

INSPECTION REPORT

SEAHOUSES MIDDLE SCHOOL

Seahouses, Northumberland

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122315

Headteacher: Miss Julie Harris

Lead inspector: Ross Maden

Dates of inspection: 17 – 19 January 2005

Inspection number: 268451

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	9 to 13 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	133
School address:	James Street Seahouses Northumberland
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Margaret Brooks
Date of previous inspection:	14 June 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Seahouses is smaller than other middle schools nationally. There are 133 pupils in the school with roughly an equal balance of boys and girls. The ethnic composition of the school reflects the local community and is predominantly white. There are no looked after pupils nor Traveller children in the school. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average although many people employed locally are in low paid jobs in the tourist industry. The school is part of the Northumberland Raising Aspirations in Society project, which according to the headteacher helps raise pupils' self-esteem, and contributes to raising standards.

The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is well below the national average. Pupils take National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2 in their First Schools. These results indicate above average results. However, testing on entry by the Middle School shows that attainment is close to the national average. This is confirmed by the judgements made in the inspection reports from the partner first schools. Pupils transfer to the local High School.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Seahouses is a very good school. Pupils achieve well and make good progress because of very good teaching. In the Year 6 tests, overall standards are in line with national averages. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. The improved standards have been achieved through very good leadership by the headteacher; rigour in the quality of teaching and in the overall expectations regarding standards; and good leadership at a subject level. Leadership of the school is clear about what it needs to focus on and there is a good capacity for further improvement. Management is very good. There is strong teamwork in the school with all staff having high expectations for pupils and there is a strong commitment to raising standards even higher. Overall pupils' behaviour is very good, as are their attitudes to learning. The quality of care is good. The school works hard to raise pupils' self-esteem. The quality of links with parents and the local community is very good. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well in all subjects and standards are very high in music and physical education.
- There is a very good ethos within the school based on pupils' very positive attitudes and their very good behaviour. This is a result of the very high quality of relationships between adults and pupils which is clearly based on mutual respect.
- Pupils' attendance and their punctuality to school and lessons are very good.
- There is a very high quality of teaching, which enables pupils to learn effectively.
- The very good range of extra-curricular activities are well supported by pupils.
- Links with parents and the local community are very good which contribute effectively to providing high quality educational experiences for pupils.
- The leadership and dedication of the headteacher ensures that all pupils receive the best education that the school can provide.
- There is a very good use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support teaching.
- There is a need, as recognised in the school's development plan, to identify strategies to fully stretch gifted pupils in all subjects.
- Whilst pupils' standards in speaking and listening are good, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop and improve their writing skills.
- There is a weakness in the consistency of the identification of targets for improvement and what pupils need to do to reach their targets. The marking of pupils' work does not always identify what they need to do to improve their work.

Since the last inspection in 1999 there have been significant improvements in the standards that pupils reach, as measured by test results at the end of Year 6. There have been equally significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. There has been good progress in tackling the key issues identified in the last report, with the exception of improving standards in writing, where further improvements are still needed.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly on entry in Year 5.

Standards of work seen in class are in line with national averages for English, mathematics and above for science by the end of Year 6. Pupils make reasonable progress across the school in relation to their prior attainment. Standards in music, physical education, religious education and citizenship were above average. In all other subjects they were average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards their targets. There is little difference in the standards of work seen between boys and girls in lessons though boys tend to outperform the girls in the national tests.

Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 7 and 8. By the end of Year 8 standards are above average for English, mathematics and science. They are well above average for physical education and music. Standards are above average in ICT, religious education and citizenship. In all other subjects standards are in line with the expectations for pupils of this age. **Pupils achieve well** because of the overall quality of provision within each subject area, which is almost always at least good. The targets set for the school are appropriately challenging.

Pupils' attitudes and their behaviour are very good. **The provision for personal development including, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.** Attendance is well above the national averages and that no pupil was excluded from the school in the previous year is an indication of how very inclusive the school is.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good. There is a very high proportion of very good and excellent teaching that leads to pupils' making good progress in their lessons. Most teachers provide encouragement and give pupils confidence to tackle their work effectively. The quality of the curriculum is good and in particular the high participation rates by pupils in the wide range of extra-curricular activities that are provided. Pupils are cared for and supported well. There are very good links with parents and the local community. There are good links with other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The experienced governing body provides very good support to the school. The headteacher's **very good leadership** and her dedication to the pupils in the school provide an excellent role model. The leadership provided by other key staff is good and allied to a strong commitment for continuous professional development results in the very high quality of teaching and learning. The management of the school is very good. The school is well resourced, and its resources are used wisely to raise standards in the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have very positive views of the school and they were all positive about the high quality of education their children receive. Pupils were equally positive about the school with 100 per cent stating that they thought it was a good school to be at and that they were well taught. There were no issues or concerns identified from either the pupils' or parents' questionnaires.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Continue to implement the priority, within the school development plan, to identify strategies to fully stretch gifted pupils in all subjects.
- Raise the standards of pupils' writing by a) increasing the opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills and b) improving the presentation of pupils' written work with particular reference to improvements in spelling and grammar.
- Ensure a consistency by all teachers in the identification of targets for improvement and what pupils need to do to reach their targets.

- Improve the marking of pupils' work to identify for them what they need to do to improve their work.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects

Standards of work in Years 5 and 6 are in line with national averages. By the end of Year 8 standards are above the expectations for pupils of this age. Pupils' are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils' competence in English language, literacy skills, mathematics and ICT is good. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The trend for improvement in the school is above the national trend.
- There is a significant improvement in the standards pupils reach when compared with those at the time of the last inspection.
- By the end of Year 8 standards are well above average for music and physical education.
- Standards in written work do not match the high standards of pupils' listening and speaking skills.

Commentary

1. Overall pupils at Seahouses achieve well across the school and in most subjects. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully from baseline tests and the school makes good and effective use of published tests to carefully track progress. The data on pupils entering the school based on their Key Stage 1 assessments show that attainment is above average. However, the baseline tests used on entry show a different picture in that attainment on entry is close to the national expectations for pupils of this age. The school also makes extensive use of Fischer trust data, which sets level expectations against national averages, giving predictions of likely outcomes based on Key Stage 1 data. Targets are set annually in conjunction with the LEA and using the LEA target setting information. These targets are appropriately challenging.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.6 (26.4)	26.9 (26.8)
Mathematics	27.2 (27.4)	27.0 (26.8)
Science	29.8 (28.7)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 32 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. In 2004 the school's results in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests were in line with national averages for English and mathematics and above for science as the table above indicates. Boys tend to outperform girls in all three subjects when compared to the national averages for boys and girls. The trend for improvement up to 2004 was above the national trend and compared with results achieved at the time of the last inspection show a significant improvement. For example, approximately two-thirds of pupils in 1999 reached level 4 in their National Curriculum tests and this had improved to approximately four out of every five pupils. Standards are rising.
3. Given the standards of attainment on entry this represents good achievement. By Year 6 standards of work seen in class indicate above average standards in science and average in English and mathematics. There was little difference between boys' and girls' work seen in

class. By Year 6 standards in music, physical education, religious education and citizenship were above average. In all other subjects they were average.

