

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BERNARD GILPIN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Houghton le Spring, Tyne and Wear

LEA area: Sunderland

Unique reference number: 108830

Headteacher: Mrs A McMaster

Lead inspector: Mr G Brown

Dates of inspection: 6 – 9 June 2005

Inspection number: 273735

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	324
School address:	Hall Lane Houghton le Spring Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	DH5 8DA
Telephone number:	0191 5536523
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor R Heron
Date of previous inspection:	17 January 2000

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Bernard Gilpin is a larger than average primary school serving the small town of Houghton le Spring, approximately six miles south-west of Sunderland. The school occupies a spacious site built in 1993 to replace separate infant and junior schools. There are currently 324 pupils on roll aged 4 to 11 years all of whom are taught in single age classes ranging in size from 23 to 31. The number of girls and boys on roll is identical. The school has no nursery. Significant numbers of children enter the reception classes with below average standards, particularly in communication, language, and literacy. Pupils are drawn from a relatively wide area but come mainly from the local estate which consists mainly of rented local authority housing. Unemployment is relatively high and the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The numbers on roll are in decline, partly the result of some house demolition close to the school itself. The great majority of pupils stay at the school for seven years, although pupil mobility is on the increase. A very small number of pupils come from different ethnic backgrounds but no pupil is at an early stage of learning English as a second language. Four pupils are under the care of the local authority. Some 100 pupils have special educational needs including eight who have a statement of special educational needs. Both these numbers are well above average for the size of the school. Pupils' needs centre mainly on moderate learning difficulties, physical impairment or speech and communication problems. The school received special achievement awards in 2002 and 2003 in recognition of the rising standards recorded by its junior pupils. An important school aim is to ensure there is a happy and stimulating learning environment which encourages all pupils to reach or exceed their potential in all areas of school life. During the inspection, three of the school's regular class teachers were absent.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21060	George Brown	Lead inspector	Mathematics Physical education Religious education Personal, social and health education Special educational needs
13462	Roberta Mothersdale	Lay inspector	
25509	Judith Clarke	Team inspector	English as an additional language Foundation stage History Music Science
32133	Joan Elton	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology English Geography Information and communication technology

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a good school** with some strong qualities. Under the good leadership of the headteacher, it provides a good quality of education for all its pupils. Pupils usually attain at least satisfactory standards and most achieve well. Teaching and learning are good with several examples of particularly effective teaching where pupils achieve even more. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils' standards in English and mathematics are above average by the end of Year 2. By the end of Year 6, standards are currently below average in English and science. Standards in religious education and art and design are above expectations by the end of Years 2 and 6.
- The school is well led by the headteacher who has a clear vision for school improvement.
- Subject leaders and governors could have stronger roles in monitoring pupils' standards and helping to evaluate school performance in general.
- Teaching is good, enabling pupils to achieve consistently well in much of their learning.
- The assessment made of pupils' work does not always lead to the setting of rigorous targets from which pupils could improve their work still further.
- Reception children make a particularly good start to their school lives.
- The school promotes good values and a secure environment for learning. Pupils show a keen interest in their learning, develop positive relationships and behave very well.
- The provision for special educational needs is very good ensuring that the pupils achieve well.

The school has shown good improvement since its previous inspection, particularly in eliminating some of the weaknesses identified at that time. Teaching has become more effective and the education of reception children is better organised. Although the standards of 11 year olds show some decline this year, standards in core subjects show considerable improvement over time. National achievement awards have been given for the 'good value' added to pupils in the junior years in particular. Higher attaining pupils are now doing better and the resources for information and communication technology (ICT) have improved greatly. The impact made by subject co-ordinators in helping to raise standards in their own areas, remains very mixed.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

**Pupils achieve well across the school.** Many children enter the reception classes with below average standards in language and literacy, but make rapid progress owing to the good provision. The majority reach the expected standards for their age in all areas of learning except in English. By the end of Year 2, the recent increase in support, training and expertise has led to above average standards in writing and mathematics. Speaking and listening are good. Standards in reading and science are broadly average for the age of the pupils.

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

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

The above table illustrates some of the school's strong results in national tests in recent years, particularly in mathematics and science. The inspection found that Year 6 standards in all core subjects have actually fallen this year owing to the high number of lower attaining pupils or those

with special educational needs. Several pupils have also left, since the same group of pupils showed broadly average standards at the end of Year 2. Currently, standards in English and science are below average whilst those in mathematics are as expected for the age of the pupils. Standards in ICT and in all other subjects are broadly average by the time pupils are seven and 11, the exception being in religious education and art, where standards are above age-related expectations. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are very well supported and achieve well set against their previous learning. The targets set for future attainment are realistic and challenging given the school's knowledge of each pupil.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development,** are good, overall. Pupils' attitudes to their learning are good. They form friendly relationships, work hard and behave very well. Attendance is good and above the national average. Almost all pupils are punctual and enjoy coming to school.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The school provides **a good quality of education** for its pupils. **The quality of teaching and learning is good overall** and there are examples of very good teaching across the school. The teaching of reception children is consistently good. Lessons are planned well for pupils of different ability and show teachers' good knowledge. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well. Teachers insist on good behaviour and lessons proceed at a lively pace. Staff motivate pupils well and this increases both progress and achievement. The less effective teaching fails to recognise that pupils learn in different ways and that teaching styles should adapt accordingly. In some classes, the use made of assessment does not lead to challenging new targets for future learning. The quality of teachers' marking is also too variable. The curriculum is broad, well organised and there are good opportunities for enrichment. ICT could be used more widely in learning. The pupils benefit from positive links with parents and other schools. This is a caring school where pupils are carefully supervised and where they are given sound levels of support and guidance.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are satisfactory, overall.** The headteacher provides good, effective leadership and has formed a positive partnership with the new deputy headteacher. The school has clear educational direction based on emerging good practice in several key areas, including development planning and assessing school improvement. A growing sense of teamwork is apparent, although the subject leaders still exercise too little influence on pupils' standards. The governance of the school is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. There is scope for greater involvement by governors in the self-evaluation process including how best to assess the school's overall performance and the standards reached by the pupils.

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

Parents and pupils share largely positive views about the school and appreciate what is done on their behalf. A few parents would like to see the position on homework clarified, including the role they can play themselves. They like the flow of information about the topics pupils learn and appreciate the regular oral and written reports on their child's progress. Most pupils clearly enjoy school and view learning as fun. Some feel they could be better involved or do more on their own, but recognise they have to work hard and behave well.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Strengthen the role of subject leaders and governors in the self-evaluation process and ensure subject leaders have a clear picture of what pupils have to achieve and how best to raise standards.
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning to match the level of the best already in the school and use the results of assessment to target more accurately the next steps in the pupils' learning.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Children in the Foundation Stage are likely to reach the expected standards for their age in all areas of learning except in communication, language and literacy development. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 also achieve well and some standards are currently above average. Achievement in Years 3 to 6 is good and, in the recent past, pupils have achieved well to reach above average standards in the core subjects. Standards in the current Year 6 are lower because of the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. There is no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys and targets for future attainment are appropriate and challenging.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage (reception classes) and achieve the standards expected for their age in all but communication, language and literacy.
- By the end of Year 2, standards are above average in writing and mathematics.
- Standards in the current Year 6 have fallen to below average in English and science.
- Standards in religious education and art are higher than those in many similar schools.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve particularly well set against their individual targets.

