

INSPECTION REPORT

ST CUTHBERT'S RC (VA) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Chester-le-Street

LEA area: County Durham

Unique reference number: 114242

Headteacher: Mr Sean Brown

Lead inspector: Mr Rob Crompton

Dates of inspection: 6th - 8th June 2005

Inspection number: 267767

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:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	284
School address:	Ropery Lane Chester-le-Street County Durham
Postcode:	DP3 3PH
Telephone number:	(0191) 388 2305
Fax number:	(0191) 389 4082
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Father Peter Carr
Date of previous inspection:	25 th January 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is near the centre of Chester-le-Street. Most pupils live locally but some travel from neighbouring Catholic parishes. Most pupils are white with a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. All pupils have English as their first language. When they enter the Reception classes, children's attainment is generally above average for their age. Mobility is low, with almost all pupils remaining at the school throughout their primary years. There are ten classes, mostly spanning two age groups. From Years 1 to 6, pupils are taught in ability groups for English and mathematics. About ten per cent of the pupils have special educational needs, which is below average. Two pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has received national recognition in the following areas:

Activemark	for promoting sport	2002
Artsmark	for provision in art	2003
Basic Skills Quality Mark	for raising standards in literacy and numeracy	2004
Healthy Schools	for promoting citizenship	2002
Schools' Achievement Award	for improving standards	2002
International School Award	for the international dimension in the curriculum	2004
Eco School	for promoting sustainable lifestyles	2003

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
7230	Rob Crompton	Lead inspector	Science Information and communication technology Music
11096	Margaret Davie	Lay inspector	
22421	Val McGrath	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Mathematics Geography History Physical education
4350	Clive Whittington	Team inspector	English Art and design Design and technology Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal Education
1 - 4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

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 637 833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 5
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	6 - 8
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	9 - 12
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	12 - 13
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	14 - 21
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	22

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very good** school where pupils achieve very well and reach high standards. Inspired by the excellent leadership of the headteacher, staff and pupils constantly strive to improve. The strong Catholic ethos underpins all aspects of school life, and personal development is promoted very successfully. Pupils develop extremely mature attitudes and behave very well, enjoying an excellent range of enrichment activities. Governors work in close partnership with the school management to provide very good support. Parents are kept very well informed and make a valuable contribution to their children's learning. Despite its limited funding, the school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Challenging teaching means that pupils make very good progress through the school.
- The headteacher, with excellent support from the deputy head, successfully promotes high standards.
- A rich variety of extra activities makes a significant contribution to academic standards and personal development.
- A strong commitment to inclusion means that pupils of all abilities have every opportunity to enjoy success.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and restricts provision for some aspects of the curriculum.

Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Pupils receive much better feedback about how they are doing and their progress through the school is more carefully tracked. The previous good standards have been further improved because the teaching is even more effective. Extra-curricular activities have expanded very significantly. The school continues to be run very well.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Achievement is **very good**. As they enter the Reception classes, most children are socially confident and their early language and mathematical skills are good for their age. They achieve well in most aspects of learning during the Reception Year, reaching good overall standards. Pupils build very well on this positive start so that, by the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science are well above average. This pace of learning continues through Years 3 to 6 and pupils reach high standards in English, mathematics and science. In the national tests (SATS) in Year 6 in 2004, the school's performance was in the top five per cent nationally in mathematics and science. Similar results are expected this year. Pupils reach the expected standards in art and design, design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT) by Year 2, exceeding them in design and technology and ICT by Year 6. It was not possible to judge standards in history, geography, music or physical education. Pupils of all abilities are very well supported. More able pupils reach their potential and those with special educational needs make very good progress towards their individual targets.

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

Key: A* – very high; 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' positive attitudes, enthusiasm for school and very good behaviour are underpinned by very effective provision for personal development. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **very good**. The quality of teaching is **very good**. Pupils develop very good learning skills and respond well to the challenging teaching. Most lessons are taken at a brisk pace so pupils remain attentive and interested. Teachers provide good feedback during lessons so that pupils know how to improve. Teaching assistants work effectively with individuals and small groups, contributing well to pupils' learning. The curriculum is good with several strengths. Children in the Reception classes benefit from a stimulating range of work centred on play. Planning in Years 1 to 6 is detailed and work is set to enable pupils of all abilities to build well on their earlier learning. They enjoy the excellent opportunities provided outside the classroom, such as sports and music tuition. The unsatisfactory accommodation, however, constrains learning, particularly for children in the Reception classes. The general state of the buildings presents risks to pupils' health and safety. Despite this, pupils are well cared for and receive good support and guidance throughout their school life. Parents play an active part in their children's learning and support the school well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. The headteacher's vision and determination provide a powerful force for sustaining high standards. He is extremely well supported by the deputy head and senior staff. Team spirit is very strong, with all staff working to a common purpose. All aspects of the school's provision are managed very effectively and regularly monitored to ensure that standards are maintained. Governance is very good. Governors support the school well but some statutory requirements are not met.