4. Pupils continue to make good progress and achieve well in Years 7 and 8. By the end of Year 8 standards are above average for English, mathematics and science. They are well above average for physical education and music. Standards are above average in ICT, religious education and citizenship. In all other subjects standards are in line with the expectations for pupils of this age.
5. The development of language and literacy skills across the curriculum is satisfactory. Teachers display and use key words very well and there is a great deal of pupils' work on show, much of it processed by computer. The quality of this work's content is considerably higher than that seen in pupils' books, in which topics studied (for example, in geography, history and science,) are not always well recorded. There is relatively little evidence of extended writing in books and folders, suggesting that pupils have limited writing stamina. There were few examples of written work where pupils present reasons or argue points of view. Poor presentation, with many errors of spelling and grammar, reduces the quality of work in several subjects. The school has identified the need to extend language skills and teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to talk about what they are learning. Standards of speaking and listening were good overall and very good in design and technology, ICT and religious education. Reading for pleasure is encouraged and teachers are careful to match texts with reading ability. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 keep a regular record of their reading.
6. A numeracy policy is in place, and opportunities for pupils to practise mathematical skills are identified in schemes of work. There are very good opportunities for pupils to use and improve their number skills in science, where they perform calculations for various measurements, and use formulae and graphs to solve scientific problems. In ICT pupils use spreadsheets and formulae to perform calculations, and they sequence events and use their knowledge of angles and rotations to control movements. Good use is made of measuring, and collecting data for statistical analysis in geography.
7. Achievement by pupils with special educational needs is good in all subjects and very good in English, music, mathematics and physical education. This is because teaching is good or better and because planning to meet the individual needs of pupils is a focus shared by all staff.
8. There are 29 pupils identified as either gifted or talented. Provision for these pupils is satisfactory in all subjects and good in physical education, music and English. Extra-curricular activities are offered as additional opportunities but there is currently no clear focus for these pupils in most subject lessons. Assessment is satisfactory but is not shared sufficiently well with pupils to enable them to make the best possible progress. The school is aware of this and it forms part of their development plan.
9. There are a number of factors that contribute to pupils' good achievement:
 - Pupils' independent learning skills
 - Very good teaching
 - All members of staff work hard and are very committed to the pupils
 - The high quality of relationships that exist between pupils and staff
 - Pupils' positive attitudes to learning
 - The enrichment and extra-curricular activities the school provides for pupils
 - The good provision, including the quality of leadership in most subjects.The factors that hinder achievement are:
 - The development of writing skills
 - Pupils do not always know what they have to do improve their written work

10. Parents' response to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that 98 per cent thought that their children were making good progress (two per cent did not know). Pupils' views showed that 100 per cent thought that teachers expected them to work hard.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attendance and punctuality are very good. Pupils display very positive attitudes to learning and they behave very well during the school day. The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal development overall, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These aspects of school life show an overall improvement since the previous inspection and are among the school's strengths.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' great enthusiasm for school results in very high levels of punctuality and is reflected in the joy they show when taking part in school activities.
- The school's very high attendance levels ensure that pupils have full access to all school activities.
- Pupils' very good behaviour flows from the very good relationships between teachers and pupils rather than from any threat of sanctions.
- Pupils' moral, social and spiritual development are very good. Their cultural development is satisfactory.

Commentary

11. Pupils declare unanimously that they like coming to this school – a view supported by their parents when responding to the inspection questionnaire. They arrive in school well before the starting bell, and during the inspection there was no lateness at all. Pupils are keen to get on with their lessons, are eager to answer questions posed by the teacher, and work productively in pairs without supervision. In a Year 5 literacy lesson, for example, pairs of pupils listened to each other in turn reading a poem and offering mutual advice about how to read the poem with greater expression. They took their task very seriously, not only by accepting the evaluation of their peers but also by incorporating their advice in a second version of their reading. Their success was celebrated with their peers towards the end of the lesson.
12. Pupils behave remarkably well, not only in the classroom where lessons flow smoothly with no disruption or noise, but also in the dining room where pupils relax over lunch with their peers. Even in the playground where the limited space has to support several different activities pupils show politeness and mutual tolerance, while clearly enjoying the freedom that comes with play. Pupils report that incidents of bullying are rare, and that even when bullying occurs it is swiftly dealt with by the school. Parents readily support that view. Mutual respect and affection between pupils and adults is very much in evidence. For example, the site manager, while acting as a lunchtime supervisor in the playground attracts the same level of respect as the teachers. The very good behaviour seen around the school appears as a spontaneous response to a shared ethos rather than a grudging obedience to a set of rules. The resultant climate of warmth and friendliness is a credit to the whole school community, providing a solid platform for learning. No pupils have been excluded from the school for many years.
13. Pupils with special educational needs are keen to come to school. They are interested in lessons and want to do well. They take a pride in their work and are willing to show it to visitors in the classroom. The relationship between pupils with special educational needs and other pupils is very good. Pupils were observed both in and out of lessons voluntarily helping those with difficulties and acting as a liaison between teacher and pupil.

14. Pupils' understanding of right and wrong is well developed, as is their awareness of moral dilemmas. The school places a strong emphasis on making the right decisions and on the importance of taking responsibility for one's own actions. In addition, teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils respond readily and with maturity to the school's expectations. They take care of the school environment and they show respect for each other. In lessons they listen attentively to the opinions of others and they often go out of their way to help others achieve success.
15. The significant sums raised for charities are an indication of pupils' concern for others, and a sense of community and mutual support is fostered by such occasions as the Year 6 team-building residential and the Annual Activity week, when pupils from all years work together on activities and projects. Circle time and Community of Enquiry allow opportunities for reflection on issues affecting the school, the community and the wider world. The school's behaviour policy is based on rewarding appropriate behaviour and further encourages pupils both to do what is right and to support each other. The School Council and Catering Committee are two good examples of the opportunities provided for pupils to take on responsibility.
16. Pupils' develop very well spiritually. They develop their awareness of different values and religious beliefs in religious education lessons, through the study of all major world religions. Innovative ways of broadening pupils' spiritual awareness include the use of ICT to allow virtual visits to mosques and synagogues, and the Year 5 philosophy work. Very good assemblies provide opportunities for the whole school to come together in a calm and well-ordered atmosphere. They offer the chance for pupils to reflect in silence on religious concepts and on major world events such as the recent Asian Tsunami disaster and the Second World War holocaust.
17. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. The curriculum is supported by visits to museums, castles and art galleries and the vast majority of students take part in music and drama activities. In addition, the Year 8 residential visit to London helps to broaden pupils' awareness of the wider world. However, the multi-cultural dimension of the school's curriculum needs to be developed. Work on Ramadan and arranged marriages is undertaken in religious education and there is a multi-cultural element to some of the work in art and music. However, not all subjects include a specific and substantial multi-cultural element within their schemes of work and therefore opportunities are missed to prepare pupils for living in a multi-cultural society.

Attendance

The level of attendance at the school is well above the levels found nationally, placing the school in the top ten per cent of schools in the country and showing an improvement since the previous inspection. The procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance, including same-morning contact in the event of unexplained absence are very effective in ensuring the very good attendance within the school. Parents are committed to their children's education and play their part in supporting their children's attendance, in spite of the considerable distances that some pupils have to travel. Standards of punctuality are very good, enabling pupils to gain maximum advantage from all school activities. Lessons start on time, and little or no time is lost between activities. The registration process at both morning and afternoon sessions is conducted briskly and complies fully with legal requirements. The school records show no unauthorised absence. Such high attendance levels epitomise the strong partnership between home and school that makes a major contribution to pupils' learning.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (96.1%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.9	School data	0.0
National data	6.0	National data	0.3

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

Exclusions

There were no exclusions in the last academic year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning are very good. The breadth of curricular opportunities is good and the opportunities for enrichment and the range of extra-curricular activities are very good. The accommodation and resources are very good. Arrangements to ensure pupils welfare, health and safety are good. The school provides good support advice and guidance to pupils, and involves them very well in its work and development. The school has established very good links with parents and the community and good links with other schools.

Teaching and learning

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Nearly half the lessons observed were judged to be very good or excellent.
- There is a very good use of ICT to support teaching.
- The very good quality of relationships between teachers and pupils contribute to pupils' learning effectively.
- Pupils respond well to the many opportunities for them to work independently and in groups.
- Assessment data is effectively used to identify targets for pupils to aim for. However, less well developed, is for pupils to be aware of what they need to do to reach their targets.
- There is a need to improve pupils' writing.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 36 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6 (17%)	11 (31%)	16 (44%)	3 (8%)	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

18. Overall, teaching and learning are very good. Nearly half the teaching was outstanding and in over nine out of every ten lessons observed the quality of teaching and learning was at least good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. There is a consistency of very good teaching across all age groups and across most subjects. Teaching and learning are consistently very good or excellent in ICT, music, physical education and religious education. In all other subjects teaching and learning was judged to be good or better. A particular strength of the teaching is the high proportion of very good and excellent lessons being taught by a high proportion of the staff. So within the school there is a wide breadth of outstanding practitioners from which all pupils benefit.
19. There is a very good balance of very experienced teachers and new teachers who work very well together in sharing experience and new ideas. They plan very well to ensure that all pupils make good progress. They ensure that time is used effectively and that pupils are engaged in productive tasks. All staff are very committed to pupils and ensure that all pupils have high levels of self-esteem.
20. One of the major strengths in teaching across many subjects is the high quality of relationships between pupils and teachers. Most teachers provide encouragement and give pupils confidence to tackle their work effectively. The high quality of relationships results in pupils' having very positive attitudes towards their learning and contributes to effective learning taking place in lessons. There is also a very good pace to learning when teachers have high expectations for pupils. This is particularly evident in music, physical education and religious education lessons.