#### Commentary

1. The good provision in the Foundation Stage means that reception children achieve well in all areas of learning. They do particularly well in aspects of their personal development, settling quickly into school routines. Most are likely to reach the targets expected for their age in all areas of learning except in English, where their standards are below average on entry. The additional support and improvements in teaching and resources given to pupils in Years 1 and 2 have led to a sharp rise in standards over those in recent years. Pupils are now doing particularly well in mathematics and writing. This is likely to be reflected in the results of the 2005 National Curriculum tests. Standards in reading and science are broadly average for their age.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	14.8 (16.1)	15.8 (15.7)
Writing	13.8 (16.6)	14.6 (14.6)
Mathematics	13.7 (16.6)	16.2 (16.3)

*There were 41 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.6 (27.6)	26.9 (26.8)
Mathematics	28.6 (29.9)	27.0 (26.8)
Science	30.6 (30.8)	28.6 (28.6)

*There were 51 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*



2. The table above reflects the high standards achieved by Year 6 pupils in 2004. The current Year 6 has also achieved well but the relatively high proportion of pupils of lower ability or with special educational needs is likely to be reflected in the results of the 2005 National Curriculum tests. The inspection found a significant number of pupils to be performing below or well below average in English and science. However, many pupils are likely to attain at least average standards in mathematics, where there is less demand on the written word. The school's tracking records would suggest that the standards of Year 6 pupils are set to rise again next year. Standards in speaking and listening, religious education and art are good across the school. Standards in other subjects are broadly at the level anticipated for the age of the pupils. There are no significant differences between the attainment of girls and boys overall.
3. Although many pupils achieve at least satisfactorily in ICT, standards could be higher if they had more opportunities to use their emerging skills in a range of curriculum subjects. Results show that higher attaining pupils now perform better than at the time of the previous inspection, but there is still scope for the gifted and talented pupils to be challenged a little more to help them reach their true potential. The intervention strategies and additional support given by school management are now having considerable impact, for example in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. However, the leadership and management of some curriculum subjects are still not strong enough to ensure standards are consistently high. Pupils with special educational needs and the very few for whom English is an additional language, achieve well owing to effective management, good additional support and carefully assessed targets aimed at the pupils' gradual improvement. In class, the teachers ensure that such pupils are clear about their learning and this secures a good level of progress.

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

Pupils' attitudes are good and their behaviour is very good. Pupils' personal development, which includes the opportunities they have for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good overall, with their spiritual development satisfactory and their moral development very good. Their attendance and punctuality are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good systems and procedures exist to ensure that the pupils are free from harassment and high standards of behaviour are promoted.
- Pupils' willingness to be at school and in their lessons on time for the start of the school day.
- Pupils' interest and enthusiasm for learning and taking part in school activities.
- The emphasis on positive values, including aspects of moral and social development.

### **Commentary**

4. The school's code of conduct is well known to pupils and consistently applied by staff. Well established strategies help identify when additional behaviour support is needed and offers pupils a wide range of rewards for good and improved behaviour, including stickers and certificates. Individual pupils can earn themselves stickers and certificates, or the whole class can work together to support the behaviour of one pupil and earn themselves a class treat of extra playtime. Bullying and any form of harassment are not tolerated and parents commented on the swiftness with which the school deals with anti-social behaviour. Pupils themselves said that although there may be occasional 'nasty' behaviour by individual pupils, they were comfortable talking to an adult about this and were confident that the school would deal with any issues immediately and properly. As a result, behaviour is very good, particularly in the classrooms. Children in reception are made to feel welcome and their personal development is well supported by the existing school ethos.
5. In lessons pupils are keen to share ideas, respond to questioning and persevere with a task. For example, in a Year 2 music lesson, pupils practised the song 'Wind wind wind the bobbin'

a number of times with enthusiasm, until a very good rendition was achieved. Pupils are confident to contribute in lessons; for example in Year 6 they talked about how their community could be improved and in Year 4 about how to avoid accidents. Pupils respect and like their teachers and because of this they are prepared to work hard for them. They help willingly around the classroom and stay after school to take part in a range of extra-curricular activities such as the craft club or games club.

6. The school recognises the importance of personal responsibility and pupils enjoy taking on a range of tasks in school such as helping with the overhead projector in assembly, library duties, ensuring that water bottles are refilled and returning registers to the office. Pupils are generally kind and it is particularly noticeable in a school where there is a wide range of special educational needs provision, just how supportive pupils are to each other. Opportunities to participate in residential activities, this year at Winmarleigh Hall, and after school clubs are widely appreciated by pupils and quoted as examples of school features they really like. By providing good social opportunities for pupils, such as the residential trip and the invitation to sing in the community at local residential homes, pupils learn to get on with each other and meet a range of other people in a different social setting.
7. The chance to participate in a 'mini election' at the same time as the nation's General Election was well received by pupils. The impact that the winning candidate has already had on improved playground equipment (part of her mandate) demonstrates a pupil's ability to carry through an initiative when given the opportunity. There is regular emphasis on good moral values as seen and experienced in the everyday classroom setting and also during acts of worship. Local clergy visit the school and help bring a fresh dimension to collective worship. Assemblies have moral themes that offer reflective opportunities but these are not developed often or strongly enough to promote the spiritual development of the pupils.
8. The school makes good efforts to introduce pupils to a wide range of cultures and faiths. Displays show work influenced by a Japanese ceramic artist, the Impressionist painters, totem poles of native Americans and letters to a school in Thailand. Pupils visit a local synagogue and are proud of the culture of their own area which is reflected in a miners' banner hung in the hall and their participation in the Houghton Feast Parade. Religious education lessons also offer pupils a good opportunity to study comparative faiths and, as a result, many become increasingly aware of the rich diversity of ethnicity outside their immediate community.

## Attendance

### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2003/4*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.6	School data	0.0
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

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

9. Attendance and punctuality have improved since the previous inspection and, in the last reported year, attendance was above that of similar schools. Unauthorised absence is below the national average. The school is conscientious in following up reasons for absence and promotes the concept of not taking holidays in term time. It also rewards the pupils for regular attendance.

## Exclusions

10. There have been no exclusions in the year prior to the inspection or during the current year.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education enabling its pupils to achieve well. Teaching and learning and the content and use of the curriculum are all good. Guidance and support are satisfactory. The partnership with parents is good. The links with other schools and the community are also positive and contribute well to pupils' learning.

## Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good. The quality and use of assessment are satisfactory.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning have improved considerably since the previous inspection.
- Overall, teaching meets the needs of different learning styles and abilities. Teachers motivate their pupils very well and ensure that everyone is involved in lessons.
- The very good additional support given to pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language ensures that they make good progress.
- Pupils apply themselves well to learning but could do more independently.
- ICT is underused by teachers to support learning across the wider curriculum.
- Assessment is not consistent or rigorous enough to set pupils' targets for future learning.

