

INSPECTION REPORT

SWARLAND FIRST SCHOOL

Newton-on-the-Moor

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122240

Headteacher: Mrs J M Dyson

Lead inspector: Mr A Margerison

Dates of inspection: 16 – 18 May 2005

Inspection number: 268019

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	79
School address:	Newton-on-the-Moor Felton Morpeth Northumberland
Postcode:	NE65 9JP
Telephone number:	01670 787346
Fax number:	-
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Merrey

Date of previous inspection: 5 July 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Swarland First School is situated seven miles south of Alnwick in the heart of rural Northumberland and serves the populations of three main villages, Longframlington, Newton-on-the-Moor and Swarland itself. The local population is a mixed one made up of local business people, farmers and their workers and a range of professional people. Recent census data shows that, although pupils' backgrounds vary, overall their socio-economic circumstances are above average. The school is smaller in size than most primary schools and since the last inspection, local population trends have led to a fall in pupils on the school roll with, numbers in year groups ranging from 11 to 20 pupils. There are currently 79 pupils on roll aged between five and nine years. Most children have some experience of education before they start school, but their attainment on entry varies significantly from year to year. Baseline assessment data shows that current children in reception started school with skills, particularly in their language and mathematical skills, below those expected, with very few children working at above the expected levels for their age. This has been the case for the last three years. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, mainly for moderate learning difficulties, varies considerably from year to year and is currently above average (30 per cent). There is one pupil with a statement of special educational needs. The majority of pupils are of White-British origin with a few pupils from mixed backgrounds. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The school was awarded the Investor in People Award in 2002 and the Activemark Gold and the Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2003. This year the school has received the Healthy Schools Award and the Artsmark Gold Award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21666	Mr A Margerison	Lead inspector	English Geography History Areas of learning in the Foundation Stage Special educational needs English as an additional language
9649	Mrs J Smith	Lay inspector	
8263	Mrs M Forsman	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Music Physical education Religious education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Swarland County First School is a very good small school providing very good value for money. Due to consistently good teaching pupils achieve very well as they move through the school to reach good standards by Year 4. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and governors.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in English are very good in Year 4.
- The headteacher is an excellent role model for pupils and other staff.
- Excellent teamwork between all those associated with the school underpins its very good ethos.
- The school has developed highly effective procedures to evaluate its own work.
- Relationships between pupils and with adults are excellent.
- The very good curriculum provides pupils with practical experiences of learning.
- Assessment information is not used consistently well enough to target the learning needs of specific pupils.
- Procedures to involve pupils in the work of the school are very effective.

Since the last inspection in July 1999, the school has made very good progress reflecting the improvements in the long term strategic planning by the leadership of the school. Teaching is now at least good in all classes so pupils are now achieving consistently well throughout the school and very well overall. The school has implemented good assessment procedures that enable the school to monitor the progress of pupils closely. In addition, major improvements have been made to the accommodation. The high quality of the school's provision for health education, physical education and the arts has been recognised nationally. Pupils' handwriting has improved, but the quality of their presentation of work continues to be variable from subject to subject.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Overall, pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well as they move through the school. Children in reception achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development so that most are likely to exceed the expected levels by the time they start Year 1. In their communication, language, literacy skills and their mathematical development, children achieve well and overall, standards are likely to be in line with those expected by the end of the reception year. However, due to their low start in these areas of learning, very few will exceed them and a significant proportion are unlikely to reach the expected level in writing and basic calculation skills. Not enough sessions were seen to make secure judgements on children's achievement in their creative and physical development or their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
reading	A	B	A*	A
writing	A	A	A	B
mathematics	A	C	A	B

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals*

The table above shows that the school's results in the 2004 national tests for pupils in Year 2 were well above average in writing and mathematics when compared to all schools. The results in reading were very high and placed the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally.

However, different year groups vary considerably in size and ability and because the results in 2003 were not as good as last year or in 2002, the overall trend in the school's results is below the national pattern. Inspection evidence shows that current pupils in Years 1 and 2 are achieving well to reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. In science and information and communication technology (ICT), pupils are achieving well and standards are above those expected for their age. Standards and achievement in art and design are satisfactory. In Years 3 and 4, pupils continue to make good progress so that, compared to their starting point, their achievement is very good overall. They achieve very well in English, particularly in their speaking and listening and reading skills. In writing standards are satisfactory, but many pupils regularly make careless errors in basic punctuation and few pupils are working at levels above those expected. Nevertheless, overall, most pupils are on course to reach very good standards in English by the end of Year 4. In mathematics, achievement is good and standards are above those expected, although pupils' mental arithmetic skills are not as sharp as is normally seen in pupils of this age. In science, pupils achieve very well to reach very good standards by Year 4. In ICT and art and design, pupils' achievement is good and standards are above those expected for their age. In religious education, standards are in line with the locally agreed syllabus and achievement is satisfactory throughout the school. **Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral and social development, are very good.** Pupils' cultural development is good, but they have limited experience of how faith or beliefs affect the daily lives of other cultures living in Britain today. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good and relationships between pupils are excellent. Pupils are very punctual to school and the vast majority of pupils attend very regularly so attendance is above the national average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good. Teaching and learning are consistently good in all classes with a substantial proportion of teaching being very good, particularly in Years 3 and 4. It is the cumulative effect of the consistent teaching that results in pupils' achieving very well as they move through the school. In all classes, teachers have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and are very explicit in their explanations of what they expect pupils to learn in lessons. Introductions to lessons are often imaginative and teachers use ICT, practical activities, drama and role-play very well to bring lessons to life. Teachers also use questions very well to extend pupils' thinking and to develop their speaking and listening skills. As a result, pupils are enthused, try very hard and apply themselves single-mindedly to the tasks they are given. Assessment procedures are very good in English and good in mathematics and science, and the information is used well to track the progress of pupils. However, the information is not always used as well as it might be to provide sufficiently targeted work for pupils who have specific learning needs. As a result, weaknesses in pupils' basic skills, particularly in calculation and writing, identified through assessment in reception, tend to persist as they move through the school. The curriculum is very good and the school's provision is enhanced by its very good links with parents, the community and other schools. Pupils are very well cared for and they play a very important role in the work and development of the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher leads and manages the school very well, but excellent teamwork between all those associated with the school is the key feature. This creates the school's very good ethos and underpins all aspects of its work. The school's highly effective procedures to evaluate its own work ensure that school

leaders and governors have a very clear understanding of the strengths of the school and its future direction. Governors ensure all statutory requirements are met well.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have very positive views of the school. Parents are very confident that their children achieve well, are well taught and cared for. Pupils feel very involved in the school and have no concerns about any aspect of its work.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that assessment information is used consistently to provide activities in lessons that address specific weaknesses in pupils' basic skills and to fully extend higher attaining pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

The overall achievement of pupils is very good as they move through the school. Overall, standards are in line with those expected in reception although there are some specific weaknesses in children's skills. Standards are in line with those expected in Years 2 and above those expected in Year 4.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in speaking and listening, and reading as they move through the school to reach very good standards by Year 4.
- Children in reception achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development.
- Pupils develop very good investigation skills in science.
- Pupils' handwriting and mental arithmetic skills are satisfactory, but not as strong as the other aspects of English and mathematics.