PARENTS' AND CHILDREN' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very satisfied with the school but are justifiably worried by the state of the accommodation. Other concerns raised by individual parents were explored by the inspection team but were not substantiated. Children are highly enthusiastic and make a good contribution to school life.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important thing the school should do to improve is to:

- Improve the accommodation.

And, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that the performance tables in the governors' annual report to parents are presented in the required format.
- Ensure that the prospectus contains the school's address and contact details.
- Appoint a governor responsible for health and safety.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved by pupils in areas of learning and subjects

Overall achievement is very good. By the end of the Reception Year, children reach good standards. Achievement in Years 1 to 6 is very good and overall standards are high.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have a solid foundation for future learning by the time they leave Reception.
- Pupils make very good progress through the school and reach well above average standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils with different abilities make very good progress.

Commentary

1. Children build successfully on their above average attainment on entry to the school. They do particularly well in personal, social and emotional development, giving them a good basis for work in other areas. By Year 1, the vast majority have made a good start in speaking, listening, reading and writing and have developed a good understanding of basic number, counting, shape and size.
2. Their good knowledge and understanding of the world outside their immediate home and school provides a secure basis for subsequent work in history, geography and science. Their physical and creative development is as expected by the end of the Reception Year.
3. Pupils make very good progress in Years 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics and by Year 2 their attainment is well above the national average in all areas of these subjects. There was a very slight dip in standards in the 2004 tests (SATs) for seven year olds, caused by the fact that almost 20 per cent of pupils in this year group had special educational needs. This year's test results show that the gradual improvement evident in the years to 2004 has been maintained. Science is also very strong with pupils achieving very well and reaching above average standards.
4. Pupils continue to achieve very well in Years 3 to 6. Test results in English, mathematics and science are consistently well above national averages and frequently in the top five per cent nationally, for example, in 2004, 62 per cent achieved the higher levels in mathematics and a remarkable 82 per cent did so in science.
5. Standards in the current Year 6 reflect this high level of attainment. Pupils reach the expected standards in art and design, design and technology and ICT by Year 2, exceeding them in design and technology and ICT by Year 6. It was not possible to judge standards in history, geography, music or physical education.
6. Pupils of all abilities achieve very well. This can be seen clearly in the impressive proportion of pupils successfully achieving the more demanding levels in the Year 6 SATs. The school's performance over the last five years has been significantly above the national trend. The success of the school in supporting pupils with special educational needs is also indicated by the national tests results. The results for Year 2 and Year 6 show that very few pupils did not attain the expected levels; indeed in science all did so. The work seen during the inspection indicated that current pupils are progressing very well and are on course to reach their individual targets. Although there are some differences from time to time in the achievement of boys and girls, their overall results were almost exactly the same over the last three years.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.0 (18.6)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	16.2 (17.6)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	17.5 (19.6)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 43 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.3 (29.6)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	30.5 (29.6)	27.0 (26.8)
science	31.9 (30.3)	28.6 (28.6)

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

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Their personal qualities including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. Attendance is above the national average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour impact significantly on how well they do.
- Their interest in school life is excellent.
- Pupils respond positively to the very good ethos and high quality provision for their personal development.

Commentary

7. Pupils show a high level of interest in their work and their very well developed work habits and self-discipline benefit their learning immensely. They respond very positively to the very high expectations the staff have of them and co-operate with teachers and each other very well.
8. Behaviour is very good and often excellent. Pupils move around the building sensibly and are very considerate and polite. They get along well and play amicably at break time. There is no evidence of bullying or racism of any kind. Pupils say there is not really any bullying in their school, and that they are very clear about what to do if it happens. 'Buddy bus stops', which have recently been added to the playground, ensure that children who are lonely soon find someone to play with. Older pupils happily help out with the youngest at playtime. It was necessary to permanently exclude one pupil, who is now at a special school, during the last school year.
9. Pupils enjoy school life and respond positively when their views are sought through the school council. They are enthusiastic about the clubs and other activities and particularly keen on outings to places of interest. They readily take on responsibilities around the school and contribute to the smooth running of the day. They are however, justifiably unhappy about the state of the accommodation, particularly the toilets, which they say they do not like to use.
10. The school helps pupils to develop their personal qualities very effectively. They are quite mature by the time they reach the end of Year 6 and very well prepared to move on to

secondary school. Assemblies and worship play a major role in the very good promotion of their spiritual development. During the inspection, a whole school assembly enabled them to reflect on helping others and to celebrate the achievements of some of their friends, who had recently taken part in sporting endeavours. Stories often have a strong moral message and this, in combination with very good adult role models, teaches pupils about qualities such as consideration and how important it is to understand the impact of their actions on others. Pupils' achievements are celebrated by monthly 'special mentions', house points and certificates. Pupils take their faith and spiritual growth seriously, and are always thoughtful and respectful during prayers.