## Commentary

11. Teaching and learning, considered satisfactory in the previous inspection, are now good. This improvement has come about through the strong leadership and direction of the headteacher, an increase in monitoring by senior management and raised expectations after appropriate training and discussion. There is also broad acceptance of the importance of self-evaluation as a guide towards staff development and lesson improvement. The headteacher has correctly identified the development of subject leaders as an important strategy in helping develop teaching technique generally among the staff and so raise the quality of teaching and learning still further. However, some subject leaders are still not involved enough in this type of detail. The development towards pupil independence by encouraging children to think and act for themselves is having an effect, although some teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for this to occur.

## Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 50 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	16 (32%)	18 (36%)	15 (30%)	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.*

12. As classes become smaller, improved adult-pupil ratios are also helping to raise standards. Classroom assistants and support staff are well used throughout the school, particularly in helping pupils with special educational needs to make good progress. The provision for such pupils and also those for whom English is an additional language is frequently very good. The staff ensure that the pupils have a clear understanding of their learning and time to think about the problems set. Good support and praise ensure that they make good progress and achieve well. Teachers and support staff make sure that extra help is available in lessons. Although higher attaining pupils also do well, the school could vary its use of classroom assistants a little more to ensure that more able pupils are also challenged even further.
13. Teaching throughout the school is generally good and, as the table above indicates, some very good teaching occurs on a regular basis. Teachers know their subjects and pupils well, plan effectively with clear objectives and organise a range of activities to engage the pupils. These activities are interesting and are generally within the range of pupils' abilities. There is good emphasis on the teaching and learning of basic skills, which ensures teaching in

subjects such as English, mathematics and science is invariably good. Where teaching is less effective, it is more often the result of teachers being less flexible in their teaching styles and a failure to grasp that pupils often need to learn in very different ways. However, where possible, teachers try to make pupils' learning meaningful by linking aspects of lessons to other subjects in the curriculum. An exception is in ICT which is underused as a support mechanism for learning across the wider curriculum.

14. Teachers are enthusiastic in lessons and motivate their pupils well. They use a wide range of attractive resources, such as the electronic whiteboards, imaginatively and effectively. Planning also takes into account the impact of visits outside school and of guest helpers. In the best lessons, teachers use a good range of strategies to keep the lesson flowing and are sensitive to timing and its impact on pupils. In the more ordinary lessons, there is a tendency to use a narrower range of strategies, sometimes with a prolonged introduction or the overuse of worksheets. Such lessons, whilst satisfactory overall, provide insufficient challenge to pupils and can lead to some not concentrating on their work.
15. As a result of good teaching, pupils relate accurately to what they have learned because their knowledge and skills have been well taught, consolidated and extended. Relationships are positive and pupils usually work well in pairs and small groups because these sessions are controlled and managed well by the teachers. The setting of pupils by broad ability from Years 3 to 6 has been an effective tool in learning. Where teaching and learning are particularly sharp, teachers have refined their planned activities, texts and worksheets within these sets, in order to provide more accurate and individual challenge. Where activities are not well chosen, pupils do not reach their potential.
16. The school has no particular subject weakness and in addition to the core subjects mentioned, teaching is particularly strong in art and design and religious education. Although the teaching of ICT is generally satisfactory, there is a need to strengthen the application of pupils' emerging computer skills across the curriculum. Further practice is required to develop these skills; for example pupils are limited in their ability to access cross-curricular materials from the Internet.
17. Currently the data from assessment tracking is used to decide setting arrangements, the level of tasks to be undertaken and class and group targets. It is currently enabling pupils in the same year group to work at a satisfactory pace. Nevertheless, within the sets, there is still a broad range of attainment, so unless teachers differentiate their questions and planning a little more, then matching tasks and expectations to different levels of ability remains an issue. Several teachers use the results of assessment well as part of the target setting process. Some less so. Marking, when used effectively, provides pupils with information on how they are performing and how they can improve. When this is fully utilised pupils respond positively and subsequent work reveals good applied learning. Unfortunately, although pupils' work is marked regularly, the quality of marking is not consistent or totally effective throughout the school. This issue is very much a management problem and subject leaders need to review what is happening in their own subjects as a matter of priority.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and provides a range of well-planned curricular opportunities for all the pupils. There are good opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum, which give greater depth to pupils' learning. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities. The accommodation is very good and resources are good overall.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for all pupils to learn.
- Teachers' planning is good and clearly focuses on pupils' learning.
- The school provides good opportunities for the curriculum to be enriched and extended.

- The accommodation is attractive and provides a modern learning environment for the pupils.

### **Commentary**

18. The school provides a good curriculum for all its pupils. Statutory requirements are met in all subjects and religious education closely follows the local agreed syllabus. The curriculum places good emphasis on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and many subjects are effective in the way they support and link to each other. For example, the pupils learn about different aspects of the local area in history, geography and religious education. Personal and social education is taught in an integrated way but more formal provision is not expected to begin until September. Sex and relationship education is also due to be expanded and pupils are already taught about alcohol and drug awareness. Although standards in ICT are average, there is insufficient and inconsistent use of the computers both in the classrooms and in the ICT suite to actively support other subject areas. This is an area rightly identified by the school for improvement. Writing has also been a focus for whole-school improvement and staff have worked effectively to target resources and build in opportunities to improve pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum. As a result, writing standards are rising.
19. Teachers generally plan their lessons well and ensure that the pupils' work is carefully matched to their needs and builds securely on their previous learning. In Years 3 to 6, the teachers organise the pupils in groups based on their abilities in literacy and numeracy. The school feels it can see the benefit of this decision in helping to raise standards. The curriculum for children in the reception classes is good. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection when it was judged to be not as rich as it could have been. The classrooms, work areas and outside areas are all used effectively to promote learning through play and independence.
20. Pupils with special educational needs are very well provided for within an inclusive curriculum. Staff prepare tasks and activities, carefully ensuring that there are strong links with those undertaken by the rest of the class. Additional adult support is often on hand and this raises the pupils' self-esteem and adds to their progress. The very few pupils who speak English as an additional language are also well provided for and great care is taken to ensure that they are fully involved in all lessons and enjoy full access to the curriculum.
21. The curriculum is enriched by a wide variety of visitors and visits to places of interest. The school also makes good use of the local area to add colour to the pupils' learning. The teachers are skilled at creating a busy working environment in their classrooms with work displayed well to help stimulate, encourage and remind pupils about their learning. Pupils show much pride when their work is displayed in this way. A satisfactory number of extra-curricular opportunities is available for the pupils. There are regular and well attended clubs such as French, art and craft and the Basic Moves Club (Year 1) designed to appeal to a range of ages and interests.
22. There is a good number of teaching staff to support pupils' learning and an appropriate number of support staff. Small numbers of children in the reception classes and additional support from nursery nurses make such support good in the Foundation Stage. Support staff for pupils with special educational needs are of high quality. The accommodation is very good both for the reception children and for pupils in Years 1 to 6. It is modern, attractive, secure and bright. The classrooms are of good size and there are spaces outside the classrooms which are used well as work areas. The playgrounds and grassed areas are large and attractive and provide much additional space for the pupils. However, in some areas there is little for the pupils to do, few ground markings and too few areas in which to shelter from the sun. Resources are good overall. The computer suite is well appointed but the computers in the classrooms are rather old and outdated and some are unreliable.

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

Provision for the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. The school provides pupils with satisfactory support, advice and guidance and there is satisfactory but informed provision to involve them and listen to their views.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Health and safety procedures are well organised and child protection training for all staff is up to date.
- Induction arrangements for new pupils are well thought out and implemented.
- The school has few formal arrangements for listening to the views of pupils but has plans to remedy this.