Commentary

1. The attainment of children when they start at the school varies significantly from year to year. This is partly due to the small size of year groups and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. For the past three years, attainment on entry has been below that expected. For the current children and in 2003, this was particularly the case in their communication, language and literacy skills and in their mathematical development. Importantly, very few children are working at significantly higher than expected levels. Variation between year groups means that current standards of attainment in reception are not as high as at the previous inspection, but children are now achieving well rather than satisfactorily, as was the case in 1999. This is because teaching places a very strong emphasis on ensuring that children join Year 1 with good basic spoken language, reading and counting skills.
2. Overall, children achieve well in reception to reach the expected levels in most aspects of their learning. However, in their personal, social and emotional development they achieve very well due to the very good teaching in this area of learning. As a result, most children are already working at the expected levels and a good proportion is on course to exceed these by the end of reception. In their communication, language and literacy skills children achieve well. They make particularly good progress in their speaking and listening skills and in reading, but in writing their progress is not as fast. As a result, although overall, the majority of children are on track to reach most of the Early Learning Goals (the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception) in writing, a significant proportion is unlikely to reach this level. Similarly, in mathematics, children achieve well overall. They develop very secure counting skills and most have a broad understanding of mathematical language, shapes and patterns. However, their calculation skills are less well developed, with only a few children likely to be very confident in basic addition and subtraction by the end of the year. There was insufficient information to make secure judgements on children's achievement in their creative and physical development or their knowledge and understanding of the world. However, in all the

areas of learning, the school's own assessment information shows very few children are on course to be working confidently at levels above those expected.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	18.3 (16.5)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	16.1 (16.3)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	17.7 (16.5)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 20 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. Overall, from when they start school, pupils achieve very well as they move through the school. This is due to the cumulative effect of consistently good teaching in all classes with a significant amount of very good teaching, particularly in Years 3 and 4. As a result, they consistently make good progress and build progressively on their skills, knowledge and understanding in most aspects of their learning. This is reflected in the schools' results in the national tests in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils in Year 2, which, overall, in the last three years have been well above the national average. In 2004, the school's results in reading were very high and placed the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. They were well above average when compared to similar schools. In writing and mathematics, they were well above average when compared to all schools and above average when compared to similar schools. Despite this, the trend in the school's results is below the national trend. This apparent contradiction reflects variations in small year groups. In particular, the 2003 group (current Year 4 pupils) whose performance, although above the national average overall, was not quite as high as other year groups.
4. At the end of reception, current pupils in Year 2 had skills, particularly in language, literacy and mathematics below those expected. However, inspection evidence shows that they have achieved well in Years 1 and 2 so that standards overall are in line with those expected. In speaking and listening, their achievement is very good and standards are above those expected. Achievement in writing and reading is good and standards are average, although a good proportion of pupils are likely to be working at the higher than expected level in writing by the end of the year. In mathematics, achievement is good and standards are in line with those expected, but again a good proportion of pupils are working at the higher than expected level for their age. However, in science and ICT, pupils are achieving well to reach standards above those expected. In art and design and religious education, standards are broadly in line with those expected and achievement is satisfactory.
5. In Years 3 and 4, pupils continue to achieve well overall, but there are specific strengths in the teaching that reinforces and builds on pupils' learning, resulting in them achieving very well overall from when they started school. Essentially this is linked to providing pupils with living experiences that enable them to develop their speaking and listening skills, their reading and research skills, the breadth of their vocabulary and opportunities to use their literacy and ICT skills. Drama and role-play feature as an important part in many lessons to encourage pupils to experience what they are learning about. As a result, by Year 4, standards in English are well above those expected overall. The standard of pupils' writing is satisfactory, but the good spelling and content is frequently marred by errors in basic punctuation. Consequently, few pupils are working at the levels above those expected for their age. In mathematics, pupils are achieving well to reach standards above those expected, particularly in their knowledge of the different strands of the subject and their ability to select the most appropriate method to solve problems. However, current pupils'

mental arithmetic is not always as sharp as is normally seen in most schools and even higher attaining pupils do not have an instant recall of basic number facts and computation.

6. In science, pupils also achieve well and standards by the end of Year 4 are well above those expected. This is due to the very strong emphasis that teachers place on providing practical activities in lessons so that pupils develop very good investigative skills. They have a very

secure understanding of fair testing and how to conduct, record and interpret the results from investigations. This approach to providing activities for pupils to use their skills also results in pupils achieving well to reach standards in ICT above those expected. There are many opportunities for pupils to use their skills in other subjects so their knowledge and understanding of the different strands of the subject is good and they learn to use their skills in a range of different contexts, including research through the Internet in ICT and presenting their work using multi-media presentations. In art and design, standards are good and pupils achieve well. This reflects the quality of the provision that has very recently been recognised by the Arts Council awarding the school the 'Artsmark Gold' Award. Pupils' achievement in religious education is satisfactory and standards are in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus. There was insufficient evidence to make secure judgements in any other subjects.

7. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from good support from support staff. However, due to the very good levels of all pupils' personal skills, teachers are able to ensure that pupils with specific learning needs get the attention they need in lessons and as result, make at least similar progress to the rest of their peers.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' personal qualities are very good. Pupils' attendance is above average and their punctuality to school is very good. They have very positive attitudes to school and behave very well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between pupils are excellent.
- The school has very high expectations of pupils and stimulates in them a very strong desire to learn.
- Pupils are very good at relating to other people's emotions and feelings.
- Pupils' have limited experience of how faith or beliefs affects the daily lives of people from other cultures living in Britain today.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of right and wrong.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (95.2%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.8	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.

8. Pupils say that they really enjoy being at school and want to be involved in everything that it has to offer. Parents agree and say that it is difficult to keep their children away even if they are not well. As a result, pupils are very punctual to school and attendance, as shown in the table above, is above the national average.
9. Pupils' very positive attitudes to school are seen in almost everything they do and they take part in lessons very enthusiastically. However, a strength of the pupils' skills and a major feature of the school are the excellent relationships that exist between pupils.

They are a product of the very broad range of opportunities pupils have to work with each other in groups and to take part in whole class activities and share experiences. Consequently, pupils learn to respect each other's views and listen carefully to what others have to say. As a result,

class discussions are lively and frank exchanges of ideas, even among the younger pupils and when they are invited to make comment on the work of others, they do so in a constructive and positive manner. Teachers also give pupils many opportunities to demonstrate their skills in different ways so that, whatever their aptitudes, all pupils can experience success and achievement in some way. As a result, by Year 4, pupils are confident in their own abilities and able to take on the challenge of new experiences without being daunted.

10. All adults who work in the school have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and consistently reinforce their requirements in a positive way. Pupils are involved in drawing up school and class rules so they are also fully aware of what is expected of them. As a result, they develop a very good understanding of what is right and wrong and learn to respect the school, adults and each other. The excellent relationships are also reflected in the absence of bullying or other forms of harassment. No pupils or parents had any concerns about this at all, although parents were quick to point out that if any disputes occurred between pupils they were very quickly and effectively dealt with. Although the school has a few pupils, for various reasons, who find behaving appropriately all of the time difficult, at no point is the learning of other pupils or the atmosphere of the school disturbed by their occasional misdemeanours. The high standard of behaviour is reflected in the lack of exclusions in the last year.
11. The school places a very strong emphasis on developing pupils' personal skills. Through assemblies and activities in lessons, they learn to reflect upon their own work and behaviour and to think about the lives and feelings of others. The use of drama and role-play in lessons is a major feature. For example, in a Year 3/4 English lesson, pupils were asked to create three simple tableau showing how people of different social classes might have felt when they were sailing away on the Titanic. The intense emotions on the pupils' faces captured the different attitudes and fears exceptionally well. Through religious education lessons and visits, pupils are taught the key principles that underpin the major world faiths so they learn to respect the cultural differences between the followers of these religions. However, given the situation of the school, pupils' experiences of how people from other cultures and faiths live their lives are limited, although the school does its best to provide opportunities for them to learn about the daily lives of the diverse cultures that are part of modern British society through, for example, 'theme days'

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. Pupils are taught well. The curriculum is very good. Procedures to involve pupils in the work of the school are very good and they are very well cared for. Very good links with parents, other schools and the community place the school at the heart of the village.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use a very good range of innovative ideas to stimulate pupils' learning.
- Teachers use questions very effectively to engage pupils in lessons.
- Procedures to track the progress of pupils are very thorough.

