that meet expectations for their age overall. For example, by the end of Year 2, pupils have developed satisfactory word-processing skills, they use graphics packages to create pictures and can explain the differences between programs that they use to support their learning in maths. By Years 5 and 6 pupils' confidence and skills have developed particularly well and many attain above what might be expected for their age. In discussion with Year 5 and 6 pupils, they talked about which search engines they preferred for internet use, and explained their recently implemented assessment and award scheme which records and rewards attainment. Several children proudly wore their badges of achievement. Year 6 pupils demonstrated their 'Powerpoint' presentations about holidays; they liked the challenge presented by fast-action programs with no need to record using pencil and paper. However, in evaluating their work, they recognised that poor keyboard skills still slow them down when they are word-processing.
59. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader is knowledgeable and has worked very effectively with the headteacher to improve resources. A comprehensive action plan to support improvement is in place and the recently introduced assessment system to monitor progress effectively and encourage achievement is already paying dividends. The school is

preparing to have its good quality provision validated through the 'National Association of Advisers for Computers in Education'.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

60. The use of ICT across the curriculum is being developed effectively. Teachers' planning for other subjects regularly identifies opportunities for its use, and lessons are timetabled in particular to develop ICT through literacy and numeracy. Pupils use the internet regularly for personal research in other subjects such as history, geography and art and design. Interactive white boards in every classroom enable teachers to share information with pupils in an exciting and engaging manner.

HUMANITIES

61. Insufficient evidence was available during the time of the inspection to make secure judgements on the provision for history and geography. Therefore these subjects have been sampled.
62. The school's approach to an integrated topic approach means that in Years 1 and 2 careful links are made across subjects to aid pupils' learning. This is planned for development through Years 3 to 6. **History** is a subject that has lent itself to this approach and is clearly enjoyed by pupils. For example, in Year 2 pupils learn about the differences between seaside holidays now and in the past. They use a very good range of photographic evidence to compare similarities and differences, and work with their talk partner to clarify their answers before committing them to paper. A visit to the local seaside is a key factor in their learning and enjoyment. In Year 4, very good teaching, learning and use of resources observed in a lesson, enabled pupils to achieve well, as they compared key features of Tudor buildings, noting the differences between the lives of the rich and the poor.
63. In **geography** a very good range of enrichment activities and visits support learning. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 speak very enthusiastically of the success of the integrated topic approach which they have implemented this year. In Year 6, pupils learn about the way that their local area has changed. They studied a local map to locate both their school and their own house so that they could devise a safe route to school using six-figure co-ordinates to give precision. In doing this, they noticed that some elements of the map had changed, and that local housing now occupies the place of former railway sidings. Displays around school show evidence of work completed in geography, for example, of the good opportunities provided for Year 6 pupils to enjoy a residential visit to Howtown where they learn more about orienteering.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong leadership contributes well to the planned curriculum.
- The very good range of visits and visitors aids pupils' understanding of Christianity and other major faiths.
- Standards achieved in Year 6 are below expectations for their age.

Commentary

64. The subject leader has worked very hard to provide for a planned curriculum to be offered to pupils that is varied and interesting. The curriculum is enhanced effectively by her organisation of visits, visitors to school and links that she has developed with local churches to help promote an understanding of Christianity and other faith traditions. She has built up the resources needed for religious education and this is an improvement since the last inspection. In addition, to aid teachers, she has put together a portfolio that provides a good resource for staff to use when assessing standards in religious education. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 to 5, and attain standards that meet expectations for their age and are in line with the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. In Year 6, however, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory and standards are below expectations for their age.
65. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In a Year 5 lesson, a calm, gentle atmosphere was set up by the teacher providing music for pupils to listen to as they wrote about places special to them. Pupils were preparing for forthcoming visits to Bede's World and Durham Cathedral but there were missed opportunities to reflect and discuss on the reason for their choice of special place. In Year 2, pupils prepared questions to ask their visitor, a Buddhist monk. They listened intently and asked a range of questions about his lifestyle. This good lesson teaching was characterised by learning that was interesting and fun. Opportunities were provided for reflection when meditating in the Buddhist tradition and this helped promote pupils spiritual development.
66. In a scrutiny of pupils' work and lessons seen, it is evident that pupils with higher ability achieve well when tasks are open-ended which allows them to use their imagination and develop both their thinking and literacy skills. Where tasks are more restricted or not matched to the differing needs of pupils in the class, achievement is more limited and not as good as it could be. In Year 6 the range of work in books is very narrow and teaching of the subject is unsatisfactory. Also, presentation of written work in religious education is not always of a high standard and marking does not often give pupils ideas on how to improve their work.
67. The coordinator carries out regular checks on teaching and learning to ensure that the religious education curriculum meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The school, therefore has identified the issue in Year 6 and has plans in place to take immediate action to improve pupils' attainment by the age of 11.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