### **Commentary**

23. Health and safety procedures are in the hands of specified staff and governors. The school also has external advisors who ensure that all assessments of risks and day-to-day procedures are completed to the right standard. Child protection procedures are designated to trained and named persons and follow the specified child protection guidelines. All staff, including lunchtime supervisors, have attended recent training on how to respond to child protection issues and first aid matters. The needs of looked after children, currently in the care of the local authority, are correctly addressed and they are fully included in the life of the school. Pupils have access to drinking water in their classrooms throughout the school day and the school promotes a healthy lifestyle by banning fizzy drinks and crisps at break times and serving fruit in school.
24. A road safety activity is organised with volunteer school staff which supports visiting professional road safety specialists. The school has made very good provision to support pupils who need specialised care in school and this enables them to access all areas of school life without overwhelming difficulty. Attention to disabled access is already very good and more is planned. All staff know and care for their pupils well and there are good opportunities for pupils to talk to an adult they trust, for example over lunchtime. Owing to the school's insistence on this high quality environment for all its pupils, parents are happy about the care given to their children and view the school as a secure environment where they are well looked after.
25. New pupils respond very well to the welcoming environment and warmth of relationships in the school. Good integration procedures are in place, for example the tradition of older pupils supporting younger children as reading buddies and helping out with games during wet lunchtimes. As a result, pupils settle very happily into school routines and are soon confident members of the school community.
26. The school's procedures for assessing, monitoring and recording the pupils' personal and academic development are satisfactory, although these could be more robust and followed more consistently by the staff. The attention given to pupil inclusion is very good, particularly the monitoring of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. The monitoring of any gifted and talented pupils needs to be raised still further. The pursuit of data which helps to record, for example, any potential differences between the achievement of girls and boys, is carried out satisfactorily.
27. Plans are in place to create a school council (September 2005) in order that more pupils can make a contribution to the running of the school and act as points of reference for their peers. Those pupils spoken to say they would welcome this development as they feel they have an important part to play in the life of the school. Importantly, they said that there are currently few opportunities for them to make a formal approach to staff or get together as an organised group to voice their opinions. Their latest thoughts centre on the quality of school lunches and more opportunities to use computers in lessons. The delivery of personal, health and social education and opportunities for pupil assessment to be linked to individual targets, are still rather fragmented across the school.

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

The school has good links with parents. Links to the community are also good. Good links exist with other schools.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school works hard to get to know parents and keep them well informed.
- The close links with the local community help extend pupils' achievements.
- There is a close working partnership with other schools in the area and this helps pupils during the induction and transfer stages.

### **Commentary**

28. The school values the involvement of parents and carers and welcomes their suggestions. Good opportunities are available for parents to come into school for consultation evenings and to help where they can, for example with outings and reading. Parents receive good quality information about what areas of the curriculum are to be covered each term. They also appreciate the three progress reports they now receive each year. Day-to-day contact is maintained by telephone, through the school office, in the classroom at the start and end of the school day and through home/school reading diaries. Information to parents is good and parents commented that they enjoyed the newsletters and found the prospectus a useful source of information. Parent and volunteer helpers are well represented in the school and plans to consult parents more regularly on school matters are firmly in place. As a result of these measures, most parents feel comfortable in the school and judge that they are kept well informed about their children's progress. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are involved well with ongoing consultation and the results of reviews.
29. Close links exist with the community and facilities such as the Bethany Christian Centre, road safety teams, care centres for the elderly, museums, library and the fire brigade are all used successfully as additional learning experiences for the pupils. Youngsters are also given every opportunity to know the area they live in; for example, through their work on settlements (based on studying the new town of Peterlee) and the immediate community surrounding their own school, which is rich in history. This supports pupils' social development and enables them to explore their local traditions and culture.
30. The school has created a good range of partnerships, particularly with local nursery and secondary schools. Sporting links, such as tag rugby, short tennis and cross-country are established with local schools and help extend the curriculum. Staff share training opportunities with other primary schools, for example in curriculum areas and first aid. To assist the transfer of pupils from primary to secondary education, staff from the secondary school have developed close working links with Year 6 pupils and their teachers. Links to the local nursery are strengthened by staff membership on the Nursery School governing body. The induction of four year-olds into the reception classes is well established and beneficial to both children and their parents. As a result, these links are consolidated well throughout the year. Parents express their approval of these good partnerships not least because of their potential impact on pupils' achievements and personal development.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory, overall. The leadership of the headteacher is good and management is satisfactory. The governance of the school is satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is an able leader and a major influence on school life. She has a clear vision for growth and improvement and gives good educational drive and direction.
- Subject leaders are not always at the heart of improvements in their own areas including how best to evaluate pupils' progress and plan for increased standards in the future.
- Governors are a committed body and meet statutory requirements but are not well enough involved in both the self-evaluation process and planning for school improvement.
- Day-to-day administration is good and financial matters are well managed.

### Commentary

31. Although there is still work to be done, the leadership and management of the school have improved since the previous inspection. Key areas for development are now well established and a good learning ethos has been created. The aims of the school are being met. The headteacher's influence in establishing priorities, including the raising of standards, is illustrated in the sharp improvement of the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. Until very recently, standards in this part of the school were low and provision was relatively weak. Good leadership and effective team work have given new status to these age groups and pupils' standards have risen as a result.
32. The headteacher leads by example and does much to inspire others into action as needed. Together with the deputy headteacher in particular, she continues to move the school forward in a direction and at a pace that others can join in and contribute towards. School improvement is focused on clear manageable targets such as continuing to raise pupils' achievements and ensuring the accountability of the school in its everyday work. The leadership offered by other key staff is satisfactory although there are areas for improvement, including the leadership of foundation subjects in the National Curriculum. There are, however, some examples of good teamwork within the paired year groups.
33. The annual school development plan has become an important document in terms of school improvement. Although there is now wider involvement by subject leaders and governors, their contributions are not consistent and should be increased. This would also ensure that there is wider understanding of the importance of the self evaluation process. The most effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are still confined to senior staff and more needs to be done by the subject leaders to ensure they are directly involved in helping to raise standards in their own areas. Some staff also require additional support and training in how to analyse assessment data and to take appropriate action on any weaknesses thus portrayed.
34. The headteacher and deputy headteacher place considerable stress on staff development and how this will make school management more rigorous and far reaching. The school is rightly trying to link more closely the teachers' performance management system with a whole-school improvement plan, so that individual staff will see issues as a common concern. The management of special needs by the headteacher and special needs co-ordinator, together with that of the curriculum and teaching and learning, is good. The school manages its care and integration for all individuals very well. The provision for pupils with English as an additional language is also delivered well and pupils make significant gains in their knowledge and understanding. Effective use is made of local school partnerships and the wider community.



35. The governing body is very supportive and has recently increased its total membership of parents to good effect. Governors fulfil their statutory requirements in relation to their meetings and implementation of policies. Some relatively tentative links already exist between individual members and some subject leaders, and these could be usefully increased. Governors have a sound knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are also committed to school improvement. They have taken, however, only tentative steps in the process of evaluating the school's performance and there is still some over-reliance on the headteacher for basic information. The various committees meet as required but are currently not proactive enough in gathering information for themselves and challenging the headteacher and others as part of their role as critical friend. As part of this responsibility, governors plan to visit the school more frequently during the working day and this is a step in the right direction. Like all others in the school, governors show an open commitment to inclusion.