- Teachers have very high expectations of pupils so they work very hard.
- Assessment information is not always used well enough to address the specific learning needs of individual pupils in developing secure basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Commentary

12. The quality of teaching at the last inspection was good overall and it is a reflection of the very good leadership that this standard has been maintained and improved in some areas, over the intervening period. As can be seen from the table below, all the teaching observed was good or better with a significant proportion being very good. Teaching in reception and Years 1 and 2 is good overall. Although very good lessons were seen in all classes, most of the very good teaching was in Years 3 to 4 which sets the seal on pupils' very good achievement overall as they move through the school.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 17 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	3	12	0	0	0	0

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

13. Teaching and learning in reception has improved well since the last inspection and is good overall, although the teaching of children's personal, social and emotional development is very good. The teacher plans a broad range of activities that give children good opportunities to develop their basic skills in all the areas of learning. Lessons are very brisk and the teacher uses the resources available in the class very well to give the children a rich and varied experience of learning. The teacher uses questions very effectively in the class discussions at the start of sessions to involve children in the lessons and to generate their interest. Instructions and expectations are also very explicit so that children move to their own tasks clear about what is expected of them. As a result, children try hard and do their best to complete activities as well as they can. A good balance of tasks between those that are adult-led and those the children choose for themselves ensures that children not only develop their basic skills, but also they become confident and independent learners.
14. The strengths of the teaching in other classes in the school are very similar to those seen in reception. It is the cumulative effect of consistently good teaching and learning, that is the key feature that leads to pupils achieving very well overall. Underpinning all of the teaching are the very high expectations that teachers have of pupils' behaviour and performance, particularly of their contribution to discussions, whole class sessions and practical tasks. As a result, pupils learn early on in school exactly how they should behave, and all lessons are very positive learning experiences. Lessons begin with brisk and incisive discussions in which ICT is frequently used very well to capture pupils' interest and attention. Due to pupils' very good personal skills, teachers are confidently able to plan follow-up activities that require pupils to work constructively on their own and in small groups. This allows the teachers to work with each group in turn or to concentrate their time on those pupils who need extra help and this has a particularly positive effect on the learning of pupils with special educational needs. However, occasionally opportunities are missed to provide more able pupils with activities to fully extend their skills, particularly in writing in the upper years of the school. Most lessons in all classes end with a closing discussion in which the class considers what they have learnt. Most pupils say lessons are interesting and fun and they learn new things, which is testament to the effectiveness of these sessions.

15. The main features of the teaching in the upper years of the school that in several lessons set it apart from the other classes, are the innovative and exciting approaches planned by the teachers. They frequently include a high practical content and exploit links between other subjects very effectively in order to reinforce and promote pupils' understanding. During the inspection, two particular lessons were seen that perfectly exemplify this approach. The first, referred to earlier in the report, related to the work pupils were doing on the Titanic. This lesson linked together work in history to that in English with a very strong emphasis on developing pupils' speaking skills and ability to relate to the feelings of others through drama.

Pupils were so involved in this lesson that when groups were performing their presentations, one could sense the tension in the air. The second example was a design and technology lesson in which pupils used the Internet to conduct some research on boat design and had a design brief to make a boat to carry a specific cargo down a canal. Again, this was linked to a book the pupils had been studying in English. In both of these lessons, pupils were totally engrossed with the tasks, had to use a range of skills and knowledge and also to work together to share ideas. These lessons encapsulated one of the strengths of the teaching described by one of the governors as providing 'living experiences of learning'.

16. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced very effective procedures to assess and track the progress pupils are making in English, mathematics and science. In addition, teachers assess pupils' skills in other subjects and a new procedure is being trialled in ICT. Overall, assessment information is used much better to inform teachers' planning and activities in lessons than it was at the time of the last inspection. However, there is still scope for further improvement. In reception, information collected when children first start school is used well to begin to develop children's basic skills in reading and number so that by the end of their first year in school, children have developed a very secure knowledge of letters, counting and number sequences. However, although the teacher ensures that all children complete the key tasks in each lesson and carefully records what children can do, this information is not used consistently enough to provide sufficient variation in tasks in lessons. As a result, some more able children occasionally over-reinforce aspects of their learning rather than moving on as quickly as they might. This particularly affects their writing and calculating skills. Similarly in other classes, tasks in lessons, particularly in mathematics and English, are not matched closely enough to what pupils need to learn. For example, on occasion, pupils in Year 1 are required to complete simpler variations of the task pupils in Year 2 are doing before they have fully grasped much more basic skills. As result, pupils move through the school with slightly weaker elements of their learning that manifests itself in Years 3 and 4 in the errors in punctuation and slower mental arithmetic skills than are normally seen.
17. Pupils are involved well in the assessment process and although teachers' marking does not always provide clear guidance to pupils, dialogue between teachers and pupils is a strong feature of the school, so older pupils in particular are fully aware of what they have to do in order to improve.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good. The opportunities for enrichment are good. Accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is planned very well and provides a very broad range of learning experiences for pupils.
- Pupils are very well prepared for moving on to the next stage of their education.
- The number of pupils who take part in activities outside of lessons is very good.
- The match of teachers to the curriculum is very good for the size of the school.

Commentary

18. The curriculum has improved very well since the last inspection and provides pupils in Years 1 to 4 with a very rich and varied range of learning experiences. In addition, the most recent guidance for the Foundation Stage has been introduced into reception so children have good opportunities to develop the full range of their skills in each of the areas of learning. The curriculum fully meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and the locally

agreed syllabus for religious education. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and ensures that pupils who may need extra help are identified quickly and provided with the support they require. In addition, since the last inspection the school has introduced a whole school policy for personal, social, and health education. This programme includes reference to sex and drugs education relevant to the age of the pupils in the school. The school also tries hard to reflect its policy in all aspects of work from raising pupils' awareness of the dangers of smoking to promoting healthy eating through its involvement in the National Fruit for Schools scheme and the school meals. The high quality of the provision was recognised recently with the 'Healthy Schools Award'.