21. The management of pupils' behaviour is very good and in no lessons seen was any teaching or learning time lost because of time spent in managing challenging behaviour. The consistency of the application of the behaviour management policy ensures that pupils control their own behaviour. The consistency of its application and the supportive structures in place show that staff are working as a team and not individually to manage behaviour effectively.
22. Teachers are very skilled at questioning and provide pupils with opportunities to provide extended answers.
23. The variety of teaching tasks set for pupils is very good. A feature of several lessons, which were otherwise good, is for teachers to spend too much time on introducing the lesson. However, when pupils are given the opportunity to work in pairs, or small groups, they stay on task and can give clear feedback to the class. As a result of being well taught many pupils have well-developed skills in working independently and they are given many opportunities in lessons to develop these skills.
24. In most lessons the level of challenge in the tasks set for pupils is good. On occasions, particularly in music, the level of challenge is very high. However, as is recognised in the school's development plan there is a very wide range of ability in all teaching groups and it is an appropriate priority to identify further ways to ensure that all higher attaining pupils are set tasks that fully stretch their abilities.
25. Across all subjects and all age groups there is a very good use of electronic whiteboards to support teaching. All teachers are confident in using ICT to support teaching and learning and they are well supported by the ICT co-ordinator and a full-time ICT technician.
26. Homework is satisfactory. Most teachers set appropriate tasks to extend and reinforce what has been learnt in lessons.
27. The teaching of literacy skills is satisfactory. There is a strength in the quality of pupils' speaking and listening skills. Less well developed are their writing skills. Poor presentation, with many errors of spelling and grammar, reduces the quality of work of a significant number of pupils in several subjects. Key words are displayed in all classrooms and most teachers make reference to these when appropriate in lessons.
28. A numeracy policy is in place, and opportunities for pupils to practise mathematical skills are identified in schemes of work. The head of department monitors the application of the policy. She has provided in-service training and guidelines to ensure a consistent approach across the curriculum.
29. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs in subject lessons is generally very good. Lesson plans usually include activities to meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils in Year 5 were observed in an English lesson learning about onomatopoeia through the medium of a narrative poem. Pupils with special educational needs were able to take a full part in the lesson answering and asking questions with confidence. Both classes benefited from excellent classroom teaching and excellent support from teaching assistants.
30. There are three teaching assistants who are highly effective in supporting either individuals or groups of students within lessons. They are well trained and keen to take part in professional development. They work closely with class teachers and are able to plan work in advance of the lessons. This undoubtedly has a beneficial effect on the raising of achievement. They are fully aware of the school's targets, particularly to improve writing skills, and keep this to the forefront when supporting in all lessons.
31. The arrangements for marking and assessing pupils' work are satisfactory. Work is marked regularly and standards and achievement are routinely reported to parents. There are good procedures for collecting information on pupils' capabilities as they enter the school, and settle into Year 7. This information does not provide a close match to the information from Key

Stage 1 assessments conducted in the first schools. Whilst assessment data are effectively used to identify targets for pupils to aim for, what is less well developed is for pupils to be aware of what they need to do to reach their targets.

32. At individual subject level and classroom level practice is inconsistent. The available information is not always used fully to inform teaching and learning strategies and in planning work for students of different levels of ability. Assessment data are not always used effectively to identify how pupils can improve their work and, overall, pupils are insufficiently aware of the level they are working at.
33. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. At the last inspection 60 per cent of lessons were judged to be good or better. This has increased to 92 per cent. Teaching in the last inspection was judged to be stronger in Years 7 and 8. This is no longer the case as there is now a consistency of very good teaching across all year groups. Since the last inspection much work has been undertaken to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This mirrors the priorities of the school's development plan and the focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

The curriculum

The breadth of curricular opportunities is good and the opportunities for enrichment and extra-curricular activities are very good. The accommodation and resources are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for music and physical education is very good.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities are very well supported by pupils.
- Accommodation is spacious and well organised.
- All subjects are very well resourced.
- The impact of withdrawing pupils from their timetabled lessons to attend basic skills lessons is not fully evaluated.

Commentary

34. The curriculum includes all the National Curriculum subjects and religious education. It meets statutory requirements. In Years 5 and 6 there are lessons each day for literacy and numeracy as recommended in national guidelines. There is an extra English lesson each week to focus on pupils' writing, a priority for improvement identified by the school.
35. The introduction of a philosophy lesson in Year 5 this year and projects in science, mathematics and geography have been introduced to develop the thinking and communication skills of pupils. They are part of ongoing work to raise standards.
36. Pupils with special educational needs receive good provision. In addition to in-class support in lessons, groups of pupils in all year groups are withdrawn from lessons to attend an ICT basic skills programme for literacy improvement. Progress on this programme has been monitored and it has been proved to raise standards of literacy over a short period of time.
37. Pupils are grouped so that for some lessons they have the stability and continuity of being taught by the same teacher and in their year class whilst at other times they benefit from being in smaller groups of similar attainment for specialist teaching. For example, there are two smaller groups for mathematics in Year 6 and for science in Years 7 and 8.

38. The timetable arrangements for technology in Years 5 and 6 provide longer blocks of time each half term rather than one-hour lessons each week. The aim is to facilitate more effective use of time and resources and promote project work of a higher quality. Initial evaluation of this change indicates that it is a positive move in raising standards in design and technology.
39. ICT has been a focus for development in recent years. The facilities, resources and teaching are seen as models of good practice in the local area. ICT contributes significantly to the progress of pupils and the standards they reach in all subjects. One specific use of ICT is to provide additional support in literacy and numeracy for some pupils. This Basic Skills programme operates by withdrawing pupils from their normal timetable for half a lesson on two or three days each week. There is clear evidence to indicate that this is an effective strategy for raising standards for weaker pupils. However, it reduces the rates of progress they make in the normal timetabled lessons from which they have been withdrawn.
40. Provision for music and physical education are very good. Pupils of all ages benefit from specialist teaching and facilities and achieve high standards. These subjects make a valuable contribution to the overall ethos of the school.
41. The schemes of work for citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE) cover the statutory requirements. The school makes good use of the community nurse to support pupils in the delivery of the school's sex education programme and in alcohol and drugs awareness.
42. Seahouses Middle has very good links with its local first schools. Teachers meet regularly to discuss and plan the curriculum and to agree on joint priorities and initiatives - for example, a focus on speaking and listening. This liaison ensures that the move for pupils from first to middle school is as smooth and informed as possible.
43. The range and quality of extra-curricular activities is a strength of the school. Almost all pupils attend at least one school club and 50 per cent of pupils have instrumental lessons in music and sing in the school choir. School sport is strong through clubs and inter-school matches. One particular example is a ten-week soccer coaching course for boys and girls set within the context of an anti-smoking programme. There are many opportunities for pupils to benefit from the expertise of visitors to school and participate in activity days, charity events as well as days out locally and residential visits to London and the Lake District. Links with the community are very strong. For example, the annual pantomime involves all pupils, friends and family members, local people with expertise and ex-pupils. The production in December 2004 raised over £3,000. A Year 8 accreditation programme encourages and rewards pupils to take part in clubs and offer their time to help with jobs in school or in the local community. The comprehensive enrichment programme makes a strong contribution to the personal, social and health education of pupils and to the success of the school.
44. Accommodation is spacious and well organised. Bright decoration and display work create a welcoming and stimulating learning environment. There are good facilities for class based work, particularly in Years 5 and 6, and for specialist teaching in, for example, science, ICT, music and physical education. There is a new and well-stocked library looked after by a part-time librarian and pupil library assistants. The school is well resourced with books, specialist equipment and materials, and computers.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety are good. The school provides good support, advice and guidance to pupils, and involves them very well in its work and development. This aspect of school life shows an improvement on the situation reported at the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very warm relationships throughout the school make it easy for pupils to approach adults with any concerns.
- The school makes very good arrangements for listening to its pupils and involving them in the running of the school.
- The procedures for health and safety and child protection are good.
- Good transition arrangements help pupils to settle quickly into the next phase of their education.
- The lack of rigour in assessment procedures reduces the effectiveness of the academic guidance provided for pupils.