### **Financial information**

36. The school has good financial systems and procedures in place and makes good use of its annual budget together with various grants. The main principles of obtaining best value are known and followed through successfully. There are clear links between expenditure and the priorities expressed in the school's development plan. The slightly high carry forward figure from 2003/4 reflected the school's need to think about additional support staff in the classrooms. Good financial advice is given through the appointed officer of the local authority, particularly when setting the budget and monitoring it over a 12 month period. Governors, too, are involved well through their financial and general purposes committee. Given pupils' standards on entry set against what they achieve over time, together with the quality of education provided, the school gives good value for money.

#### ***Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005***

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	800,052	Balance from previous year	29,280
Total expenditure	823,894	Balance carried forward to the next	5,438
Expenditure per pupil	2,496		

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

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

The provision for children in the reception classes is **good**. The school has made very good improvements since the previous inspection. Teaching and learning are now good. Independence is promoted very well and the children are given lots of opportunities to enjoy books and write. Focused teaching in small groups ensures that the children's work is carefully matched to their needs and most make good gains in their learning. This is also the result of good assessment procedures and the effective use of available information.

Most children have some pre-school experience before entry into the reception classes. There are at present 34 children who work in one of two reception classes. There are good induction procedures so that children make an easy and staged transition into school. Good information provided for parents enables a close home/school partnership to form from the onset. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. The co-ordinator has managed change since the previous inspection very well and, alongside the leadership of the school and the support of her colleagues, the provision and teaching in reception have improved significantly. A significant number of adult helpers give their time and expertise to come to school to help motivate youngsters and this improves the children's achievement.

The staff in the reception classes work well together as a team. The teachers are effective in planning closely for all the children in the class. The nursery nurses are very effective in supporting both the teachers and the children in their work. Staff have very clear ideas about creating an attractive, happy and effective learning environment. As a result, the children show a willingness to come to school, enjoy their learning and feel secure.

On starting school, the children's overall attainment is frequently below the levels expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. Recognition of letter sounds and writing skills are both weak. For some children, their speaking skills are also not well developed. By the end of their reception year, most children are likely to achieve the goals expected for their age in all areas of learning, with the exception of communication, language and literacy, where they are just below the levels expected. The children therefore achieve well in all areas of their development.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching creates a calm, supportive, learning environment where children learn to be independent and flourish.
- An ethos built round the very good relationships enables children to achieve well.

#### **Commentary**

37. Good teaching in this area of learning allows the children to learn and achieve well. As a result most of the children are likely to reach the levels expected for their age by the end of the reception year. The staff help to create a calm but stimulating environment where children become confident yet relaxed in their surroundings, and consequently learn well. Children are keen to attend and talk happily to each other and to the teachers when they arrive. They listen carefully to staff and helpers and work with great enthusiasm, happily selecting their own materials and resources and tidying away at the end of the sessions. They help each other and show consideration for others. Lessons are conducted in a happy caring atmosphere and so the children learn good social skills. Very good relationships exist and this means that the children set about their work with great enthusiasm. The children are pleased

with their efforts and work and play happily together. They also help each other and share resources. In this way the children learn good social skills and most show a growing confidence and independence.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in this area of learning are likely to be below average for many pupils.
- Good teaching and learning ensures that the children achieve well.
- Children enjoy books and there is good emphasis on them developing their early reading and writing skills.

### **Commentary**

38. Good, carefully planned and effective teaching enables the children to achieve well in their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. As a result, they make good progress and develop well. Most children, however, are unlikely to reach the levels expected in this area of learning by the end of the reception year. The staff employ a wide range of strategies to encourage a strong vocabulary and confidence when speaking. These are given high priority.
39. The children show good interest in their reading books and are beginning to read well. They read with energy, talking happily about the stories and what might happen next. Most have good support with their reading and spelling at home. The children also made some books of their own and these are displayed with other books on the shelves. In one classroom, there is an attractive tent in which the children love to read.
40. Children are encouraged to write and have many opportunities to do so. They write their names accurately on their work, use the writing tables to prepare their own cards and write orders on the menu in the café. Children who do not speak English as their first language are given good help and encouragement. More able children are able to write their own simple sentences with spelling phonetically accurate. Staff work with small groups of children giving them individual help. Despite their good progress, significant numbers of children are unlikely to attain the expected standards for their age in this area of learning.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good focused teaching allows the children to learn and achieve well.
- A good range of practical activities fully engage the children's interests.

### **Commentary**

41. As a result of good teaching and resources, the children develop their mathematical awareness well. By the end of the reception year, most children are likely to reach the levels expected for their age. They enjoy counting and are keen to show how their skills have improved. They count back from 30 with confidence and accuracy. They work with the nursery nurse in the playground, putting numbers in the correct order and making tracks with numbered leaves through exciting tunnels. More able children decide which of four numbers is the smallest, which is the largest, and correctly position the middle numbers. They enjoyed this tricky activity and showed great perseverance and concentration skills.
42. Staff use a wide range of resources and activities to help consolidate mathematical

development. Making marshmallow caterpillars with different segments ensured that all the children enjoyed opportunities to count and use their mathematical skills. Many decide which items are the longest and whether vessels are full or empty. Because activities are at the correct level of demand and teaching is in small targeted groups, the children learn well.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Exciting learning and stimulating activities ensure that the children learn well.
- The observation skills of children are well practised and developed.

### **Commentary**

43. As a result of good provision in both classes, the children develop their knowledge and understanding of the world well. By the end of the reception year, most are likely to reach the levels expected of them. It is clear from the attractive and informative displays, that the children have a wide range of activities planned for them, most of which are designed to engage their interests and stimulate their curiosity. Observational skills are well developed through careful planning and the effective use of resources. The classroom, practical area and outside areas are full of items to engage and intrigue them. Snails, fish and stick insects are all looked after well by the children. Outdoors, the children search for mini-beasts which they observe closely through the electronic microscope.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in physical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The indoor and outdoor accommodation supports the children's physical development well.
- Teachers place good emphasis on the development of the pupils' fine and gross motor skills.

### **Commentary**

44. As a result of good provision, the children develop their physical skills well so that by the end of the reception year, most are likely to reach the levels expected of them in this area of learning. The children have the benefit of two outdoor areas and they work with a variety of activities to develop their physical skills. In physical education lessons they learn to run, jump, skip around hoops and control their movements so that they are able to change their direction of travel. Most use small equipment with increasing control. For example, they used tools when moulding and shaping playdough as part of making their own mini-beasts. The children play with wheeled vehicles, sensibly sharing equipment and working together well. For example, two children decided that their dolls should sit on their knees as they worked the seesaw together. The children are very keen on model making and use their fine motor skills well by selecting their own materials and placing them exactly where they need them.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of experiences and attractive resources help promote children's creative learning.
- Children's creative development is used well to help support their learning in other areas.