19. The school has devised a very effective approach to planning that creates the basis for the innovative and interesting activities seen in lessons. A series of themes are identified for each half term that run right through the school and act as the focus for the texts used in literacy lessons, as well as the topics studied in other subjects such as geography, history, art and design and design and technology. Where it is realistic, opportunities for pupils to use their ICT skills and to link subjects together are identified and exploited. As a result, pupils' reinforce their skills and understanding in exciting ways. For example, at the time of the inspection, the topic theme was Spain. In the dance lessons reception children had been dancing to the sounds of Spanish music, relaxation music and using sun-sprays, parasols and fans; Years 1 and 2 had sampled some Spanish foods and Years 3 and 4 had been part of the Christopher Columbus expedition and had researched Spain from the historical as well as fun view. In addition, the curriculum has a coherence and flexibility that enables the school to respond to the varying numbers of pupils in year groups that results in the mixed-age classes. Pupils learn about the art, music and lifestyles of cultures in the past in Britain and around the world and this is linked into how these cultures affect the way we live today.
20. The curriculum is enriched well by additional activities. Visits and visitors make an important contribution to lessons. This is particularly important when the school's situation, as a small rural community, is taken into account and pupils have few opportunities in their everyday lives to experience, for example, the wider aspects of art or music. Visiting artists, theatre groups and musicians as well as specific weeks, such as the 'Absolutely Africa' week last year, when parents can come into school to work on a particular topic with their children, all help to broaden and enrich pupils' experiences. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 also go for a week's residential at Ford Castle. This is well supported by parents and the chair of governors is a regular member of supervisory staff. Due to the fact that a significant proportion of pupils are brought to school by bus, opportunities to provide a very extensive range of after school activities are limited. This was noted at the last inspection, but the school has tried to broaden these activities by introducing a series of 'taster sessions' at lunchtime in, for example, dance, judo, drama and kwik cricket. The number of pupils who take part is very good. As result, pupils' social development is promoted very well and whatever their aptitudes, sporting, musical or creative, pupils have good opportunities to extend and develop their skills and interests.
21. The governors have placed a very high priority on maintaining the breadth of expertise among teaching staff despite gradually falling rolls in recent years. Through careful budget planning, they have succeeded in retaining the staffing levels at those seen at the time of the last inspection. However, the school also provides specialist teaching in dance with lessons across the school and another specialist teacher of yoga works with the younger pupils on a weekly basis for one term each year. This is due in part

to the very good links within the local school cluster so costs are shared. The school also provides specialist coaching in aspects of physical education, such as athletics. These staff supplement the skills of the full time staff very well and ensure that all aspects of the National Curriculum are covered very effectively.

22. The school has developed the accommodation for teaching and learning very well recently. With the help of parents and through consultation with pupils, facilities have been developed outside, including the installation of a pagoda large enough for a whole class to use. There is

no separate area designated for the children in reception, but the school makes good use of the outside space and children have many opportunities to play outside. The school has recently also improved the facilities and resources available for lessons very well. Most notably, a large resource room has been built using capital funding supplemented by donations. This very flexible room acts as a library, computer and research suite and has an interactive whiteboard and projector. All classes have access to this room and teachers use it very effectively in lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for ensuring pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is very good. Support and guidance for pupils are good. The school has very good procedures to involve pupils in the work of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between pupils and adults are excellent.
- Induction arrangements into reception are very good.
- The school has established a very good range of opportunities for pupils to express their views and contribute to school development.

Commentary

23. This aspect of the school's work is one of its major strengths. All aspects of the school's procedures to ensure that pupils are safe and cared for within a healthy environment, including those for child protection, are very effective. The headteacher and governors pay very careful attention to ensuring that the school's procedures are followed rigorously and that safeguards such as risk assessments are in place before any activity is undertaken.
24. The school is very proud of its caring, community atmosphere and the ethos of mutual respect and support that exists between pupils and adults. The excellent relationships between pupils and adults are at the heart of this. This is partly due to the fact that most of the support staff live in the village and are well known to parents and pupils alike. In addition, several staff have several roles in school. For example, the caretaker is also one of the midday supervisors. As a result, the continuity of adults at all times of the day from the Breakfast Club through lunchtimes and after school activities ensures that the support for pupils is always there and the school's expectations, for example of behaviour, are reinforced consistently. Consequently, virtually without exception, pupils are confident that if they have a problem they will be able to talk to some one about it.
25. The school begins to build good relationships with parents and foster children's confidence in the school before they start in reception. The reception teacher has designated time each week to work with staff and children at the private playgroups in Swarland and Longframlington that many of the reception children attend before starting school. The main aim is to link the work that the playgroups provide for children with what is done in school in order to give coherence to the children's first experiences of learning. In addition, the children from the playgroups work with the teacher and children in reception at least once a week in for, example a yoga session with the visiting teacher in the summer term. As a result, parents are very pleased with the procedures to prepare their children for school and report that they settle very

quickly into the new routines when they begin school. Those pupils throughout the school with identified needs such as learning, social and emotional problems are well supported by the school staff and visiting professionals.

26. The 'family' feel of the school is further enhanced by the very effective ways that staff involve pupils in its work and development. The school took the decision that, due to its size, a school council was not appropriate and that all pupils should have a voice in what happens in

school. As a result, pupils are regularly consulted through questionnaires and fully involved in discussions about specific initiatives that are proposed. A notable example is the new Resources Room, the design and furnishings of which were based on pupils' advice and ideas. Pupils recognise that the school makes every effort to include them wherever possible and in the questionnaire that pupils completed prior to the inspection, the vast majority felt that teachers listened to their ideas.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has established a very constructive relationship with parents.
- Due to the very good links that the school has forged with many groups within the community, it is an integral part of village life.
- Arrangements for ensuring the smooth transition of pupils to middle school are very good.

Commentary

27. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to build its relationship with parents. These are now very good and centred on ensuring that parents are very well informed about all aspects of its work and involved in decision-making. At the time of the last inspection, school documentation did not fully meet statutory requirements. These errors and omissions have been addressed well so that pupils' reports and the annual report to parents from the governors now comply fully with requirements. In addition, the school has prepared very detailed information on how parents can help their children at home, particularly in reading, so their work complements that of the staff. As a result, of the very good information parents receive, the vast majority feel fully informed on their children's progress. Parents' views are canvassed by using questionnaires and holding meetings on specific topics. Their views are respected by the headteacher and governors, and taken into account when discussing possible school developments. As a result, parents are very supportive of the school and, through the Home-School Association, provide substantial sums of money to help fund new projects. For example, the low-level adventure trail on the field.
28. The school continues to be a very important and integral part of the village. Several village activities, such as Brownies and karate, are based in the school so even when they have left, many former pupils maintain their links with staff and the school. In addition, several past pupils attend the after-school club until their parents are able to collect them after arriving back in the village from Middle School. The school also takes an active part in community events and initiatives. For example, the community has recently been investigating ways of improving the village 'square' and other amenities. Pupils were involved in conducting a survey and expressing their ideas on how facilities could be improved. In addition, the school has established very good links with the village sports club which provides coaching in football and tennis. As a result, parents feel that the school enjoys a good reputation and has a high profile in the community.
29. The school works very closely with the other schools in the local cluster to broaden the learning experiences for pupils. For example, a dance teacher is employed by the

school cluster and provides specialist teaching to all classes on a weekly basis. These activities reflect the school's approach to linking subjects together wherever possible to give pupils a real learning experience. Pupils also work with pupils from other schools on joint topics and musical performances. For example, Year 3 children are going to the playhouse to perform "Saving Our Sloths" with the rest of the cluster schools in June. Joint training events for staff

help the school provide a broader range of in-service training than would be possible on its own and enable staff to share good practice with each other. The school has also established very good links with the schools that pupils transfer to when they leave. Pupils make several visits and teachers come to school taking lessons alongside school staff. As a result, parents are very pleased with the transfer arrangements and say that the transition takes place without any major problems and their children settle very quickly into their middle school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is very well led and managed. The headteacher's leadership of the school is very good. Subject leaders fulfil their roles well. Governance of the school is very good. The very good management systems are very effective in driving school improvement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is an excellent role model for staff and pupils through her own teaching and sense of purpose.
- An excellent climate of teamwork underpins all aspects of the school's work so there is a very coherent direction to its day-to-day work and development.
- Self-evaluation procedures are very effective.
- Governors have a very clear understanding of the strengths of the school and very clear vision for its future.
- The school makes a very good contribution to initial teacher training.