Commentary

45. Relationships between adults and pupils are characterised by warmth and mutual respect resulting in an atmosphere of intimacy and confidence that greatly aids pupils' learning. In consequence pupils are not afraid to ask the teacher for clarification when they do not fully understand what has been explained; nor are they afraid of answering even though they might not get the right answer. For their part teachers listen attentively to such answers and congratulate pupils on their efforts.
46. In the more formal setting of the school council and of the catering committee where pupils are elected to represent the interests of their peers the school encourages them to explore new ideas that might bring about improvements to life at the school. The school encourages serious debate, and uses a strategy called "The Community of Enquiry" to promote philosophical debate among pupils. The school also makes effective use of Ofsted-type questionnaires to seek pupils' views about various aspects of school life.
47. The good procedures for pupils' health and safety and for child protection make a solid contribution to the climate of confidence and well-being that pervades the school. The weekly testing of alarms, termly fire drills and risk assessments, effective first aid procedures and appropriate security arrangements all contribute to a climate of care that makes pupils feel safe and well cared for. The school agree that training should be offered to those who deputise for the designated child protection person and the nominated first aider.
48. The school's current academic assessment practices reduce its ability to track pupils' academic progress to greatest effect. While monitoring takes place its focus is less sharp in some subjects, though not all. The marking of homework and the content of annual reports are more vague and targets are less clearly defined. In consequence the support and guidance for pupils based on the monitoring of their work are less effective. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is good.
49. Pupils with special educational needs are identified before arriving at the school through good links with the first school. Year 4 pupils also take part in the optional national tests. This information along with teacher assessment is used to identify any areas of difficulty.
50. There are currently 21 pupils identified as having specific learning needs and placed on the special educational needs register at either School Action or Action Plus. One pupil has a statement of need. All pupils on the register have an Individual Education Plan. These plans clearly identify the targets for each pupil and progress towards them is well documented.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has established very good links with parents and the community and good links with other schools, showing an overall improvement since the previous inspection. This aspect has become one of the school's strengths.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very positive views expressed by parents reflect the very effective partnership between school and home that supports their children's learning.
- Parents are very well informed about school life.
- The school actively seeks parents' views and responds to their suggestions or concerns very promptly.
- The school's position at the heart of the local community greatly enriches pupils' personal and social development.

Commentary

51. The majority of parents who met the inspectors and those responding to the parents' questionnaire expressed very positive views about their partnership with the school. They agree almost without exception that their children like coming to school and are making good progress. They applaud the very good behaviour and the absence of bullying, and are pleased with the quality of teaching and leadership of the school. Parents agree that the school seeks their views and takes account of their comments. A recent example arose from a questionnaire sent to parents to seek their views on several matters. As a result parents attended a writing workshop and were able to tell the inspectors at the pre-inspection meeting what their children needed to do in order to reach specific National Curriculum levels in writing.
52. Improved relationships with the partner schools help to ease the transition for pupils to the next stage of education. The moderation of pupils' work prior to the transition, the teacher exchange arrangements, the shared use of resources, and visits to the partner schools involved all combine to bring a greater sense of continuity to the pupils' educational experience in the new school setting.
53. The links with the local community are very good. It is clear that the school is at the heart of the local community and many opportunities are taken to use the expertise within the local community to enrich pupils' personal and social development. The support of the local community for the future of the school is clear evidence that the school has the confidence of the local community.
54. The special educational needs co-ordinator has a very good relationship with parents and involves them at all stages of the review process. Parents are able to communicate with the co-ordinator by phone or letter or through their child's subject books as seen in an English book where a parent was requesting some extra help for their child with homework.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The governance of the school is very good as is the leadership of the school provided by the headteacher. The leadership provided by other key staff is good and the management of the school is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors, many of whom are very experienced, provide very good support to the school.
- The headteacher's dedication to the pupils provides an excellent role model for all staff.
- The very high quality of teaching and learning in the school is directly related to the good quality of leadership within the school.
- There is a strong commitment to the professional development of all staff which has provided teachers with the necessary skills to raise pupils' standards of work.
- The school is well resourced and uses its resources wisely to ensure that the school provides good value for money.

Commentary

55. Governance is very good. The governing body is fully involved in planning and formulating policies and supports staff in implementing them. The governing body is very supportive of the school and many governors have a wide range of experience as governors. They are very supportive of the headteacher and have a very positive relationship with the senior management team. Governors are well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and deal with them openly and frankly. They are prepared to question, challenge and act as critical friends and do hold the school to account.
56. Leadership by the headteacher is very good. She is dedicated to ensuring the highest possible standards and achievement in all areas of the school's work. She is committed to raising pupils' expectations. There are established policies in place which provide the necessary structure to enable pupils' standards to rise and to foster good achievement. The headteacher has in recent years very successfully concentrated her efforts on raising the standards of teaching and learning within the school. In this respect she leads by example in teaching physical education where she demands and receives very high standards of performance from pupils. She is very loyal to her staff and is an excellent role model. This has resulted in a school community where all staff are hard working and dedicated to ensuring that all pupils in the school are both treated with respect and receive the highest quality of education the school can provide. There are several very experienced teachers who have taught in the school for a considerable period of time but there is no complacency within the school. All staff are encouraged by the headteacher to be innovative and are consistently striving to find ways to improve the quality of pupils' learning. She makes very good use of performance data and has used these data to correctly identify a priority within the school development plan to identify further ways to fully challenge gifted pupils. Across the school, leadership is good. In a small school of this size it is inevitable that some teachers have to take responsibility for providing leadership in more than one National Curriculum subject. This they do well and respond effectively in monitoring and supporting their colleagues. The recruitment strategies have ensured that all members of staff have a good capacity to take subject leadership for continuing improvement of the school.
57. Management is very good across the school. The school operates smoothly and procedures are effective. The school development plan identifies appropriate targets for raising standards, which are based on a detailed and rigorous analysis of both assessment data and evaluation of the work of the school. There is a strong commitment to the induction and ongoing professional development of all staff to avoid the school's becoming either isolated or insular in its approach. The two newly qualified teachers are being well supported, in particular through the school's involvement with the Northumberland Raising Aspirations in Society project. Teachers and support staff feel valued and prepared for the work that they currently do and are continuously seeking ways in which their contributions can be improved. Resources are effectively deployed and the impact and benefits of training are evaluated. The school has a commitment to supporting initial teacher training and recognises that not only that trainees benefit from a placement in the school but that the school benefits from the ideas and strategies that trainees bring to their teaching. Performance management is fully implemented and contributes to the identification of training needs. There is a rigorous system for the monitoring of teaching and learning and the roles and responsibilities for subject co-ordinators have improved since the last inspection. These areas were weaknesses at the time of the last inspection but have been effectively tackled.
58. The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good. The co-ordinator ensures that communication channels are kept open between staff and between home and school. The teaching assistants are managed and deployed well. They have benefited from the meeting structure that has been put in place since September and can share strategies and ideas.
59. The budget has clearly identified targets that are linked to individual education plans and to pupils' statements. Resources are good. In many lessons the features of interactive

whiteboards are particularly useful for pupils with special educational needs, when, for example, highlighting specific words or finding words to describe a picture.

Financial information

The school's basic income per pupil is well above the national average for middle schools. The table below summarises the financial data for the previous school year. Financial controls are good. The governing body has implemented all the recommendations arising out of the latest auditor's report in February 2003. The headteacher and governors monitor expenditure rigorously and the principles of best value are applied well. An example of this is seen in the staffing appointments where there is a good balance between full-time and part-time teachers to ensure that pupils have access to specialist teachers of National Curriculum subjects. Finances are well targeted to meet the priorities of the school development plan. For example, when the school introduced electronic whiteboards into the school it was a very well thought out strategy, which ensured that all teachers had their own interactive whiteboard. Full-time technician support was available, and the ICT co-ordinator had sufficient time to work alongside her colleagues to ensure that all teachers had the confidence to use the board effectively. The result of a well-planned and supported strategy is that there is a very high use of interactive whiteboards in lessons. Teachers are confident in using the technology and there is a very good sharing of practice which results in a very good use of ICT to support teaching and learning. The improvements in the use of ICT to support teaching have contributed significantly to the improvements in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. Additional grants the school receives, such as additional resources for special educational needs are effectively targeted for the purposes they were intended. The school provides good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	488,440	Balance from previous year	50,133
Total expenditure	501,698	Balance carried forward to the next	36,875
Expenditure per pupil	3,801		

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 2 AND 3

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

There were no timetabled lessons of **French** during the inspection period. It is therefore not possible to write a subject report on modern foreign languages.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in reading reached at the end of Year 6 in 2004 were above average.
- Teachers plan well and lessons seen varied between good and excellent.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and speak fluently with confidence and enthusiasm.
- Pupils who have limited reading and writing skills get very good additional support. The school has an appropriate focus on improving the quality of writing.
- Marking does not always provide pupils with specific enough advice on how to improve their work.