11. Social development is very well supported. School performances for parents at Christmas time and team sporting competitions and charitable fund-raising activities are undertaken with a great deal of enthusiasm. The school council is showing pupils how to work together effectively for a common purpose and they are positive about taking part in community activities.
12. Pupils are very effectively encouraged to broaden their horizons, particularly through activities linked to the 'International School Award'. However, their opportunities to gain an understanding of the cultural diversity of British society could be better. Access to global citizenship is very good and includes close links with schools in Russia, Italy and Tanzania along with learning basic French and German and a residential visit to France, an unusual feature in a primary school.
13. Attendance rates are above the national average and there is no unauthorised absence. Good attendance is encouraged and rewarded with certificates. Pupils enjoy coming to school and arrive punctually and ready to learn.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.5	School data	0.0
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	250	0	1
White - Irish	2	0	0
Mixed White/Asian	1	0	0
Black or Black British	1	0	0

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning throughout the school are very good. Assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers motivate pupils very well so they are keen to learn.
- Pupils respond well to the challenging work.
- Pupils' achievement is tracked well.
- Occasionally pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their independent learning skills.

Commentary

14. Staff in the Reception classes develop very good relationships with children. From the start, they encourage children to be independent, ask questions and explore new ideas. Time is used to maximum effect with every part of the day planned to stimulate children's curiosity and to develop their emerging skills. Teachers and support staff make the best of the available space. Although there is scant room outdoors, they have worked hard to make the best of it and the children have at least some space to work outside. In their eagerness to engage all the children, staff occasionally spend too much time introducing topics and questioning children as a class. This is only a minor weakness, however, as the quality of teaching and learning is very good overall.
15. Teaching and learning in Years 1 to 6 are also very good. Teachers almost always motivate pupils to do their best. Lessons move at a brisk pace and pupils respond well to teachers' skilful questioning. Teachers are very good at managing behaviour, nipping minor disruptions in the bud so everyone can get on with the matter in hand. Pupils like being challenged and say that they always have to work hard. This is a very significant factor in the progress that they make through the school. Pupils listen to their teachers carefully and settle to their tasks quickly. This was shown in a Year 2 science lesson during which pupils were challenged to try to push over the school building and some of the large trees in the playground, in order to learn about forces. Although enjoying the activity enormously, they really concentrated on the task at hand, which meant they learned a lot. Occasionally, the rate of learning slows because teachers labour the point, but in the main learning moves on apace and lesson time is used very productively. Teachers set homework regularly; pupils see the point of it and make every effort to complete it. This is an additional reason for their rapid progress though each school year. Teaching assistants provide very good support, particularly for pupils with special educational needs.
16. Teachers keep detailed records of pupils' day-to-day progress and monitor their achievement over each term. They assess progress at the end of each unit of work, for example, the study of evaporation in science, and note who has done better than or not as well, as expected. Marking is satisfactory overall. It is inconsistent across subjects, with teachers providing good feedback in English and science but less guidance about how to improve in mathematics and ICT. Because pupils develop very mature attitudes by Years 5 and 6, there is room for work to be more open ended so that they have more opportunities to explore topics in more depth and to bring their creative skills into play.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1	13	12	3	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good and there are excellent opportunities for enrichment. There is a good supply of resources but accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils receive excellent preparation for their secondary education.
- A very wide range of extra activities supports pupils' academic and personal development.
- The school provides very well for pupils with different abilities.
- The accommodation does not provide a good learning environment or workplace.
- There is some imbalance in the curriculum because some subjects are allocated too much time, and others not enough.