Commentary

30. The headteacher provides very strong leadership and she has successfully created a warm, very caring school in which pupils want to learn. She has a very clear focus on raising standards and how the school, as a team, is going to achieve this. As a result, the school has continued to build on the firm foundations reported at the last inspection. Two main factors underpin this development. Firstly, the headteacher is an excellent role model for other staff and pupils through the very good quality of her own teaching and the way that she sets an example through her relationships with pupils and parents. As a result, they hold her in high regard and have great confidence that the school is well run. The second factor is the way that all staff are involved in the development of the school. Although the headteacher is very clearly the driving force behind the school's ethos and momentum, she has succeeded in establishing a shared, corporate approach to decision-making and the implementation of initiatives. All staff are fully involved in discussions and have a personal stake in the future of the school. As a result, of this very strong teamwork, staff are enabled to fulfil their duties well, drive forward their own areas of responsibility and realise their own ambitions. The awards that the school has achieved in health education, physical educational and, most recently, the arts, are largely due to the commitment of individual staff to these areas.
31. The ethos of teamwork extends to the governors who are very committed to the school and ensure that the headteacher and other staff have the time and support they need to enable the school to realise its ambitions. They are fully involved in the identification of school priorities and hold the staff to account, monitoring very effectively the progress and the effect of these priorities on pupils' learning. Many governors also take an active part in school life by, for example, providing athletics

coaching or helping to staff the annual residential visit to Ford Castle. However, they also respect the views of parents and pupils and ensure that these groups are consulted and involved in the school. As a result, they have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and the areas it needs to develop next. Governors ensure that the school meets its statutory responsibilities well.

32. As a result of the very close relationships between all staff, governors, pupils and parents, the systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are very effective. For example, pupils' performance in national tests and in assessment tasks are carefully analysed to evaluate the effectiveness of changes the school has made to teaching methods or the curriculum. However, the school also uses other methods to audit the effectiveness of its provision. Although the headteacher is very proud of the awards the school has received, she is very clear that the process of getting these awards is far more valuable than the outcomes. This is because they require very close analysis of the school's provision and can highlight areas for improvement. The effectiveness of the school's procedures is reflected in the very close correlation between the inspection findings and the school's own self-evaluation documents. As a result, the school improvement plan, in which each subject has very clear action plan with standards and improving provision as its primary objective, provides a very good overview of what the school needs to do over the next three years. Performance management is used effectively to identify training needs to aid individuals' professional development and to enhance the work of the school. To help staff fulfil their responsibilities effectively, the school is also well on the way to providing teaching staff with the preparation time required under workforce reform legislation. This also ensures that the day-to-day management of the school and the implementation of developments are very effective and coherent. The school also recognises that it has a responsibility to the future of the teaching profession as a whole and is a very active partner in the local 'school-based initial teacher training' (SCITT) programme. Each year, the school provides six students with placements. This has the added benefit for a school where the teaching staff are well established and experienced, of giving pupils the experience of working with different adults who bring their own fresh ideas and enthusiasm.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	188,212	Balance from previous year	40,000
Total expenditure	212,333	Balance carried forward to the next	15,879
Expenditure per pupil	2,308		

**Audited accounts for 2004/05 were not yet available at the time of the inspection.*

33. The carry forward figure in the table above is slightly above the 5 percent guideline. However, this included money allocated to improvements in ICT provision in the Resources room, but not spent until the following year. In 2003/04, the school had to use a significant proportion of its reserves to maintain staffing levels in the face of a fall in pupil numbers. During the last year, numbers have stabilised and the school is projecting a small rise next year. A local authority audit visit (Sept 2004) noted that the school uses Audit commission/Ofsted computer-based tools to self-evaluate its own procedures. This was commended as a strength and supports the inspection judgement that financial management is good and the school has good procedures in place to ensure 'best value'.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Most children enter the reception class at the age of four having attended one of the local playgroups. Their attainment on entry varies considerably from year to year and most groups recently have been small. At the time of the inspection, there were eleven children in the reception class. This group's attainment on entry, according to baseline assessments conducted when they started in September, was below that expected. Importantly, only one child was working at levels above those expected in any of the areas of learning. This has been the case for the last three years. The Foundation Stage is led well and, as a result, the quality of teaching and learning has improved well since the last inspection and is now good. Consequently, children achieve well in their first year in school. Since the last inspection, the school has begun to strengthen links with the two main playgroups children attend before they start school, to try to improve the continuity of the curriculum. The Foundation Stage leader has designated time each week to work with playgroup leaders and the children and this is beginning to pay dividends. This is particularly noticeable in how well children are prepared for school. Due to these very good links, when they start school children know the school staff and have worked with current reception children. Parents are very pleased with the way their children settle into school. The accommodation and resources for learning are good. Too few sessions were seen to make secure judgements on standards in knowledge and understanding of the world, physical or creative development.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most children are likely to exceed the expected levels for their age by the time they start Year 1.
- Relationships between adults and children are very good.
- Adults have very consistent expectations of children's behaviour and use school procedures very effectively.
- Children have plenty of opportunities to develop their independence and self-confidence.

Commentary

34. Teaching in this aspect is very good so children achieve very well in their first year in school. Even at the time of the inspection many children were working at the expected level. The vast majority of children are likely to reach the expected level for their age in most of the aspects of their learning and a very good proportion will exceed these levels.
35. The very good relationships between adults and children are at the heart of the good teaching so children respond very positively to the encouragement of the adults to work and play with each other. They leave their carers confidently and quickly settle into the tasks they are given. Adults use the school's procedures to manage and reward good behaviour very consistently so all children quickly learn the difference

between right and wrong and behave well in lessons and outside in the playground. This sets the basis for the very good behaviour seen in Years 1 to 4. One of the major strengths of the teaching is the very good range of opportunities children have to work on their own, to make choices and to play with others. Teachers' instructions are also very explicit and children are expected to take turns and to play their part in keeping the classroom tidy and organised. As a result, most children are independent and tackle tasks confidently.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The early skills of reading are taught well.
- Pupils achieve well in developing their communication skills.
- Adults use questions well to draw all children into discussions.
- Inconsistent use is made of assessment information to ensure that potentially higher attaining children develop all their skills quickly enough.

Commentary

36. When they start school, few children know many letters or can write their own names. Their spoken vocabulary is limited and several have indistinct speech and imprecise pronunciation. However, due to good teaching in literacy lessons, in which teachers and support staff place a very strong emphasis on developing children's basic skills, they achieve well and, overall, levels of language and communication are likely to be in line with those expected by the end of reception.
37. In response to the low level of skills children have when they start, the teacher uses every opportunity to reinforce children's knowledge of the alphabet. For example, books, stories and rhymes are frequently used at the start of lessons to set the scene. As a result, most children make good progress, learn to recognise letters of the alphabet, and link them to sounds. More able children learn to use their knowledge to sound out simple words and read simple books. The parts of lessons where the class are taught together led by an adult are particularly effective in developing children's speaking skills, their appreciation of books and reading because adults use several different methods to reinforce children's understanding and they have a very clear understanding of what they want the children to learn. The resulting discussions are brisk and lively. The teacher uses questions well to challenge children's understanding and to ensure that all children are fully involved in the lesson. Activities that children choose for themselves provide many opportunities for them to act out and play imaginary games; to discuss with each other and an adult what they are doing. As a result, most children are on course to reach the expected levels in the communication and reading aspects of this area of learning.
38. Group activities, which are led by an adult, are also generally effective, building well on the whole class sessions. Adults adjust and adapt the basic activities well to accommodate the learning needs of the children they are working with, particularly those who find it difficult. However, there are occasions when, although assessment information and children's work indicates they could attempt activities that are more challenging, children have to continue to practise skills they have already mastered rather than moving on to the next step. This particularly affects those children who reach the expected levels in the writing strand of this area of learning. Most children learn to form letters, to write their own names, to hold a pencil correctly, but at the time of the inspection, few were able to write simple sentences, sometimes using full stops and capital letters. As a result, standards in this strand of the area of learning are likely to be below those expected.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well in developing basic number skills.
- Inconsistent use is made of assessment information to ensure that potentially higher attaining children develop all their skills quickly enough.