Commentary

60. Standards overall are good. Reading scores in the national tests in 2004 were above average. However, poorer scores in writing meant that the overall performance was average, with a below average number of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 grade. Work seen from these same pupils, now in Year 7, was of a higher standard than achieved in the test. Work in the other years indicates that the pupils can write effectively. Although they express ideas well and develop interesting stories, punctuation and handwriting are weaknesses of which the school is aware. Pupils read well and can understand complicated texts. They talk intelligently about how different writers achieve their purposes and class discussions are both orderly and enthusiastic. Pupils speak and listen well and their self-confidence and responsible behaviour contribute to the success of lessons.
61. Teaching and learning are good overall. In the lessons seen, they ranged between good and excellent. Teachers plan meticulously; use digital projectors (multimedia software and interactive whiteboards) very effectively. Lessons have clear learning objectives, move at a fast pace and contain a good range of linked activities. Teachers' enthusiasm is infectious. The ethos of mutual respect in classrooms encourages pupils to engage in active learning. They listen carefully to each other and work productively, both as individuals and in groups. In Year 8, there is a small core of less interested boys. Good classroom management prevents them from disrupting lessons. This reduces the overall pace of some lessons and higher attaining pupils do not receive the teacher's extra attention they need in order to make faster progress.
62. Pupils with special educational needs get very good support from the skilled teaching assistants and take a full part in lessons. Some groups are withdrawn for additional help. Although they return to classes in an orderly fashion, it interrupts the flow of these lessons while teachers help them to catch up with the work in progress. Marking is very good in Years 7 and 8. It identifies the good points in work, corrects errors and sets clear improvement targets. In Year 5 regular marking carefully corrects spelling and grammar mistakes but does not consistently explain how to make the improvements needed.
63. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader provides a good role model for pupils and colleagues. The subject team shares a determination to further improve standards.

It has identified appropriate priorities for improvement and uses advisors to help analyse results and suggest new approaches. Classrooms are bright and the department provides carefully chosen resources that meet the wide range of pupils' needs. There have been significant improvements in teaching and standards since the previous inspection. Teachers make very good use of computer linked teaching aids.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

64. The development of language and literacy skills across the curriculum is satisfactory. Teachers display and use key words very well and there is a great deal of pupils' work on show, much of it processed by computer. The quality of this work's content is considerably higher than that seen in pupils' books, in which topics studied (for example, in geography, history and science), are not always well recorded. There is relatively little evidence of extended writing in books and folders, suggesting that pupils have limited writing stamina. There were few examples of written work where pupils present reasons or argue points of view.
65. Poor presentation, with many errors of spelling and grammar, reduces the quality of work of some pupils in several subjects. Pupils' work is regularly marked but teachers' comments do not consistently explain how to improve the quality or effectiveness of writing. The school has identified the need to extend language skills and teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to talk about what they are learning. Standards of speaking and listening were good overall and very good in design and technology, ICT and religious education. Reading for pleasure is encouraged and teachers are careful to match texts with reading ability. Pupils in all years keep a regular record of their reading.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- The leadership and management of the department are good.
- There is good use of ICT to support teaching.
- Marking of pupils' class work is inconsistent.

Commentary

66. In the 2004 National Tests for 11 year olds results were close to the national average when compared to all, and to similar schools. The results in mathematics were similar to those of English, although slightly better when comparing the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 and above, but they were not as good as the results in science. Results have improved in line with the national trend since 2000. Boys have performed better than girls over the last four years.
67. Pupils enter the school with attainment in mathematics that is in line with the national average. Their current attainment, at the end of Year 6, is similarly average so their achievement is satisfactory. Higher attaining Year 6 pupils are able to identify symmetries of two-dimensional shapes, convert simple fractions to decimals, calculate fractions and percentages of various quantities, and produce and interpret frequency tables from sets of data that they have collected. Lower attaining Year 6 pupils can recognise when simple fractions are the same, identify and describe basic number patterns, and recognise simple two - and three-dimensional shapes.
68. From work seen during the inspection, Year 8 pupils are attaining above national expectations and their achievement is good. Higher attaining Year 8 pupils are able to formulate and solve linear equations, understand the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages

and use them to perform calculations. They demonstrate the ability to explore number patterns and sequences to find the 'nth' term, and use their knowledge of the properties of angles and triangles to solve problems. They show good skills in investigating problems, and apply algebra and ICT well in developing solutions. Lower attaining Year 8 pupils understand place value, can add and subtract decimals to two places, and can find perimeters and areas of simple two-dimensional shapes.

69. Since pupils enter the school with average attainment, and by the end of Year 8 are attaining above national expectations, the overall achievement in mathematics is good. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is generally good. They benefit from very effective in-class support that enables them to maintain concentration and develop their number skills. For higher attaining pupils, and those who are gifted and talented, achievement is good. However, in some Year 7 and Year 8 lessons, where class sizes are large these pupils do the same work as others in the group and their progress is restricted.
70. Teaching and learning are good overall. When teaching is very good or better lessons are very well planned and contain a variety of activities that challenge pupils to improve and learning is very good. Pupils have good opportunities to practise speaking and listening skills. Teachers make excellent use of electronic whiteboards to demonstrate mathematical concepts and pupils are thoroughly engaged in their learning. In most lessons pupils respond with enthusiasm, relationships are very good and pupils collaborate well with one another to produce good work. For example in a Year 5 lesson the teacher made excellent use of a variety of practical activities which included group work, use of ICT, and independent study to introduce pupils to the properties of angles and parallel lines. The pupils were engrossed in their work and took delight in their learning. Their progress was excellent.
71. Marking of work is in line with the school policy. However, whilst the work in class books is marked positively, teachers do not give diagnostic comments and generally there is little written detailed advice on how to improve inaccurate work.
72. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and gives a clear direction on what is needed to improve standards. She has revised schemes of work to effectively implement the national strategy for mathematics. She monitors the quality of teaching and learning and provides an excellent role model for staff and pupils. She is currently developing and improving the use of assessment data to identify and target underachieving pupils. Resources are good and the department makes very good use of ICT to support teaching and learning. There are good links with local first and middle schools, and the local high school in shared professional development activities.
73. There has been good progress since the previous inspection. New schemes of work are now in place. There is extensive use of ICT to support teaching and learning. There is greater use of assessment data to identify areas for improvement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

74. A numeracy policy is in place, and opportunities for pupils to practise mathematical skills are identified in schemes of work. The head of department monitors the application of the policy. She has provided in-service training and guidelines to ensure a consistent approach across the curriculum. There are very good opportunities for pupils to use and improve their number skills in science, where they perform calculations for various measurements, and use formulae and graphs to solve scientific problems. In ICT pupils use spreadsheets and

formulae to perform calculations, and they sequence events and use their knowledge of angles and rotations to control movements. Good use is made of measuring, and collecting data for statistical analysis in geography.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress and attain high standards.
- Good teaching, based on problem solving in science, motivates pupils and supports their learning.
- The subject is led and managed very effectively.
- ICT is used very well to deliver lessons and to enhance pupils' learning.
- The routine marking of work does not provide sufficient feedback on standards achieved nor on how pupils can improve.
- Some pupils are limited in science by their poor writing skills.
- There is no technician support available for science.