### Commentary

45. As a result of good provision, the children's creative development is well provided for. Children's skills are used well to extend and illustrate their progress in other areas of learning. By the end of the reception year, most of the children are likely to reach the levels expected for their age in this area of learning. The children enjoy a good range of well-planned creative experiences, including art and music, to help stimulate their imaginations and extend their learning. They enjoy their music sessions very much, playing musical patterns and using simple instruments to make their own music. They did well when creating pictures of exotic and rainbow flowers and curved and straight patterns with shapes. The outdoor area is used well to provide enrichment. The children use the water and sand trays and work in the Bernard Gilpin Café in order to extend and develop their vocabulary, ideas and feelings. They collaborate well in their role play using a good blend of imagination and creative ideas.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

### ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are generally above average by the end of Year 2 but are currently below average by the end of Year 6.
- Basic skills are well taught although writing remains an area for further improvement.
- Pupils add to their achievements by their own helpful attitude and enthusiasm for learning.
- Teaching is good overall but in some lessons the pupils' work lacks pace and challenge.
- The use made of assessments is inconsistent and does not always lead to new targets for learning.
- The subject is well led and managed.

### Commentary

46. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. This is due to effective leadership and clearer management strategies leading in turn to improved teaching and learning. Standards, which were previously below average at Year 2, are now above. These improvements have come about through the systematic teaching of phonics and sentence structure, additional support from teaching assistants and the adoption of independent and improved learning methods in reception through to Year 2. In addition, there have been fewer pupils with learning difficulties in Year 2 compared with the previous year. In Year 6, despite several years of very good results in national tests, current standards are below average. This is due to the large proportion of pupils with special educational needs, changes in staffing and the high mobility of some pupils between Years 3 and 6. Nevertheless, because teaching and learning have risen from satisfactory to good throughout the school, all pupils achieve well and make good progress. This includes pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and higher attaining pupils. The achievement of girls and boys is broadly similar.

47. Speaking and listening are very well developed throughout the school. This is because teachers use good questioning skills and effective strategies such as 'hot seating' as a means of extending the pupils' use of language and powers of discussion. Reading remains satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 but has improved to good in Years 3 to 6. This has mainly come about through regular discussion about different texts across the curriculum so that pupils appreciate layers of meaning, inference and structure. Pupils also hear and read a wide range of poetry and prose on a daily basis. In Year 6, less able pupils are able to use text effectively to support their opinions in discussion. They listen to each other carefully and, because relationships in the classroom are supportive and encouraging, they are assertive but good humoured when challenged. Writing is well taught and standards are now good in Years 1 and 2. Systematic teaching of spelling, punctuation and handwriting is bearing good results. There is also good coverage of the curriculum with pupils writing for a variety of purpose and audience.
48. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. This represents an improvement on the previous inspection, when teaching and learning were satisfactory. During the current inspection, there was also evidence of some very good teaching and learning in Years 1 and 4. Generally, teaching and learning have improved because of very good planning and preparation. Effective use is also made of various strategies to capture pupils' interest and sustain their concentration, as well as good use of additional support to help meet the needs of more individual pupils. Teachers are also being trained to respond better to lesson evaluation. Where teaching and learning were seen to be particularly effective during the inspection, contributory factors were excellent classroom organisation, an appropriate pace of lesson, the use of some highly imaginative activities and high challenge and expectations. In only one English session did achievement drop back to satisfactory. This happened because the lesson failed to cater for all learning needs and lacked the right type of stimulus, pace, management and structure.
49. There are some good examples of marking being constructive and the pupils' response helping to extend their learning. Assessment is also informing target setting in these classes and pupils know what they have to do to improve. Some pupils show awareness as to how to move their work on to the next level. However, good quality marking and target setting are not consistent throughout the school. Nevertheless, by Year 6, where the setting arrangements work and pupils are challenged appropriately, much of the more able pupils' oral and written work is original and interesting, both in expression and viewpoint. Pupils of average ability are able to express themselves clearly with fewer complex sentences and embellishments. The large number of less able pupils struggle to produce the quantity of work required and are insecure about punctuation, but can nevertheless communicate principal points using basic expressions and vocabulary.
50. English is well led and managed. The subject leader is an effective and enthusiastic role model who is developing a good overview of progress throughout the school. She analyses data purposefully and by regularly monitoring teaching and learning has accurately identified subject priorities. These include a need for consistent target setting in response to rigorous marking and assessment and more regular use of ICT by all pupils.

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

51. Pupils are given good opportunities to practise their speaking and listening, reading and writing across the curriculum. In Year 2 they write 'eyewitness' accounts of the Great Fire of London in the first person. Opportunities for non-chronological writing occur in Year 6 when pupils use a PowerPoint presentation (ICT) to reflect on aspects of the Second World War.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are currently above average by the end of Year 2.
- Teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good enabling pupils of different abilities to achieve well across the school.
- Whilst many pupils are strong in terms of mental work and basic number operations, their ability to use and apply such knowledge to problem solving is relatively weak.
- The everyday marking of pupils' work is not as good as other assessments.
- Whilst the subject leadership takes good account of priorities for improvement, the overview of mathematics is not based sufficiently on close observation and the monitoring and evaluation of standards across the school.

### Commentary

52. Standards in mathematics are above average by the end of Year 2 and broadly in line with national expectations by the end of Year 6. Normally, these judgements would be reflected in the assessment data drawn from the annual National Curriculum tests but, as indicated elsewhere in the report, this is not the case. The weak Year 2 results in 2004 reflected the low attaining nature of that particular group of pupils as well as indifferent levels of provision. Standards in Year 2 have now jumped to above the national average owing to improved provision and pupils being targeted better. The normally high results obtained by pupils in Year 6, are likely to be replaced this year by results much nearer to the national average. This is because of the relatively high proportion of less able pupils. The great majority of pupils continue to achieve well and there is no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys. The subject has made steady progress since the previous inspection.
53. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has helped bring structure and consistency to much of the pupils' work in number, including the development of their mental skills. Most pupils show secure recall of the number tables and understand the basic number operations and their relationship. Older pupils are particularly adept at working with large numbers and using calculators to check their answers. The more able pupils are quick to spot repetitive patterns in number and to demonstrate different strategies to obtain an answer. By the end of Year 2, many pupils have a secure grasp of time, weight, shape and capacity and usually record their work neatly and systematically. However, a significant weakness, not least in the current Years 5 and 6, is the lack of confidence when handling data and in pupils applying their knowledge of number to problem solving. Younger pupils in particular struggle to use the right mathematical language, although this is generally modelled well by the teachers. There is also a tendency across the school for pupils to complete too many 'mechanical examples' rather than apply their knowledge in other ways.
54. The quality of teaching and learning is generally good across the school and is a strength of provision. The grouping of pupils by broad ability (setting) works well. Planning is thorough and correctly identifies those pupils who will potentially need extra help as well as those capable of more extension work. The questioning of pupils is not always convincing in all lessons but is usually good enough to ensure that all pupils are involved. The good response of the pupils themselves is often a positive factor in their own progress and achievement. Learning is brisk and little time is wasted because of the friendly but firm control and management of the pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are supported very well.
55. Homework is used satisfactorily to reinforce rather than extend learning, but too little is seen of ICT as a tool for aiding mathematical understanding and development. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory and includes a wide range of evaluations and test data. In some

classes, more could be made of this material in order to set pupils new targets for improvement. Compared to English, mathematical targets are less familiar to many pupils. The marking of pupils' everyday work is very variable and, in some classes, it is not helping pupils appreciate the point they have reached and where, if necessary, they are going wrong.