Commentary

39. Children's attainment is likely to be close to the expected standard by the time that they start Year 1 in most of the aspects of this area of learning. The quality of teaching and learning is good and children achieve well.
40. Teaching has the same strengths as seen in the other areas of learning; there are very good management and relationships between adults and children and a very strong focus on basic knowledge. As a result, lessons are brisk and positive learning experiences for children so they develop a secure understanding of numbers and counting. Most count confidently at least to ten and many beyond this. The majority sort and organise basic shapes and colours, with a few more able children beginning to do simple addition sums. The good range of methods used by adults to reinforce children's mathematical language in whole class discussions results in most children having a sound knowledge of subject vocabulary such as *more than*, *less than*, *lighter*, *bigger* and *smaller*. In addition, there are plenty of opportunities for children to reinforce their learning through games and activities around the classroom when they have completed the essential parts of their tasks and when they are working without the help of an adult. Teachers and support staff assess children's learning well using questions. However, there is a tendency for adults to over-reinforce children's very basic skills in counting and not always to move children on quickly enough to develop their ability to use these skills to do basic addition and subtraction sums. Because of this, many children start Year 1 with less well developed skills in this very specific aspect of their learning.
41. In **knowledge and understanding of the world**, children have good opportunities to find out more about the world around them both in the classroom and outdoors. For example, children have surveyed traffic passing the school and walk down to the village to look at the houses and the shop. The teacher uses books well in the opening parts of lessons to set the scene for the sessions and ICT plays an important part in many lessons. As a result, children learn to use the mouse and keyboard to enter text and to control programmes. A programmable car is always available for children to use on their own so they develop a very good understanding of how they can control movement by entering numbers and directions. They also use computers to make simple maps of their route to school.
42. In **physical development**, children have good opportunities to play outdoors using a good range of equipment and wheeled toys. The school is very keen that children get plenty of fresh air and fun so a full class set of waterproofs and wellies has been bought so whatever the weather children get outside. Outside, adults encourage children to play together and to create their own games. When they started school, the teacher reported that few of the current class could play constructively with others, but during the inspection, the effectiveness of the school's work was reflected in the positive way most played games together. The provision in this area of learning makes a good contribution to children's personal development.

43. In **creative development**, children are provided with a good range of opportunities to explore different media; for example, creating pictures using arrange of materials. Displays around the classroom celebrate what children have done and create a bright and stimulating environment for children to learn. Activities provide children with opportunities to practise their skills in using scissors to work with different materials such as paper card and fabric and to express their own imaginations. As with the other areas of learning, the current topic theme is used well as the basis for planning activities.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

44. One lesson of **French** was seen with pupils in Years 3 and 4. The limited evidence from this short session showed that pupils begin to develop a basic understanding of conversational French. The lesson encapsulated many of the features that characterise the very good teaching in this class. Very incisive questions and very high expectations created a very brisk pace and very positive learning atmosphere. Together these factors ensured that pupils concentrated very hard because they knew they would probably be selected to contribute to the lesson – there is nowhere to hide in this class! As a result, pupils rapidly developed their understanding of how to greet and other person. Importantly, the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' preparation for moving on to middle school where French is part of the curriculum.

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons place a very strong emphasis on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills.
- The subject leader is a very good role model for other staff and pupils.
- Other subjects make a good contribution to pupils' reading skills.
- Pupils' written work is marred by frequent errors in punctuation and grammar.

Commentary

45. Very good leadership and management have been crucial factors in the maintenance of high standards and the significant improvement in teaching and learning seen in English since the last inspection. The subject leader is highly skilled, provides very strong leadership, is an excellent role model for staff and pupils and her highly effective monitoring of teaching and the evaluation of standards has given rise to effective action.
46. Overall, standards in Year 2 in the last three years have been well above the national average. However, in 2003, (the current Year 4 group), standards were not as high as normal because this small group of pupils had a significant proportion of lower attaining pupils. Currently, standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening skills at the end of Year 2 are well in line with the national expectation. Standards of speaking and listening and reading in Year 4 are very good, but standards in writing are in line with those expected. Due to the very good behaviour of pupils, teachers are able to support and help those pupils who need extra help with their learning so those with special educational needs achieve at a similar rate to their classmates. Despite being awarded the Basic Skills quality mark in 2003, handwriting and spelling has been a focus for improvement. The school's success in developing pupils' skills is reflected in the very high standard of spelling seen throughout the school. However, pupils' written work is variable in presentation and frequently contains many careless errors in punctuation and, to a lesser extent, grammatical structures. This reflects the occasional inconsistency in the use of assessment information to ensure that pupils'

particularly lower down the school develop a secure grasp of the basic ideas before being moved on to the next level.

47. Teaching and learning are good in Years 1 and 2 and very good in Years 3 and 4. Teaching in all classes is characterised by very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and performance. Lessons begin with the teachers sharing the aims of the lesson with pupils so they know what they will be learning about and what they are expected to be able to do by the end of the lesson. In most lessons, teachers use the last few minutes very well to draw the lesson to a

close and revisit the aims in order to review the progress that has been made. All staff use questions very effectively to involve pupils in lessons and to check their understanding. As a result, pupils' listening skills develop quickly and all of them, including the few pupils with special educational needs, develop their confidence to contribute their ideas to discussions. Opening discussions are brisk and capture pupils' enthusiasm and interest and they develop very good attitudes to the subject. The openings to lessons in Years 3 and 4 move at a very quick pace and the teacher, (the subject leader) uses her very good subject knowledge to stage very challenging and incisive discussions. As a result, pupils learn to look carefully at the language authors use to capture the reader's attention and to infer the more subtle meanings and messages that are being portrayed. Together with pupils' very good research skills, this aspect of pupils' skills is at the heart of the very good standards of reading seen in Year 4.

48. One of the main features of the teaching that contributes to the high standards in pupils' speaking skills seen in Year 4, as well as to their personal development, is the strong focus teachers throughout the school place on drama and role-play. Lessons frequently include short opportunities for pupils to think about how characters in books might be feeling or to portray sections of the book they are currently studying. In Years 1 and 2, these complement well the other activities pupils do in lessons when they are working in groups. As a result, pupils develop a good understanding of how authors develop the settings and how they use adjectives and other writing devices to describe characters what look like and what they are doing or feeling. However, opportunities are occasionally missed to fully extend more able pupils' writing, capitalising upon their good understanding, by giving them activities to practise their own skills in a broad range of different styles. To some extent, this lack is reflected in the inconsistencies and weaknesses in aspects of pupils' writing in Year 4. However, the very positive effect of this consistent emphasis on the use of drama on pupils' speaking skills was seen in an excellent lesson in Years 3 and 4 where pupils were asked to portray the feelings of passengers on the Titanic as they left port for the United States. It is impossible to explain in this context how superbly the emotions in pupils' faces, movement and body shapes captured the mood, the trepidation and in some cases, the self-satisfaction of the passengers at that momentous moment in history.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

49. The school's curriculum overview that uses a series of themes to form a coherent framework ensures that teachers are able to link subjects together well so that pupils are provided with good opportunities to use their literacy skills in other subjects in all classes. This results in pupils having very good literacy skills by the end of Year 4. For example, in science, pupils are expected to write up their investigations in their own words and to explain what they have discovered. This is also the case in design and technology. In geography and history, pupils are expected to use the Internet and other sources of information to find out about the topics they are studying. However, opportunities are missed in religious education to promote pupils' handwriting and writing.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and reach standards above those expected by the end of Year 4.
- Good teaching ensures that pupils to develop a good range of problem-solving skills.
- The quality of presentation is variable.
- Pupils' progress is effectively tracked.
- Pupils' recall of basic number facts is slower than expected.