Commentary

17. Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour are supported by good provision for personal and social education. This is imbedded in the ethos of school, in the moral and social values promoted and the high expectations set for relationships and behaviour. Lessons encourage healthy lifestyles and give pupils the opportunity to talk about personal issues. The school council provides a very good forum for the exchange of ideas with teachers and other pupils. This impacts significantly on the very good relationships in school, and the pupils' awareness of the responsibilities of working within a community. The very high standards achieved in literacy and numeracy, and the very good partnership with secondary schools, provide excellent preparation for secondary education.
18. Pupils are really enthusiastic about the activities that are organised for them outside of lessons and this has a very positive impact on their enjoyment of learning. Many clubs operate throughout the school year with some activities targeted at specific groups of pupils such as the challenge club. Attendance at after-school activities is very high: participation in Years 1 and 2 runs at about 60 per cent and in Years 3 – 6 at 80 per cent.
19. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. They receive very effective support, enabling all to achieve very well. More able pupils are very well supported because the level of work in class is suitably challenging. The school identifies pupils with particular gifts or talents and supports them well with a weekly lunchtime session. Pupils who excel in music and sport are given every encouragement in school through the wide range of opportunities in these areas. Their success in and out of school is celebrated appropriately.
20. The staff make every effort to brighten up the interior of the buildings and to make the classrooms interesting and stimulating in order to overcome the poor decorative state. Pipes regularly leak and drip, and occasionally burst, causing not only risks to health and safety but unsightly staining on the ceilings, walls and floors. Many of the toilet facilities are very old and suffering from years of wear and tear. Some of the classrooms do not have running water, which affects curriculum coverage. The youngest children do not have easy access to water and opportunities to learn outside are inadequate. This constrains children's achievement in their knowledge and understanding of the world because there are insufficient stimuli for observing living things and change. There are also too few opportunities to engage in physical and creative activities outside. The general decorative state both internally and externally is unsatisfactory. Many door and window frames and facia on all of the buildings are rotting and in addition to the security implications this presents, means that the school looks unsightly. Because of their location and the dampness in the buildings, the cost of networking computers

is prohibitive and this limits learning in ICT. Facilities for adults are unsatisfactory. The site suffers from regular incidents of vandalism because of the school layout.

21. The breadth of the curriculum ensures all subjects are taught, with high emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Some literacy lessons of 1.5 hours, and some numeracy lessons of 1.25 hours, are rather long. On the other hand, only 1.5 hours are allocated to physical education lessons. Although there are several after-school clubs, this does not guarantee that all pupils receive the recommended minimum of two hours per week. The school has acknowledged the need to reconsider the use of time in its forthcoming revision of the curriculum in Years 3 to 6.

Care, guidance and support

Pupils are well cared for. The support and guidance they receive as a result of checking their work are good and their views are valued.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are very good and pupils trust the adults who work with them.
- The accommodation presents health and safety risks.
- Child protection procedures are good.
- Pupils are involved well in the work of the school.

Commentary

22. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils say they like their teachers and they feel the guidance they are giving them helps them to do as well as they possibly can. Pupils feel they are treated fairly and that staff will help them sort out any problems. Teachers know their pupils very well and as a result are able to give them work and personal support that suits their needs. This makes pupils feel happy, safe and ready to learn and impacts very positively on their attainment. All staff have recently had child protection training and are up to date with the required procedures.
23. The state of the accommodation makes it difficult to ensure that pupils are always working in a safe environment. The headteacher and site manager spend a good deal of time each day ensuring site safety. Shortcomings in the toilet facilities impact on standards of hygiene and because of the very damp winter conditions parents report that many pupils suffer chest infections and that conditions like asthma are made worse. The statutory requirement for having a health and safety governor is not met.
24. Pupils' views are regularly sought and their ideas taken seriously. Members of the school council show a high level of maturity when it comes to making suggestions to improve their school and ensure that the views of their peers are respected. The council also conducted a recent survey and analysed the results to find out whether pupils would like a wider range of clubs. The school has promised to take the outcomes, which are displayed on the council notice board, into account when clubs are planned next year.

Partnership with parents and the community

The school's links with parents and carers are very effective. Partnerships with the community and other local Catholic schools are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school enjoys a very high level of parental support.
- The parents' association contributes significantly to school resources.
- Some of the information given to parents is not as good as it should be.
- There are very close links with the Church and other local Catholic schools.

Commentary

25. The very effective parental links found at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and contribute significantly to pupils' overall achievements. Parents are highly supportive of the school and their children's learning. A good number help in school, attend events and volunteer to help on trips. During the inspection, for example, a large number of parents accompanied Reception children on a visit to the park. The school appreciates the high level of support it gets and takes parents' views seriously. They were recently consulted about changing the length of the school day and their views were taken into account for changes that will be implemented from September.
26. The parent teacher association (PALS) works tirelessly to put on both social and fund-raising activities and this provides an excellent boost to school funds. Their efforts contribute significantly to the provision of new resources. Parents are understandably concerned about the state of the school buildings, many writing to point out its shortcomings, and have made tremendous efforts to build up a fund to support the building of a new school. Recently, they have also purchased new books for the library and a reading scheme. They organise many events throughout the school year such as discos for pupils, Christmas and Easter fayres and provide teas and a friendly welcome for the many visitors at school productions.
27. Parents receive a good deal of information to keep them informed about school life. Newsletters are regular and contact with staff both formally and informally is very good. Two written reports are sent out; interim reports in February are good because they contain clear and concise information about progress in English and mathematics. Year-end reports are satisfactory. Their content and presentation are variable, only the best reporting clearly on progress over the year and sharing learning goals. Curriculum information is insufficient, as it is not consistently shared with parents of pupils in all year groups. The governors' annual report and prospectus are informative, however both are missing the full range of National Curriculum test results and relevant national statistics.
28. Pupils regularly visit the church, where events such as Christmas plays, to which parents are invited, are often held. A strong link exists between the Church, the ten local Catholic primaries and the Catholic secondary school to which most pupils transfer in Year 7. This provides opportunities for social interaction as well as to work on a bridging curriculum, which ensures that pupils move on to this phase of their education with confidence. Very good links with the local community give pupils opportunities for a wide range of experiences; for example, they recently worked with a local artist in residence making a banner representing Sri Lanka, which will be displayed at the nearby county cricket ground.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher is a determined and effective leader. Leadership of other key staff is very good, as is the governance of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a very clear vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations for the school and is very well supported in this by the deputy head.
- Subject co-ordinators are very effective leaders and enjoy the support of all staff.
- Governors are fully involved and support the school very well.
- The school places a high priority on self-evaluation.