Commentary

75. Pupils come to the school in Year 5 with standards in science that are broadly average. In 2004, the results of the National Curriculum tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 were above those for all schools nationally. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, reached the expected National Curriculum level and higher attaining pupils did better than others nationally. There was little difference in the performance of boys and girls. Since the last inspection in 1999 results at the end of Year 6 have risen along with national trends. However since groups are small, results vary from year to year depending on individuals in each cohort. Overall, the performance of girls and that of talented pupils have improved, with the best results achieved in 2004. The average results for the Year 6 pupils in 2004 were above those predicted showing evidence of good progress.
76. In Years 7 and 8 regular testing, in line with National Curriculum guidelines and after each unit of work, shows that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, continue to make good progress. Most pupils reach the expected level of attainment before they leave the middle school although in the past there has been under performance at the higher levels. Results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 show that Seahouses' pupils, after two terms in the high school, attain standards in line with national expectations.
77. Pupils clearly enjoy science. Their enthusiasm and motivation contribute significantly to success in the subject. They listen very carefully to instructions and explanations and most speak out with confidence and fluency in class discussion and small group work. They are competent and responsible to organise practical work efficiently and safely. Some show initiative and are able to make decisions to adapt and extend what has been set. They respond well to the interesting challenges and ideas presented in the classroom but many do not have a wider knowledge about science from reading and other experiences to support their schoolwork.
78. In the first two years pupils study science topics started in the first school although, at present there is no planned approach to build on what has been learned there. The quality of work produced in class is in line with national standards. For example, in Year 5, pupils understand that sound is made when materials vibrate and that the pitch and loudness of sound can be changed. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils could use the technical terms *solvent* and *solute* correctly and could make informed predictions about their practical investigation on how different sugars dissolve. Most had the numerical skills to plot their results as a line graph and interpret them. In Year 8 pupils can distinguish between different rock types, in terms of how they are formed, their properties and uses in every day life. In this context, a carefully paced and structured practical lesson enabled most pupils to understand the difficult concept of density. Practical skills are now very good. This was an issue at the last inspection and has been fully addressed. Some pupils however do not keep accurate and complete records of

their work and find it difficult to express their ideas on paper. This limits their progress in science.

79. Teaching is good across the school. Work is well planned and thoroughly prepared despite a lack of technical support. Lessons are often based on problem solving activities set within a real context that pupils can relate to. This approach captures their interest initially and keeps them involved. Learning outcomes are made explicit at the beginning of lessons but teachers sometimes spend too long introducing the work so that not enough time is left at the end to review what has been achieved. Teachers manage pupils firmly but sensitively. They use skilful questioning to check knowledge and to develop ideas and understanding further. Work is adapted so that all pupils can understand what they have to do and achieve results. More challenging tasks are provided for higher attaining pupils and they are expected to work things out for themselves. Teachers make very good use of electronic whiteboards to deliver lessons and pupils use information technology expertly in the research, processing and presentation of their work. ICT contributes significantly to progress in science. Teachers check notebooks and comment on work regularly. However they do not give pupils sufficient feedback about the standard of their work nor provide specific advice on how to improve.
80. The subject co-ordinator provides very strong leadership, supporting new teachers, implementing national initiatives, and working effectively to provide very good facilities and resources for science. Strong professional links with science colleagues locally ensure that subject expertise and resources are shared for the benefit of all. There is a rigorous system to analyse assessment data so that pupils' progress can be tracked and teaching evaluated. Departmental documentation is thoughtful and comprehensive underpinning the overall effectiveness of science provision. All the issues raised in the last inspection report have been fully tackled.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in ICT lessons are very good.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- There is very good use of ICT to support teaching across the curriculum.
- Assessment data are not used to set targets for individual pupils.

Commentary

81. Pupils enter the school with varied skills and experiences of ICT but overall their attainment on entry is below national averages. In work seen during the inspection, pupils in Year 6 are attaining standards in line with national expectations. In Year 8 standards of attainment are above national expectations. This represents very good achievement overall. For pupils with special educational needs, and higher attaining pupils, and those who are gifted and talented achievement is in line with other pupils in their year group.
82. By the end of Year 6 pupils have experience of using the Internet for research, and of using word processing and graphics packages to present work. They use spreadsheets to perform calculations and produce graphs. Pupils in Year 8 use word processing, graphics packages and multimedia software creatively to make presentations. They research topics on the Internet, design and produce web pages, and have developed skills in the use of spreadsheets to perform numerical calculations and to present graphs. They show good understanding of the use of sequences of instructions to simulate and control movement of characters and objects. Higher attaining Year 8 pupils have a clear understanding of presenting material to meet the needs of different groups of people, and show that they are

aware that information gained from the Internet may be biased. Lower attaining Year 8 pupils display good technical skills but do not always complete their work thoroughly.

83. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are well structured and planned to use a wide range of activities that capture pupils' interest. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very positive, the pace of learning is brisk, and challenging teaching and learning objectives are met. Relationships are very good and pupils collaborate well with one another. This was evident in a Year 5 lesson where the pupils were using a control package to experiment with sequencing instructions to simulate the movement of a boy around a pond. As an introduction to the lesson individual pupils were blindfolded and others had to give instruction to move the pupils around obstacles. This was followed by a teacher led class activity, and then pupils worked independently on their own projects. Pupils gained excellent practice in speaking and listening skills, and developed knowledge of angles and rotations which they applied to solve problems. Pupils were enthused and their learning was very good.
84. Very good feedback is given to pupils on how to improve their work during lessons, and a new system of providing pupils with national curriculum levels on grids has been introduced, along with pupil friendly descriptions of what is required for different levels. However, assessment data are not used to set targets for individual pupils.
85. The contribution that ICT makes to the teaching of literacy and numeracy is very good. Key words are emphasised in lessons. Pupils practise speaking and listening skills in collaborative work. They extend their numeracy skills using formulae in spreadsheets, and experiment with shapes and measurements when using graphics and control packages.
86. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has revised schemes of work in line with the national strategy. She closely monitors the use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning, and has given very good support and guidance to non-specialist staff by providing in-service training to improve their use of ICT to support teaching, particularly in the use of electronic whiteboards. There is excellent technical support for pupils and staff, which promotes confidence and assists in raising standards. The accommodation and resources are very good. There are good opportunities for pupils to use the ICT facilities for extra-curricular activities at lunchtime and after school. Developments are planned to improve assessment and target setting for pupils. There are strong links with local first schools, middle schools and the local high school through joint in-service training. Pupils from local first schools use the ICT facilities, and the head of department regularly teaches pupils from two of the first schools.
87. There has been very good progress since the last inspection. Teaching and learning are very good. New schemes of work are in place. There has been a large investment in new computer resources. The school has employed a fulltime technician and has provided extensive in-service training for staff in the use of electronic whiteboards and subject related software.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

88. The use of ICT to support teaching across the curriculum is very good. Its use to support learning is good. All teachers have their own lap top computer and they make excellent use of electronic whiteboards to skilfully captivate pupils' interest in the subjects that they teach. Very good use is made of computers for composition in music. Pupils interrogate the Internet to research information in science, citizenship, religious education, history and geography. They make good application of word processing and multimedia software to present their work in most subject areas. Mathematics and science make very good use of spreadsheets to perform calculations and produce graphs to solve problems.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Knowledgeable teachers deliver well-planned and interesting lessons.
- Syllabus changes and good liaison with the high school are promoting improved standards.
- Classroom displays include interesting books for research and stimulate pupil interest.
- The quality of presentation in some pupils' books is unsatisfactory.
- Marking does not clearly enough tell pupils how to get better at geography.

Commentary

89. Standards overall are satisfactory. Geography and history topics alternate in Years 5 and 6 and there was relatively little evidence in exercise books. However, the standards seen in work were below the national expectations for pupils of this age. Presentation was poor and map drawing skills underdeveloped. The standard seen in lessons was higher, with pupils correctly remembering and using key vocabulary. Written work in Years 7 and 8 was closer to national expectations but suffered from poor presentation. Pupils are able to use a variety of methods of displaying statistical information - for example, of population characteristics of Brazil. Computers were used well in ICT to graph features of climate. Standards seen in a Year 8 lesson were average and pupils were able to combine aerial photographs and maps to help them to describe and explain patterns of urban crime. Regular contacts with the high school are helping to raise pupil expectations and achievement by Year 8 is now satisfactory.
90. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and teachers make good use of computers and interesting resources. Work displayed in classrooms reflects both local studies and recent world disasters. Pupils are confident and have a good memory for previous work. This results in lively discussions in which they use appropriate subject vocabulary. Teachers share clear learning objectives and make very good use of PowerPoint projectors to record developing ideas. Lessons include a range of activities and all pupils work consistently hard at both group and individual activities. Teachers know their pupils well and see that the resources used and work demanded match pupils' skills and needs. Lessons are lively and pupils can explain what they have previously learned and make links between different places. Teachers mark work regularly and praise progress made. However, their comments do not sufficiently describe what is needed to improve particular pieces of work. As a result, pupils can understand features of poor presentation and spelling but cannot explain what needs to improve to make them better geographers.
91. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Responsibility for geography has recently changed. The review and development of provision is still taking place and the subject development plan accurately identifies areas for further improvement. Good links with the high school and the recent revision of the scheme of work have increased expectations and the level of challenge for pupils. Written work does not yet reflect these changes, although the level of understanding displayed in lessons is satisfactory.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching ensures that pupils make good progress.
- ICT is used imaginatively to enhance pupils' learning.
- Very good use is made of external visits to enrich the curriculum.
- There are some inconsistencies in teachers' approach to marking pupils' work.