56. Leadership and management are satisfactory and the experienced co-ordinator has targeted the right priorities for subject improvement over the next few months. Although monitoring could be increased, pupils' exercise books and teachers' planning are collected regularly. There is, however, room for additional improvement in teaching and learning which will occur through more rigorous monitoring, better use of assessments and more regular dissemination of good practice. There is also no total overview of the subject or clear guidance to staff how standards can be sustained and eventually raised in specific year groups or among vulnerable pupils. Attention to these points would improve the overall subject provision to good.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

57. This aspect is satisfactory although more could be done to introduce mathematical understanding into other subjects. Careful measuring practice is often adopted in design and technology and pupils use scales and grid references in map work. A few teachers compile problem solving exercises based round the school grounds and pupils can perform lots of 'more than' and 'less than' exercises whilst visiting the school's environmental garden. Year 1 pupils were able to compile an accurate list showing how basic shapes such as the oblong and triangle occur in the classroom.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement in science is good throughout the school.
- A clear emphasis on investigation, experimentation and observation has ensured that standards have risen.
- Good teaching and learning have been significant in raising achievement.
- The co-ordinator has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject.

### **Commentary**

58. Standards in science at the end of Year 2 are likely to be average and by the end of Year 6 below average. A significant number of pupils both in Year 2 and Year 6 achieve the higher levels for their age and this is a very good feature of the all round attainment of the pupils. This is a very different Year 2 scenario from that seen in recent years and reflects a determined effort to see lasting improvements in the standards of pupils in Years 1 and 2. Attainment in Year 6 is currently not as strong as in recent years, where standards have been consistently high. Achievement for the current Year 6 is good but standards are lower. This is because of the significant numbers with special educational needs allied to relatively high levels of pupils joining the school part way through their schooling. It is clear that this group of pupils has done well and continues to make good progress despite being a lower attaining year group. Achievement is good throughout the school for all groups of pupils. This is a good improvement over the previous inspection, when achievement could have been higher. High standards have been achieved in Year 6 science over the past three years. This demonstrates commendable achievement by the pupils and a school that is by no means complacent as it strives to improve still further.
59. The pupils' books show good emphasis on investigation, experimentation and observation. Fair testing and the careful planning of investigations have ensured that standards have risen in the past. There is also a clear commitment by staff and pupils to use the correct scientific



language, accurate measurements and careful recording of experiments. All these place a clear demand on the pupils and, because they are keen and enthusiastic about their lessons and wish to work hard, they rise to the challenge and do well.

60. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. There are effective features of teaching, clearly shown during all observed lessons. Particularly strong features are the correct technical knowledge and understanding demonstrated by the teachers. The staff make good use of attractive resources. There is also a clear drive by the pupils to solve problems and find out the answers to questions set by the teachers. This reflects the promotion in the school of improving the pupils' thinking skills. For example, in Year 2, the pupils had to decide whether electrical equipment gave off heat, light or made sounds; whilst in Year 6, the pupils had to construct circuits prepared by their friends and decide if they would or would not work. Practical activities set by the teachers are both appealing and promote both independence and scientific enquiry. The planning of lessons is good and shows clearly what the teacher intends the pupils to learn. Teachers make effective use of different methods by which pupils record their work. Pupils also make good use of their literacy skills by labeling diagrams and writing up experiments.
61. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development. The subject leader has analysed test results and amended and provided additional resources to deal with areas identified for improvement. He does not yet, however, have a clear grasp of standards across the school and this inhibits the effectiveness of targeting resources. The school has rightly recognised that ICT is as yet underdeveloped in science and remains a further area for improvement.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Most pupils make at least satisfactory progress in most designated ICT lessons.
- Although teaching is satisfactory overall, some teachers lack confidence with the new resources.
- Pupils have good attitudes to their work and this reflects on their achievements.
- Pupils are not given enough time on computers to fully develop their skills.
- ICT is not used extensively to support learning in other subjects.

### **Commentary**

62. Pupils' attainment throughout the age range is broadly in line with national expectations and so standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. The curriculum is broad and balanced and pupils learn the appropriate skills and techniques as they progress through the school. Most lessons take place in the new computer suite, except those for reception and Year 1. These pupils tend to use classroom computers which are not always reliable. Year 1 pupils are confident when compiling a graphics picture, using a word bank and engaging in simple counting games. By Year 2, pupils conduct an information search using 'Google', use further tools to create graphics and enter text in text boxes on the screen. Satisfactory progress is maintained in Years 3 to 6 and, towards the end of Year 6, most pupils can research a topic on the Internet and create suitable presentations to communicate their findings. Separate provision for Year 6 pupils is also arranged with a local secondary school to cover control and data-logging aspects. Pupils enjoy working on the computers. They know what is expected of them and are well motivated and self-disciplined. They also work well with others, all factors that contribute to their personal and social development.
63. Occasionally, it is clear that some teachers lack confidence in the subject, are unsure of the software and are nervous at the possibility of technical problems occurring. Despite this, most teaching is at least satisfactory and teachers' confidence is on the increase as additional

training becomes available. All pupils thus receive appropriate support and their achievement and progress are satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and pupils reach the expected targets. Some very good teaching and learning were observed in Years 2 and 6. In these, introductory sessions were well used to instruct pupils on the purposes of their work so that during the 'hands on' sections no time was wasted and pupils knew how to correct their actions in the event of error. Web sites with immediate appeal to pupils were used. There was also provision for the higher attaining pupils and much emphasis was placed on self-evaluation.

64. Resources for the subject are satisfactory. There is a well furnished and attractive computer suite with additional machines in classrooms and library. All computers have Internet access and all the pupils have an e-mail address. There are some electronic whiteboards in classrooms and these are soon to be increased. Teachers generally make good use of these whiteboards to illustrate teaching points, to provide additional resources from the Internet and to use the impact of professional graphics to motivate pupils. In some lessons, there are not enough computers for pupils to work individually while in the computer suite and this could affect their achievement. The school is not yet making full use of the suite nor are the computers in classrooms and the library fully utilised. Pupils' time on the computer, although well spent when it occurs, is not sufficient to increase speed on the keyboard, flexibility in usage and independence across the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and often achieve well. This is because of the visual impact of ICT and the way teachers choose to organise lessons so that the more able are on hand to help those with learning difficulties.

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

65. Although teachers use cross-curricular themes in ICT designated lessons, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise and refine their skills when they return to the rest of the curriculum. Pupils have acquired sound skills for Internet research but these are not exploited in other lessons. There is little evidence of word processing about the school or of pupils drafting and redrafting their work on the computer. Scrutiny of teachers' plans reveals that as an aid to learning, ICT is underdeveloped throughout the school.

### **HUMANITIES**

The evidence relating to history and geography was not sufficient to make a judgement on overall provision. These subjects were therefore briefly sampled.