Commentary

29. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. He is perceptive and caring and shows a strong commitment to raising standards in all areas of the school's work, with a clear-sighted sense of purpose. The deputy headteacher provides first class support and subject co-ordinators are highly effective. They work and plan together in highly supportive teams, inspiring, motivating and influencing staff and pupils. All are very good role models.
30. The governors fulfil their role very effectively. They are fully committed to the school and its continued development. All are involved through various curricular and class links. They are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide a necessary challenge and support to the headteacher and staff, acting very effectively as 'critical friends'. The school is highly self-evaluative. Efficient systems identify areas for improvement and the school development plan is a constructive working document which reflects the needs of the school very accurately. The result of this has been very good improvement since the last inspection.
31. Finances are managed well. Governors work hard to ensure that limited funds are used as effectively as possible. They have rallied the support of the school community in raising many thousands of pounds towards improving accommodation but plans to build a new school have been shelved by the authorities.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	663,768
Total expenditure	687,280
Expenditure per pupil	2,176

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	33,697
Balance carried forward to the next year	10,185

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

The needs of all children are met well because good use is made of assessment in most areas of learning. The good ratio of adults to children enables good support for individuals and small groups. The teaching assistant provides very good support. The indoor accommodation is satisfactory, although the lack of running water and storage areas limits some aspects of creativity. The outdoor learning environment is unsatisfactory because it is too small, lacks adequate resources and is not accessible from the classroom.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships between adults and children lead to good emotional development.
- A good balance of group, independent and collaborative activities promotes very good social and personal skills.
- Teaching is very good, although there are some missed opportunities for promoting initiative and autonomy in the daily routine.

Commentary

32. Good management of time, staff and resources leads to very good levels of concentration and perseverance. Children select from a range of activities planned for them and levels of engagement are high. The range of equipment has improved considerably and promotes good levels of interest and enthusiasm. However, because there are insufficient storage and display areas, opportunities for children to exercise initiative and autonomy are constrained. For example, there are few opportunities for children to select independently the materials they need for their own purposes. Staff and children clearly enjoy each other's company, and this promotes very good attitudes to learning and behaviour. Adults regularly give positive responses and encouragement and this leads to good levels of self-esteem in children. Overall standards are well above those expected by the end of the Reception Year.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning leads to very good achievement in reading and writing and above average standards.
- A good range of activities contributes to good achievement in speaking and listening, although the use of questioning could be improved to promote more extended talk.

Commentary

33. Very good achievement in reading is promoted by the effective use of resources and the involvement of parents. Children regularly share books with adults at home and school. Children develop a good understanding of how sounds, pictures, rhyme and sentence patterns can help them predict words. Children's reading competencies are regularly assessed and children take reading 'packs' of three or four books home each week. These

are well matched to individual needs. This ensures good levels of challenge for children progressing confidently, and more breadth of reading experience for children who need it. Standards are well above those expected by the end of Reception.

34. Children are given very good individual support when writing and reach good standards. They show very good knowledge of sounds and letters, which they apply confidently when building words and sentences. The vast majority write using plausible spelling and simple punctuation. A good range of meaningful writing opportunities, such as sending post cards from the 'Camp Site' and adapting stories such as 'The Train Journey', make writing exciting and enjoyable.
35. Children are keen to respond to questions, and express their views enthusiastically. Standards in speaking and listening are above those expected by the end of Reception. Good use is made of imaginative play for promoting speaking and listening, enabled by the quality of resources and the time allowed for collaboration. For example children create building sites with play people in sand, and journeys with tracks, trains and cars and talk about imagined events willingly. On occasions the pace of questioning does not allow sufficient time for children to expand beyond short answers, and there are some missed opportunities for promoting longer discussions.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very well-planned curriculum leads to very good levels of challenge for all children.
- Teachers provide good practical opportunities for using mathematics but sometimes children are expected to listen for too long.