Commentary

92. Standards in work seen in Year 8 are above average, representing good achievement. Standards in Year 6 are average, representing satisfactory achievement. There are no significant differences between boys and girls in standards and achievement or for those pupils with special educational needs or who are gifted and talented. As they proceed through the school pupils' develop a good understanding of the topics they study. In Year 8 pupils can interpret a range of source material and articulate their findings with assurance in their work on the gunpowder plot. In Year 6 pupils understand timelines and show developing critical thought in their work on the Ancient Egyptians and their processes of death. Pupils write for a range of readerships with increasing skill. Year 6 work is often marred by weaknesses in literacy. Pupils discuss history with confidence. Their ability to work in groups and behave sensibly is very good. They enjoy history.
93. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are well planned to provide a progressive learning experience. ICT is very well used to enhance learning, as in the use made of the school's intranet to teach local history topics. This visual and research aid brings history alive to pupils and inspires them. Where pupils were required to explore the question "Was Guy Fawkes framed?" in Year 8, the teacher made skilful use of questions to check understanding. An imaginative array of resources supported learning and well-managed integrated group work enabled pupils to share and develop ideas. The pace of teaching can be slow, limiting what might be achieved. The marking of pupils' work lacks a consistent approach and few substantive comments for improvement are provided.
94. The quality of leadership and management are good. There is a good vision for the subject. Teachers provide a good role model to pupils. The curriculum has been well developed since the previous inspection, with the increased use of ICT a significant feature. All pupils benefit from an imaginative programme of educational visits to museums and sites, which stimulates their interest in the subject. Good improvement has been made since the previous report.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership is very good and provides a clear vision for development.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are very well developed.
- Pupils respond with maturity and sensitivity to the challenging programmes of study.
- Pupils work well together, showing enthusiasm and a willingness to support each other.
- Greater use should be made of written work, in order to consolidate learning.
- Assessment of written work needs to be improved.

Commentary

95. At the end of Year 6 standards of work seen are above the expectations set out in the locally agreed syllabus. Boys and girls respond positively to the demands of the programmes of study and they achieve well. They have a good knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs in Christianity, Islam and Judaism and the responsibilities and expectations placed on people by their religious beliefs. The standards achieved by pupils by the end of Year 8 are also above those expected by the locally agreed syllabus. During Years 7 and 8 pupils develop a firm knowledge of places of worship, religious festivals and relationships within different religions, including Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Christianity. They also develop good understanding of key issues at the centre of moral and religious dilemmas as well as how religious beliefs influence people's actions.

96. Teaching and learning are very good. Pupils are being systematically introduced to world religions and their lessons give them opportunities to reflect on what they are learning. They are also encouraged to relate what they learn to their own experiences. Pupils respond with enthusiasm to well-planned, stimulating and often very challenging lessons. They support each other willingly and this helps all pupils to achieve success. The development of speaking and listening skills is a strong feature of lessons. Consequently, pupils are given plenty of opportunity to express their opinions and justify their conclusions. They respond with maturity, showing empathy for others and sensitivity towards religious beliefs and moral dilemmas. Little written work takes place in this subject. This limits the consolidation of learning and means that pupils cannot readily remind themselves of prior learning. Assessment of written work needs to be more rigorous. Vibrant classrooms help to create an environment, which motivates and enthuses pupils. In the best lessons, there is a genuine sense of enjoyment amongst all pupils.
97. Leadership and management are very good. Teachers work well as a team. They benefit from a very effective departmental policy, which aims to develop pupils' positive attitudes towards other religions, other people, and the subject itself. Schemes of work are detailed and well thought out. They include strategies to support the learning emphasis is placed on making pupils aware of their own responsibilities and on explaining to them how to make appropriate decisions. The very good leadership has created an interest and enthusiasm for the subject in the teaching team.
98. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Schemes of work for all years are now clear and detailed and there is a strong link between religious education and PSHE. Each subject reinforces the other. The quality of both teaching and learning are now very good and pupils display very positive attitudes to their lessons. The subject makes a very positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, cultural and personal development.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology **is good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy their design and technology lessons and are keen to learn.
- Pupils work well in groups and have good independent learning skills.
- There is a good use of ICT to support both teaching and pupils' learning.
- Non-specialist teachers are well supported by the subject co-ordinator.
- Pupils' progress in developing their practical skills is limited when they are withdrawn for basic skills lessons.

Commentary

99. By the end of Year 6, standards are in line with national expectations; pupils demonstrate a good grasp of the design process in the range of design and technology projects they are set. Their making skills are satisfactory. They can apply design principles and generate a range of ideas when constructing bookmarks in Year 5. Technical knowledge and understanding by all pupils are satisfactory. Pupils use tools and equipment confidently and safely; accuracy of the final product is satisfactory and in Year 6 some of the glove puppets that pupils had made were of a high standard.
100. In Years 7 and 8 standards are in line with national expectations. The progress pupils make in developing their design skills is good. In Year 7 pupils design and make coat hooks and achieve well in following the design process. They have good research skills, which utilise the Internet, books, and other printed materials and surveying pupils' needs. (These skills were

further developed and built upon in a Year 7 food lesson when pupils were skilful in using their senses to evaluate different types of bread). There is good improvement in the progress pupils make in developing their design skills. Less well developed are their skills in making. Within any one module their progress is satisfactory but their progress is restricted because they have few opportunities to practise their skills over time. This is caused by pupils having their design and technology experiences as part of a carousel of activities and it can be some months before they have the opportunity to build upon their previously learned skills. Skill development is therefore understandably restricted because of the need to ensure that pupils have a good variety of design and technology experiences in resistant materials, food, textiles and control. Progress is also restricted when significant numbers of pupils are withdrawn from Year 7 lessons to receive additional help in developing their basic skills.

101. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in Years 7 and 8 when pupils have regular timetabled lessons taught by teachers with specialist expertise. In Years 5 and 6 teachers who are well supported by the design and technology co-ordinator suspend the normal timetable to provide design and technology experiences in a block of time. This is an effective strategy for ensuring that all pupils in Years 5 and 6 receive appropriate experiences in design and technology. Lessons are thoroughly planned, which enables pupils of all abilities to be fully challenged. Pupils respond well to the opportunities provided to learn independently and in working with groups as evidenced in the Year 7 lesson when pupils were researching different types of coat hook. They enjoy their lessons and sustain their concentration throughout the hour-long lessons. Pupils' oral contributions in lessons are good. They are keen to answer questions and have a wide range of vocabulary. This is matched in their written work. For example, in a Year 7 lesson pupils had an extensive range of adjectives, which they used to describe the characteristics of different types of bread.
102. Leadership and management are good. Documentation is thorough and planning for the module courses is good. Learning outcomes are clearly identified and related to National Curriculum levels. The accommodation and resources for design and technology are good. The newly appointed subject co-ordinator, although in his first year of teaching and who only teaches part-time in the school, has made a good start in reviewing existing schemes of work and relating them to the National Curriculum programmes of study. He provides very good support and advice to the team of teachers who teach design and technology. The department has made good progress since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables pupils to make good progress.
- Pupils show very good attitudes and enjoy art lessons.
- ICT is very well used to support the teaching of art and design but is insufficiently used to enable pupils to generate art work.
- The subject misses opportunities to enhance pupils' understanding of other cultures.