Commentary

50. Over recent years, standards in Year 2 tests have been above average. The trend has been above the national median over the last five years. In 2004, results were above the national average overall. The percentage of pupils reaching the expected level was very high in comparison with similar schools while the percentage of pupils reaching the higher level was below average. Year groups are small, however, and there are natural variations in groups' abilities.
51. Inspection findings are that pupils' achievement is good throughout the school. Although attainment on entry in the last three years has been below that expected and a significant number of pupils have not begun the National Curriculum with all the necessary skills in calculating and recording, currently standards are in line with expectations at the end of Year 2. In Years 3 and 4, pupils continue to achieve well so that standards at the end of Year 4 are above the expected levels for the age of pupils. Although investigations are not always high-profile events in lessons, teachers use many opportunities for pupils to work on problems. For example, older pupils pondered a question about dividing a flag with colours while having their fruit and milk before break and successfully made the necessary breakthrough. As a result, pupils' understanding of how to tackle problems is particularly strong. The quality of mental maths has improved since the last inspection, but there is still scope for greater rigour in teachers' expectations. As a result, a few pupils with the potential to reach the higher than expected levels do not always make the progress they could. Sometimes they know how to solve problems, but are hindered by a lack of speed and confidence in recalling number bonds and multiplication tables.
52. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school and very good in Years 3 and 4. Relationships are very good and give pupils confidence. The school has promoted the investigative aspect of the curriculum very well and teachers ensure that pupils acquire strategies for solving mathematical problems. The investment in new mathematical software and the interactive whiteboard has had a considerable impact on this aspect of teaching and learning, particularly in the opening parts of lessons. Teachers are also skilled in phrasing questions to prompt pupils to be articulate and to provide reasons for their conclusions. For example, younger pupils working on halving were able to explain why odd numbers did not halve exactly. Teachers' planning generally provides appropriately for the different ages in classes, but it is not always directed closely enough at specific groups within those ages. For example, the needs of pupils who begin Year 1 without the expected skills in calculation and recording are not always specifically met and they are expected to tackle elements of the National Curriculum without first developing secure basic addition and subtraction skills. As a result, a few pupils move through the school with gaps in their knowledge reflected in the sluggishness of a few older pupils in their mental arithmetic. In addition, teachers' expectations for the layout and presentation of work are sometimes too generous and marking does not consistently help pupils improve their work.
53. The subject is well led and managed and the staff work very well together as a team. The subject leader has a good overview of the subject and has undertaken monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. As a result, improvement since the last inspection has been good. The school has acted effectively to address the weaknesses in teaching and learning and has provided better scope for subject management and monitoring. In addition, assessment procedures have been strengthened since the last inspection and provide good information to enable

individual pupils' progress to be tracked and for comparisons between year groups to be made. Older pupils in particular, are closely involved in the evaluation of their progress. As a result, the school plans very well for the further improvement of standards and has invested in a scheme of work for mixed age classes to ensure appropriate coverage and challenge.

Mathematics across the curriculum

54. Overall, pupils' numeracy skills are good and they are provided with satisfactory opportunities to use them in other subjects. The use of ICT to extend and reinforce mathematical skills is well established, particularly for number and shape. Programmable toys are used well to reinforce pupils' understanding of shape and direction. Pupils use measuring skills in design and technology for example in planning a sailing craft. In science, pupils have to use charts and graphs to record results from investigations so that they learn to interpret a line graph and reach conclusions about the peaks and troughs.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and very well in Years 3 and 4.
- There is a very good focus on learning through practical experiences.
- Teaching promotes a good understanding of scientific methods.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Commentary

55. Teaching is consistently good in Years 1 and 2 and very good in Years 3 and 4. Lessons are well planned and good use is made of resources in and outside the building. There is an emphasis throughout the school on the effective use of questioning to develop pupils' thinking strategies. In all classes, teachers place a very strong emphasis on developing pupils' understanding of fair testing and their confidence in planning experiments. Crucially, teachers are confident enough to allow the unexpected to happen and let pupils work out why. For example, younger pupils were surprised when the toy car did not travel as far as they expected down a ramp but, after reflection, suggested themselves that they had made the ramp too steep and the car had bounced. As a result, in Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve well and standards in science are above the expected levels in Year 2. They quickly become familiar with the requirements of a fair test and most pupils learn to set out their reports in an organised way and use their own words. The very good range of practical activities and experiences motivates them. Recent work on colour, for example, involved making spinners, testing for visibility, using a prism to make a rainbow, separating colours with absorbent paper and making a bar graph with ICT. Pupils demonstrate both observational and reasoning skills, for example, in devising their own criteria for animal classification.
56. In Years 3 and 4, pupils continue to build upon their knowledge and understanding of the different strands of the subject. Teachers continue to place a very strong emphasis on using practical activities so that pupils' learning has a real purpose, they develop a very keen interest and enthusiasm for the subject and continue to develop their investigative skills progressively. As a result, pupils achieve very well overall to reach standards well above those expected by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4. Pupils learn very well from the practical experiences provided for them and develop very good attitudes to the subject. As a result, they learn to plan experiments carefully with increasing independence and record their findings well.

Pupils' work shows that their investigations in magnetism were approached and recorded in different ways. During the inspection, higher attaining pupils demonstrated a very secure understanding of reversible and irreversible changes, which were investigated with chocolate, water and candles. Most pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of physical processes, materials and living things. Classification skills are refined as pupils learn new methods, for instance in using keys to sort and identify.

57. Since the last inspection, the school has reviewed the role of the subject leader successfully. As a result, the subject leader leads and manages the subject well and provision in science has improved well since the last inspection. Assessment procedures are sound and provide tracking on the progress of individuals and cohorts. Self-evaluation by pupils is a significant feature of the assessment process. This information is complemented well by a high quality portfolio of pupils' work that is moderated in detail and is regularly updated to help teachers evaluate standards in their class. Resources for learning are good and the school grounds are used extensively, for instance with the butterfly garden. In addition, teachers make good use of an increased range of ICT resources to support work in science, for example using a data-logger to monitor sound.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The use of ICT has an obvious purpose in lessons.
- Resources have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- There are good plans in place for further development.
- The school benefits from regular technical support.