Commentary

36. Very good teaching and learning lead to very good achievement. Consequently the vast majority of pupils reach well above average standards. In whole group sessions, children demonstrate very good learning as they count forward and back, using counting skills enthusiastically in songs. The vast majority record simple addition number sentences, writing numerals and symbols correctly. The involvement of all children in questioning and tasks ensures very good learning about the properties of shape and associated vocabulary. Children have meaningful opportunities to develop their understanding. For example, they photographed shapes in the school environment, and built models with cartons of different shapes, sorting them into those that roll and slide. Occasionally children are expected to listen for too long, eroding time available for practical tasks. This leads to a slower pace of learning as children lose interest.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good use of indoor practical activities but inadequate resources to promote good awareness of other cultures.
- Children have high levels of interest and persevere well but there are missed opportunities for children to talk about their own ideas and predictions.
- Visits and visitors make a good contribution to learning.

Commentary

37. Good teaching means that children achieve well, reaching standards above those expected by the end of Reception. For example, children made rapid progress as they explored the forces of pushing, pulling and moving air in a range of very well planned activities. They used magnets, fans and blew down straws to make things move, and considered how toys are pushed and pulled. Children persevered at these tasks very well, although there were missed opportunities for children to explain their thinking about cause and effect, or to predict what might happen. Visitors and visits to the local area are used to good effect to promote learning. Children have enjoyed visits from the police and medical services, pet owners and their pets, and visited the locality to identify building materials. There are good opportunities for learning about human growth such as talking to a visiting mother with her baby. The lack of an outdoor learning area is a major constraint. Without frequent and easy access to the outdoors, opportunities are limited for closely observing living things, growth and change. There are also few resources, photographs and books to promote children's awareness of other cultures, within and beyond their own society.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Outdoor accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory.
- There is good enrichment through visits to the park, where children enjoy high levels of challenge and participation.

Commentary

38. Children do not have regular and easy access to an outdoor area during each session. The school acknowledges this shortfall in provision and has provided increased access to the hall, allowing the youngest children four sessions per week. The range of activity is good and includes games, dance and gymnastics. The level of challenge and high participation rate in the park is good, providing good levels of challenge for climbing, balancing and controlling small equipment. Assessment is not used effectively to note when tasks are too easy or too difficult to enable children to enjoy success. Overall, teaching and learning of physical development is satisfactory. Children progress steadily, reaching the standards expected by the end of Reception.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Imaginative play promotes creativity well.
- There are good opportunities to build, construct and model using structured equipment.
- Some art activities are over directed by adults, constraining opportunities for individuality.

Commentary

39. Children achieve well as they engage in imaginative play in the role-play area and with toy people and animals. They sing very enthusiastically and tunefully. Regular opportunities to build, construct and model with malleable materials and construction toys also promote creativity well. Teaching and learning are good in the provision of imaginative and creative play. Some art activities are over directed by adults, however, with few opportunities for children to choose art materials and develop their own unique responses. Classrooms lack an area offering easy access to a range of tools and materials. Consequently children do not regularly paint in their child-initiated activities. Standards are in line with those expected but there is potential to increase the range of materials used. A particular strength is the positive

encouragement children receive as they work. This area of learning could be further promoted, however, by offering children more tactile and visual stimuli for creativity, such as natural materials, photographs, artefacts, living things and artists' work.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in English are well above national expectations with all pupils achieving very well.
- Learning is enriched by a variety of interesting activities.
- Subject leadership and management are very good but library provision is inadequate.

Commentary

40. Achievement is very good across the school and pupils leave the school with standards well above the national average. Provision for those pupils throughout the school who have special educational needs is very good and they are given work that is appropriate to their abilities, assisted very ably by a number of specialist teachers. Other pupils have been identified as being particularly gifted, and they too to make very good progress through work that is suitably targeted to their needs. Boys and girls do equally well over time.
41. Most pupils enter Year 1 with speaking and listening skills which are above average for their age. A high priority is given to maintaining and further improving this area and skills are promoted very well in all classes and in all subjects, so that by the time pupils leave the school they are confident and articulate. The standard of reading throughout the school is well above average. Guided reading sessions are used purposefully and are helping to raise standards further. Pupils are encouraged to take books home and read to an adult, and do so on a regular basis. The standard of writing for all age groups is well above average. There are many strengths here, particularly in the range of written work covered in other subjects.
42. A broad range of activities extend pupils' interest and enjoyment. These include theatre trips and visiting writers to the school. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and one lesson seen was excellent. Relationships are very good and the teachers' enthusiasm is infectious. All lessons seen were lively and imaginative, with pupils interested and keen to contribute. The consistently high standard of teaching ensures that pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and standards are high.
43. The co-ordinators have produced a wide range of useful material to help teachers. They undertake focused observations of lessons and keep an eye on pupils' work, providing very good feedback to colleagues. The library is situated in the main school corridor. The school has identified this as an area for development, but currently pupils have limited opportunities to develop study skills and pursue independent research.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