Commentary

103. Standards of work seen in Year 8 are above average and represent good achievement. Standards of work seen in Year 6 are average and represent satisfactory achievement. There are no significant differences in pupils' standards and achievement according to gender or special educational needs. As they progress through the school pupils develop confident drawing skills. They work with increasing skill in a range of media. Colour is used to good expressive effect in landscape pictures. Pupils have a limited knowledge of the work of other artists. They show limited ability in evaluating their work. Pupils behave very well in lessons. They relate positively to the teacher and treat resources with respect.
104. The quality of teaching and learning are good. Good subject knowledge enables the teacher to provide an imaginative curriculum that stimulates pupils' interest in art. Pupils develop confident practical skills because the teacher provides skilled demonstrations and checks understanding with incisive questioning, as in work seen on lino printing. Lessons are well planned to provide progressive tasks that ensure that pupils consolidate their skills. Pupils are highly productive because they are very well managed in a very supportive environment.
105. When discussing a famous portrait the teacher made very good use of ICT to explain its characteristics to pupils. Opportunities for pupils' to develop their skills both independently and in group work are very good. Some teaching is over directed, restricting pupils' creative development. Pupils are not given a clear idea of how well they are doing or how they might improve further.
106. Leadership and management of art are good. The new co-ordinator has a good vision for the subject. Development planning appropriately identifies needs. The schemes of work are in the process of review, in particular to address the current lack of opportunities to generate art work using ICT. The teacher provides a very good role model to pupils. Pupils' achievements are well displayed around the school. The curriculum lacks opportunities for pupils to explore the artefacts and meanings of art from a range of world cultures. No use is made of visiting artists or gallery visits to enhance pupils' experience of art.
107. Improvement since the previous report has been satisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching ensures that all pupils achieve well.
- Excellent subject leadership provides a wealth of extra-curricular opportunities.
- Pupils achieve high standards of musical performance.
- Pupils have very good opportunities to develop their work using ICT.

Commentary

108. Standards seen in Year 8 are well above average, representing very good achievement. Standards in Year 6 are above average, representing good achievement. There are no significant differences in standards and achievement according to gender or special educational needs. Talented musicians achieve very well. As pupils proceed through the school they develop high standards of performance and composition. Pupils play instruments with assurance and technical skill, they co-ordinate their parts very well with others and are acutely alert to rhythm, dynamics and articulation. Listening skills are excellent. Improvisation and composition show imagination and understanding in a range of styles.

Pupils are fluent in their use of terminology, knowledge of composers and musical styles. They read staff notation with confidence. They behave very well, enjoy lessons and large numbers participate in extra-curricular groups and take instrumental lessons.

109. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The specialist teacher has excellent subject knowledge and sets very high expectations to which all pupils happily respond. Lesson planning is meticulous, providing a briskly timed, progressive learning experience to develop pupils' understanding and confidence across a range of skills. The classroom atmosphere is always vibrant and stimulating because of the teacher's musical enthusiasm. Classroom management is outstanding. The curriculum is always very well integrated, as in Year 6 where pupils used a large array of instruments to explore a range of musical styles which were discussed, performed and evaluated. The teacher provided discreet encouragement and incisive questions throughout to promote high levels of understanding combined with practical performance. In Year 8 excellent use is made of ICT to develop pupils' ability to compose and use a music publishing programme. In one lesson seen, expectations were at a good GCSE standard. The quality of teaching provided by the visiting instrumentalists is very good.
110. The quality of leadership and management are excellent. There is an excellent vision for the subject based on learning through enjoyment and the discipline of performance. The teacher provides an excellent role model to pupils. All aspects of the subject are meticulously organised, evaluated and developed each year. Music makes a very good contribution to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Over half the school benefits from well-organised instrumental tuition. A substantial programme of performance work significantly enriches both the school and the local community. Standards of performing groups, including the choir and steel band, are very high. The school is justifiably proud of the quality of its music making. Very good improvement has been made since the previous inspection report.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of the very good teaching and learning.
- Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are very good and they are keen to take part in lessons.
- There is a very good range of physical education activities offered to all year groups.
- Targets for improvement are not always shared with pupils.

Commentary

111. Standards of pupils on entry to the school are average in dance and swimming but below average in ball skills and gymnastics. By the end of Year 8 standards observed in badminton, basketball and indoor athletics are above average, representing very good achievement. At the end of Year 6 pupils have very good dribbling, passing and receiving skills in basketball. Pupils in all years understand the need for warm up before physical exercise.
112. Pupils' achievement in basketball is a particular strength of the school. There is no difference between the achievement of boys and girls. In Year 7 most pupils have developed good analytical and observational skills and particularly in indoor athletics can advise group members on how to improve performance. Pupils listen carefully to instructions. They are keen to take part in lessons and change into their kit very quickly. They do not need to be prompted to start their individual pre-lesson warm up session. They are well organised and take good care of equipment. They show respect for the teacher and for her specialist knowledge.

113. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is very good. The only full-time teacher is a physical education specialist. She is able to use her knowledge and skills to plan effective and progressive lessons. Pupils talk knowledgeably about their work using the appropriate technical terms. They articulate clearly the benefits of exercise and identify the major muscle groups being used when warming up. In one excellent basketball lesson all pupils were fully engaged in the tasks. The pace of the lesson was brisk and skill acquisition was excellent. In one very good lesson different pupils took on the role of 'coach' to a group of other pupils. Pupils were observed working co-operatively and purposefully in groups, supporting and advising each other as appropriate.
114. Leadership and management are excellent. The curriculum is broad and inclusive. The co-ordinator has high personal standards and is actively involved in her own professional development. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer and it is hoped that this will be extended through the Northumberland Sports Partnership. Two teaching assistants with an interest in sport have received training from the co-ordinator and make a valuable contribution to the department by helping to run some of the extra-curricular activities. Performance levels for pupils are recorded but not always shared with pupils. Targets for improvement are not always shared with pupils.
115. Resources are well targeted and the department is well resourced. Facilities are good and are well maintained. The school has maintained its high standards since the last inspection. It has made good improvement in the breadth of the curriculum on offer, in developing the skills of other staff and in its links with other schools and associations.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils develop into well informed, thoughtful and responsible young people.
- There is a wide range of excellent opportunities for citizenship education.
- Leadership is good with a high degree of commitment and enthusiasm.
- Formal records of work are being neglected.
- There is no assessment strategy. Pupils are not given enough feedback on the quality of their work.

Commentary

116. Standards achieved are good. Pupils acquire the necessary knowledge and skills appropriate for their age and develop very well into responsible and informed young people.
117. Pupils are very positive and enthusiastic about the work. They demonstrate a strong sense of justice and concern for others, locally, nationally and globally. This is evident in the quality of the work that they do, from interviews with them and in feedback from local people and visitors. Pupils are however less secure in their knowledge and understanding of people from different ethnic groups and about worldwide issues. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils acted in a given role and worked as if in groups representing different nations to agree and design a logo for their marketing company. This required skills of negotiation and decision-making. They were learning what it was to be an adult from another culture working in business.
118. In Years 5 and 6, citizenship is taught with PSHE and religious education under the themes of 'Making Decisions' and 'Taking Responsibility'. In addition, in each year a term is devoted to the 'Make it Real' game. Community projects in the summer term ensure that all pupils are actively involved in practical work to develop further their competence in this area. The Year 5

community project is linked to work in geography on environmental conservation. It involves an introductory illustrated talk from a National Trust officer and culminates in a day spent cleaning the local beach.

119. In Years 7 and 8 the schemes of work for citizenship and PSHE cover the statutory requirements. These are enriched with a wide range of timetabled activities including visits out, visitors into school with special expertise such as the police, community nurse, and business people. The Year 8 community project is to organise a fund raising day for a selected charity. Pupils learn at first hand about elections by campaigning and voting for School Council and catering committee representatives. There is a wealth of excellent opportunity for citizenship education in the school. This promotes the high quality of work seen.
120. In the lesson observed on citizenship, teaching was good. There were clear learning objectives and pupils' tasks were managed supportively yet firmly. Time was spent at the end to share what had been achieved and to reflect on learning. There are, however, too few opportunities for pupils to record their work and to develop their ideas and views further by writing about them. Work is not formally assessed against agreed criteria and pupils do not receive enough feedback on actual standards reached.
121. Leadership is good with a strong commitment to the important role that the subject area can have in the all round education of pupils. However, policies, procedures and documentation are as yet incomplete. For example citizenship themes have not been fully plotted across other subjects and current work is not formally monitored and evaluated. Nonetheless, the development of the subject to date is good in terms of meeting national requirements and in supporting the values of the school.

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	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
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	3
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).