Commentary

58. Standards attained in information and communication technology by most pupils are above the expected levels at the end of Year 2 and again at the end of Year 4. Pupils' achievement is good and for some pupils who begin school with lower than average attainment, achievement in Years 3 and 4 is very good.
59. Teaching is good throughout the school so most pupils are confident users of ICT and develop good skills in the different strands of the subject. Teachers give clear instructions and explanations and they support the pupils well. A major strength of pupils' learning in the subject is that, as well as teaching discrete skills in specific sessions, the delivery of the ICT curriculum has been successfully mapped across and integrated into other subjects. As a result, pupils always have a reason for learning, talk knowledgeably about their use of ICT and understand how to apply their skills. For example in Years 1 and 2, explained how they had used many of the tools on their favourite painting program to create pictures with captions and entered and amended text. They learn to use simple data handling programs to enter information to support work in science and print out charts so that they have a record, for example, when measuring the growth of plants. They program a device with a set of instructions to make it move in the desired direction, which supports their understanding of shape, space and direction. In a religious education lesson pupils used the digital camera to record the role-play of a baptism. They know that a data-logger monitors sound or temperature and produces line graphs.
60. In Years 3 and 4, teachers continue to place a strong emphasis on practical learning through other subjects as pupils meet the breadth and complexity of the next stage of the National Curriculum. Pupils learn to use the Internet successfully to find information on a range of topics. For example, as part of their project on building a small boat, they researched the shape of suitable boat hulls and compiled reports from

the information. Pupils' multi-media presentation skills are above what is expected for their age. For example, recently groups of pupils created presentations of familiar fairy tales. The main characters were cardboard figures drawn and made by pupils and digitally photographed against a setting. The images were presented in a slide show interspersed with text and graphic pages made by the pupils. The slideshow printouts were laminated and bound as storybooks, placed in the school library.

61. The subject is very well led and managed by the two subject leaders and the provision has improved very well since the last inspection. Resources have been much improved, especially with the extended accommodation in the Resource Room, and the way that the subject is taught has been reviewed and updated. In addition, the school has purchased digital cameras, a digital microscope and data-logger. As a result, the confidence of both teachers and pupils in using ICT is much greater than it was. The school has high aspirations for the development of the subject and it continues to be a focus for development. For example, the school has introduced sound assessment procedures and uses the information appropriately to track pupils' progress and to involve them in their own assessment. However, the subject leaders are not satisfied that the process is easy enough for teachers and pupils to use and are currently investigating more manageable forms of recording assessment.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

62. Good use is made of opportunities for enhancement with ICT in many subjects which is reflected in the good standard of pupils' ICT skills. Pupils use suitable programs to support work in the data handling aspects of mathematics and science. Equipment such as digital microscopes are used in science, and the use of control technology helps pupils consolidate their understanding of shape, space and direction. Imaginative use of presentation and publishing programmes allow pupils to apply their literacy and creative skills. Teachers set good role models for pupils by their use of ICT.

HUMANITIES

63. Due to the timetable arrangements and the focus of the inspection, provision in **history** and **geography** was only sampled by looking at pupils' work, talking to subject leaders and observation of a small number of lessons. Pupils' work and school documentation show that pupils study a balanced range of topics that provide them with opportunities to develop the full range of skills, knowledge and understanding. The school makes good use of the village and visits further a field to places such as Alnwick and Beamish Museum to give pupils practical experiences. Pupils' work shows that there is strong emphasis on developing pupils' research skills.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills.
- Pupils have a good understanding of Christianity.

Commentary

64. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 2 and again at the end of Year 4 are in line with the expectations of the Northumberland Agreed syllabus. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory throughout the school.
65. Due to the timetable arrangements, only one lesson of religious education was seen during the inspection. In this lesson, the quality of teaching and learning was good

and it was clear that teachers know their pupils well and involve them effectively in their learning. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 undertook their roles in presenting the celebration of baptism confidently and respectfully. They have compared major festivals in world faiths and know what prayer means. From their work on Judaism they have become aware of some similarities and differences between the Jewish and Christian faiths. As pupils move through the school, they

continue to build on their knowledge of the major world faiths. For example, older pupils know the main features of Christianity and the purpose of some Christian services. However, although they understand the key features, they are not as clear about how having faith affects the way a person lives their life and their relationships with others, and how this compares to their own lives.

66. The subject contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as well as to their personal development. Discussions are a major element of lessons in religious education so the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills and, because of the very good relationships in the school, they are confident to engage in discussion and reflect on their feelings. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were encouraged to articulate the good qualities in themselves and others. The phrases they used showed that they understood what was required and could use the appropriate language. However, the presentation of pupils' written work on loose sheets in folders makes it difficult for pupils to appreciate what they have achieved, misses opportunities to reinforce the expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation skills as well as to reducing the coherence of the subject.
67. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed and aspects of the subject have developed well since the last inspection. A new scheme of work has been introduced and the scope of the curriculum is being further developed this year as the school begins to broaden the experiences offered to pupils. For example, a recent visit to a synagogue had a considerable impact on the learning of pupils in Years 1 and 2. Assessment is adequate and is to be adjusted to the new syllabus.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

68. It was only possible to sample the provision for **design and technology**. No judgement could be made about provision, standards or teaching. Available evidence indicates that the subject is taught to a high standard. The high quality of pupils' work on display shows that they develop skills progressively and experience a range of materials and techniques. The one lesson seen during the inspection was of a high quality. The lesson was very well designed as a problem-solving exercise but was given an imaginative context based on the story of "The cow who fell into the canal". Pupils' response showed that they had the necessary skills to plan a project, select appropriate materials, take measurements and apply suitable joining methods. The curriculum provision is very good because of the breadth of experience offered and the progressive nature of learning.
69. No lessons were seen in **music** so it is not possible to make judgements on provision, standards, teaching and learning. Available evidence shows that the subject is taught regularly and that pupils make at least appropriate progress. The provision for music has been externally evaluated as part of the school's successful bid for the Artsmark award and has been judged to be of a high quality. Valuable links are made between music and other subjects such as dance. There are opportunities for pupils to learn about the music from other cultures, particularly when the whole school has a focus on specific region. Last year's very successful project "Absolutely Africa" is due to be run again with a focus on China.
70. No lessons were seen in **physical education** so it is not possible to make judgements on provision, standards, teaching and learning. Available evidence, however, indicates that pupils receive a broad curriculum and are successful in many areas, for example in dance. The subject is well led and managed by the co-ordinator who is

currently undertaking the schools sports' co-ordinator partnership. This is bringing many benefits to the school such as opportunities to join in competitions, receive expert training and to improve the subject structure. The school has recently gained the prestigious Activemark gold award.

Art and design

Provision for art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Art usefully enhances other subjects.
- Skills teaching is effective.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject.
- The good provision seen at the last inspection has been further improved.

Commentary

71. Standards at the end of Year 2 are at least in line with expected levels. At the end of Year 4, standards are above that expected for the age of pupils. Pupils' achievement is good and for some who enter school with below average attainment achievement is very good.
72. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which is used very effectively, especially in Years 3 and 4. They have high expectations for pupils and encourage them to use the proper techniques and to become familiar with the subject terminology. Pupils' work has been recognised for its quality and has been included in the local education authority's website. The curriculum is broad and provides a range of good opportunities. Recently pupils made Greek pots in clay, relief printing of story characters and produced tree pictures by blowing paint. Pupils are given good opportunities to use their ICT skills. For example, pupils created standing figures from fairy tales which were then used in a digital story board and multi-media presentation.
73. The subject is well led and managed and has improved well since the last inspection. As a result, pupils benefit from the integrated approach which provides valid contexts for art work. The school's provision has been externally evaluated and has been awarded the highest level of the Artsmark by the Arts Council.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

74. This area of the curriculum was sampled. From the one lesson seen and discussion with the co-ordinator, personal, social and health education makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced a whole school scheme of work that places an appropriate emphasis, relevant to the age of the pupils in the school, on social issues such as sex education, drugs and alcohol. The school is involved in several initiatives to promote healthy living such as the National School Milk scheme and the 'National Fruit for Schools' scheme. The school has recently been awarded the Healthy Schools award which reflects its commitment to developing and promoting this aspect of its provision.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	3
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	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
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	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	2

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