44. There are many links with other areas of the curriculum. These include numerous opportunities in all subjects to develop speaking and listening. ICT is used regularly for word processing and researching information. Pupils write about problems in mathematics and their investigations in science; they write extended accounts in geography, history and in religious education they also write poems and prayers.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been very good improvement in pupils' achievement, leading to well above average standards by Years 2 and 6.
- Teachers set very high levels of challenge in Years 5 and 6.
- Investigative mathematics has been promoted recently but it is not fully established in all aspects of mathematics.
- Very good leadership has been effective in maintaining well above average standards over the last five years.

Commentary

45. Achievement is good overall, and is very good in Years 5 and 6 because of the high expectations set by teachers, and the very good support provided by parents. The progress pupils make in learning about number and calculations through the school is impressive. They develop increasing competence in tackling mathematical problems.
46. The quality of teaching and learning is good. There are good opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively. A particular strength in the best lessons is the time allowed for pupils to discuss and explain their problem solving methods. For example pairs of Year 5 pupils used the nine times table to solve problems and explained the efficiency of different methods. Occasionally, too much emphasis is placed on teacher talk with pupils recording answers individually in a test like situation. This leads to some pupils' misunderstandings not being addressed. Pupils are taught mathematics in ability groups, contributing to the good pace of learning for pupils of different abilities. Teachers plan very challenging work for more able pupils. Provision for pupils with special needs is very good because their needs are well identified and they receive high quality individual support. Assessment is good and is used accurately to identify pupils' levels of attainment.
47. A wide range of recent initiatives by the co-ordinator includes detailed guidance for teachers on the use of assessment information to identify areas that need more emphasis, and organising participation in the Durham Mathematics Challenge and lunchtime mathematics clubs. This very good leadership augurs well for developing the subject further. The school has acknowledged the need to improve the application of mathematics in practical and investigative contexts.

Mathematics across the curriculum

48. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to practise and extend their skills in other subjects. In science, pupils use measurement skills to record their observations, and record readings in grids and graphs. They measure with increasing accuracy in design and technology. Such links are incidental rather than systematically planned so opportunities are missed for pupils to use their mathematical skills in subjects such as geography, physical education and ICT. There are also some missed opportunities for using and applying mathematics to real school events such as visits, social events and concerts, for example, by calculating the income from the sale of tickets.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management sustain high standards.
- Pupils respond enthusiastically to the challenging teaching.
- Practical work helps pupils to understand scientific ideas.
- Links with ICT are limited in scope.

Commentary

49. Since taking over the role two years ago, the coordinator has had a very positive impact on the provision, especially in helping teachers to provide more practical activities. Standards have gone from strength to strength. Pupils achieve very well through the school. In 2004, all pupils achieved the expected standards by Year 2 and Year 6. The work of current pupils is also very good with a high proportion reaching well above average standards.
50. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have been very well supported by the coordinator's visits to lessons to observe and advise them about how to improve. Their day-to-day assessment has been refined so lessons are pitched consistently at an appropriate level, both for the many more able pupils and the small number who need to take things more slowly. Pupils enjoy finding things out for themselves. For example, there was a buzz of interest during a Year 4/5 lesson when pupils were investigating the sound insulation properties of various materials. They worked very well together devising their own tests and methods of recording. Similarly, in a Year 3 lesson, pupils enthusiastically made circuits while exploring electrical conductors and insulators. Their responses to the teachers' challenging questions indicated a very secure level of understanding. Younger pupils also benefit from lively and imaginative teaching. In a Year 1/2 lesson, for example, they gained a very good understanding of push/pull forces by using a wide range of materials and thinking carefully about which forces were used to move classroom objects.
51. Although pupils independently choose to record their findings using charts and graphs, they are much less likely to turn to a computer to assist their investigations and analysis of results. For example, there were missed opportunities for using sound sensors in the Year 4/5 lesson on insulation. There are few computer-generated tables and graphs in the science work books indicating that there is scope for more links between science and ICT.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership is successfully driving up standards.
- Pupils benefit from after school activities.
- Limited access to the Internet constrains some aspects of teaching and learning.
- Data handling is not developed systematically through the school.