68. During the time of the inspection, there was insufficient evidence to make secure judgements on provision in art and design, design and technology, music and physical education and so these subjects have been sampled.
69. No lesson were observed in **art and design** during the inspection. However, displays of pupils work show that they have a good range of opportunities to develop their creative skills through art and design. Children in reception have worked with an artist to make their 'Jack in a box'. Displays feature artefacts, for example from South Africa to stimulate pupils thoughts about 'Art around the world'. Pupils' skills are developed in paint, pastel and charcoal and a visit to 'Locomotion' provided the stimulus for charcoal and chalk drawings of engines. Similarly a history topic in Year 5 prompted the study of Victorian family portraits and so pupils drew their own, 'Style and Elegance' in pencil.
70. In **design and technology** one lesson was observed during the inspection and this was taught by a visiting teacher from the local secondary school who was very ably supported by a teaching assistant from Thornhill Primary. The Year 5 lesson was excellent in quality and had a clear focus on learning being fun. The lesson's structure was firmly in line with pupils' needs and presented challenge as they considered the process of design, making and evaluation of their product. Displays of pupils' work show that throughout the school, they develop their skills appropriately in design and technology. For example, Year 2 have been 'making masks' and Year 3 have made 'Moving Monsters' from egg cartons. It is clear that this is a subject much enjoyed by pupils.

71. No lessons in **music** were seen during the inspection. However, it is clear that the school places great importance on giving all pupils the opportunity to take part in a good range of musical activities. All Year 3 pupils learn to play the recorder, there are visiting teachers for violin and percussion lessons and the school gives financial support to the purchase of instruments. There is a successful school choir that performs in assemblies from time to time; for example, during the inspection, in a 'singing assembly' the choir performed songs such as 'SATS blues' ably accompanied on guitar by the Year 6 teacher who also runs the choir. Pupils also take part in local events such as the Shildon Carnival and puts on performances such as 'The Wizard of Oz' and 'Toy Day' when instrumentalists and singers take part. The Carol Concert is performed in the town and open to anyone from the community to attend.
72. No lessons were seen in **physical education** during the inspection, however, the school places high importance on all pupils having access to two hours of physical activity during the week. There is an extensive range of sporting and physical opportunity available after school to include yoga, football, country dancing, cricket, and rounders. Pupils are proud of the school's sporting accomplishments and their participation in team events are celebrated in newspaper cuttings that are displayed along with sporting trophies for all to see in the entrance hall.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

73. No full lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE) were observed during the inspection and so the subject has been sampled. However a scrutiny of the information available and discussion with the head teacher and her team reveal that the school has a clear focus on the development of PSHE and citizenship in school. The school is justifiably proud of the Healthy Schools award and its completed preparations for the anti bullying accreditation award. Governors, staff and parents work well to help promote this subject. All are very proud of their achievements particularly relating to the 'Time for Children' and 'Getting Along' projects and the work done on preventing bullying.
74. The head teacher outstandingly leads the school's focus on pupils becoming good citizens. The school council runs efficiently and pupils are well prepared for later life when for example they take part in the 'playground buddies' scheme or assume positions of responsibility for example as librarians. The school council helps pupils understand the principles of democracy and they know that their views may be heard through their elected representatives. Pupils are proud of their school and clearly feel involved. The school's effort to prepare the children for adult life contributes very well to their overall personal development.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (<i>ethos</i>)	2
Attendance	5
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
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	2
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
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	2
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).