Commentary

52. In the short time since taking up the role, the coordinator has successfully improved the provision. She has a very clear idea of standards and the strengths and weaknesses in the subject. Her after-school ICT club is very well attended with over two-thirds of the pupils enjoying extra tuition over the year. Standards have improved since the last inspection. By Year 2, pupils have good general skills. They reach the expected standards, confidently using

computers to word-process and 'paint' on screen. They are good at devising sequences of commands to move a floor robot in different directions. Pupils achieve well in Years 3 to 6 reaching good standards. By Year 6, they skilfully create multimedia presentations and use spreadsheets to record and analyse data and produce graphs. They are adept at using 'search engines' to obtain information from the Internet. Pupils also demonstrated good skills in control technology as they created sequences to control traffic lights.

53. It was not possible to judge the quality of teaching through lesson observations as only two lessons were seen. However, discussions with pupils and the level of work indicated that teaching is effective; this despite some constraints. As the accommodation cannot house an ICT suite, teachers use two sets of laptops, moving these from class to class. To some extent this is perfectly satisfactory but as lessons take place in four buildings, the organisation of resources is difficult and time consuming. Each classroom has at least one PC connected to the Internet but teachers and pupils cannot take full advantage of the wealth of information and learning materials available on-line.
54. There is a reasonable range of software to cover all aspects of the curriculum but pupils in Years 3 and 4 have limited opportunities to learn how a database is created by using the appropriate software. They use a sophisticated spreadsheet more suited to older pupils rather than educational software which introduces ideas at a more appropriate level.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

55. The use of ICT in other subjects is satisfactory. Pupils often word-process their work and use paint programs for illustration. The multimedia presentations produced by older pupils are linked to current topics in history and geography. The school is not as far ahead as it might be in integrating science and ICT. For example, the local secondary school helps with aspects of control and the use of sensors, but this is not directly linked with classroom topics.

HUMANITIES¹

56. It is not possible to make overall judgements about provision in geography and history because no geography was observed and only one Year 1/2 history lesson was sampled. From a review of work and displays it would appear that the school meets requirements in these subjects. There is a good range of visits to promote learning in history and geography, for example, residential visits to Richmond and France for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Pupils' learning about ancient Egypt is extended by a recent visit to the Hancock Museum, and about Victorians by their visit to the Beamish Museum. This very good enrichment of the curriculum contributes to pupils' positive attitudes to history and geography.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

57. Too few lessons were seen in these subjects to judge overall provision. Two lessons were seen in art and design and in music but it was not possible to observe pupils working in design and technology or physical education. Displays of pupils' work, photographs, and assemblies provided opportunities to evaluate aspects of the provision.
58. Displays around the school, many of which are interesting and attractive, have little relevance to art and design as a discrete subject. Although one year group is just beginning a topic on sculpture, there is a lack of three-dimensional art within the school. Standards in those areas covered are generally in line with the national expectations in the subject. Pupils are keen; they share their tasks when appropriate, discussing sensibly what is involved. In some lessons, however, the level of work is not high enough to fully capitalise on pupils' enthusiasm. There is a very good range of enrichment activities, especially out-of-school

¹ As this is a church school, provision in religious education is inspected separately.

clubs, which are well attended. An 'Artist of the Term' is chosen from each class, which celebrates pupils' achievement in the subject.

59. Standards in **design and technology** are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2 and above them at the end of Year 6. Pupils plan and make models and note how their work could be improved. This self-evaluation is fully embedded by the end of Year 6, where planning is very thorough, with all stages of the design and making process explored. This good quality work includes designing and making shelters, playground equipment (linked to a science topic on forces), moving monsters and sewing samplers (linked to a history topic).
60. During the two lessons observed in **music**, pupils rose to the good level of challenge. Year 1/2 pupils made good progress in conducting their classmates playing percussion instruments, signalling them to change the tempo and dynamics. In a Year 4/5 lesson taught by the coordinator, her high level of expertise and confident approach fully engaged pupils as they tackled tongue twisters to improve their diction and later sang four-part rounds. The singing in this lesson and in the assemblies observed was tuneful and expressive. Music plays an important part in the life of the school. Pupils have frequent opportunities to perform in concerts in and out of school and many take advantage of the instrumental tuition available.
61. Accommodation for **physical education** is good. Pupils have access to a playing field, adequate space on the playground for lessons, and use of a large hall. Since the last inspection there has been very good improvement in the sporting opportunities provided by the extra-curricular programme, including athletics, cross country, football for boys and girls, cricket, hockey, netball and rugby. Opportunities for pupils to engage in sporting activities at playtime, however, are constrained considerably by the lack of space when the whole school is using one small playground area.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

62. Although no lessons were seen, plans indicate that provision is very good. All areas are covered either discretely or through subjects such as science. Medical services support sex education and the police provide guidance about the misuse of drugs. Personal, social and health education and citizenship are integral to the life of the school. Pupils acquire moral and social values through the quality of relationships and the high expectations for behaviour.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2

Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
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	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	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	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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

poor (6); very poor (7).