66. In **geography** pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of places in the locality, in contrasting areas of the United Kingdom and of the world generally. Studies of places such as London, and Chembakoli in India give pupils an appreciation of different lifestyles and the recent pen-pal connection with a Thai school, gave Year 2 pupils more personal insight into a distant country. Teachers use environmental projects well and the teaching seen was largely effective. The pupils' enquiry skills are well planned for. In Year 1, pupils analyse their own traffic surveys whilst in Year 6, pupils examine maps, photographs, plans, atlases and diagrams to study new towns built after 1945. There is, however, little evidence of the use of ICT to research projects or to record findings.
67. In **history** the pupils enjoy a well-organised and interesting curriculum. Pupils in Year 2 listened to a recording of Florence Nightingale's voice and tried hard to match it to the photographs of famous people provided by the teacher. Older pupils in Year 3 study the life and times of the Ancient Egyptians, making necklaces of gold and jewels and thinking what life was like at this time. Most pupils speak enthusiastically about their interest in history and the teaching seen was mainly well planned and delivered. Attractive displays throughout the school celebrate the pupils' learning and promote the subject well.

### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards meet those of the agreed syllabus by the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Pupils enjoy the subject and respond well through the quality of their oral and written work.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good, enabling pupils to achieve well across the school.
- Good leadership and management ensure that staff are kept up to date and are well resourced.

### **Commentary**

68. Standards and provision have improved since the previous inspection. Staff plan the subject well and pupils show good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of topics. The high quality displays around the school reflect the importance of the subject in the wider curriculum. There is little difference in the attainment of girls and boys and most achieve consistently well.
69. During the inspection, several in-depth studies were being made of Christianity as well as comparative religions such as Buddhism, Sikhism and Judaism. The staff show they have researched their topics to a good level and understand those aspects most likely to interest and motivate the pupils. Older pupils can show evidence of using the Internet to look for additional information and the older pupils' recorded work usually reflects a good balance of worksheets and their own notes. Class lessons were seen to be relatively lively affairs with most pupils eager to learn and some good questions asked and answered. Pupils are able to compare and contrast different religions and show good sensitivity for the beliefs of others.
70. The quality of teaching and learning is good, with well-planned lessons leading to some thoughtful discussions. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are very well supported and participate fully in lessons. Pupils as young as those in Year 1 were able to evaluate the features of Buddhist life and practice. Many know the meaning of important symbols as well as key words. Year 6 pupils were making a close study of the significance of religious sculptures seen in the nearby cemetery and showed particularly good observational skills following their visit. Most were able to record their findings as a revision and word processing exercise using the computer. When questioned, Year 5 pupils had clearly learned a great deal about great northern saints like St Cuthbert as well as medieval mysteries following visits to places such as Bede's World and Durham Cathedral. Knowledge is retained well and pupils are beginning to spot key differences, for example when visiting local churches. The pupils' knowledge of the Bible and of the moral teachings of Christ are quite marked among a significant numbers of pupils.
71. The subject has been difficult to sustain following several changes in the local agreed syllabus in recent years. Despite this, leadership and management are strong and the co-ordinator has a very detailed action plan which outlines the needs of the subject over the next year. Assessments are satisfactory and pupils' progress in the subject is conveyed regularly to parents. A strong feature of the overall provision is the wide range of attractive books, resources and artefacts teachers and pupils can call on.

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

72. The evidence relating to design and technology and music was not sufficient to make a judgement on overall provision. These subjects were therefore briefly sampled.
73. In **design and technology** pupils experience a wide range of craft materials including wood and food technology. They work with simple mechanisms such as winding, pneumatics and cams but there is still little evidence of electrical components or computer usage. Pupils' self-evaluation of their work is now a prominent feature of their design and make process. Pupils study themes, which often relate to other subjects; for example, Year 6 pupils made free

standing shelters after examining those used for protection during the Second World War. The subject is appropriately planned for although more could be evident on display.

74. In **music** all pupils have the opportunity to listen to music, to sing and to play and perform. The pupils sing songs in assemblies and clearly enjoy these experiences. Pupils say they enjoy their music lessons and have a chance to perform their own compositions. For example, the pupils in Year 6 have created their own compositions on the theme of 'Jungle', scoring their music and choosing the best instruments to blend together. The pupils have lots of opportunities to take part in concerts at important times of the school year, for example at Harvest and Christmas. The school has a good number of instruments including a good range of instruments popular in other countries.

## **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils now have access to a broader curriculum and this increases their artistic experiences.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and consistently achieve well.
- The means by which pupils' work is assessed and evaluated are limited.

### **Commentary**

75. There has been good progress since the previous inspection and standards, previously in line with national standards, are now above average. This is because of improved teaching and learning and the effective and proactive leadership and management of the subject leader. As a result, pupils' opportunities in this subject have been enhanced considerably. Pupils now receive both a wider and more progressive curriculum. They experience two- and three-dimensional art. They experiment with clay and an increasing range of media and technique. The staff now follow a well supported scheme of work and have received additional training from secondary school teachers and visiting artists. The subject leader has worked alongside other colleagues on planning and raised awareness of standards across the school by building up a file of pupils' work. The subject has been given higher profile with the organisation of an art exhibition for parents, entry into local competitions such as Northumbria in Bloom and the very attractive display of pupils' work about the school. In addition, there is a popular after school craft club.
76. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils have good attitudes to the subject and all pupils achieve well, including those with special educational needs, English as an additional language and any showing particular talents in the subject. Lessons are well planned and prepared. Teachers use pictures, photographs and artefacts to capture their pupils' imagination and model techniques very well. They are knowledgeable about the lives and work of different artists and this information engages the pupils emotionally. This was particularly noticeable in a Year 6 lesson when pupils spoke with feeling about the darkness of Picasso's Guernica compared with the desolation of Lowry's industrial landscapes. Teachers' questions and commentaries often challenge pupils' observation. The resources they use for practical work are interesting to the pupils and the good balance in lessons between teacher directed and child chosen aspects enables pupils to maintain interest and persevere with individual projects for a sustained period of time. Two particularly successful lessons at Year 2 and Year 3 on tile making and the construction of Egyptian jewellery absorbed pupils creatively and intensely for the whole of the lesson.
77. Teachers point out the best features of pupils' work in full class sessions after practical activities. This raises self-esteem and helps pupils appreciate different interpretations. Teachers also give ideas and suggestions during the lesson to develop pupils' work following

discussion and early assessment. Some teachers record such progress but, as yet, there is no common agreement or school system for assessing, recording and tracking pupils' work.

## **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a well-structured programme which ensures that pupils experience a wide range of activities including swimming.
- Some of the teaching could make better use of resources and pupil demonstrations.
- Facilities are good.
- The subject is enriched by various extra-curricular clubs of a sporting nature.

### **Commentary**

78. There is good curricular emphasis on physical education and it is a subject which many pupils favour. The inspection period coincided with the teaching of mainly minor games and ball skills which made it difficult to assess overall subject provision. However, scrutiny of the school's chosen programme of study suggests that planned provision is satisfactory and covers all the required elements of the National Curriculum. Standards in the activities seen indicate that pupils can perform the appropriate skills for their age and most achieve satisfactorily. This is a very good subject for inclusion, with all pupils, even those in wheelchairs, becoming fully integrated and involved in lessons. The subject has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.
79. Pupils are able to throw, catch and pass a range of small items such as balls and quoits with reasonable accuracy and skill. The oldest pupils show good awareness of space when two pupils try to retain possession of a ball against a single opponent. Team relays show pupils competing hard but fairly when trying to win for their own side.
80. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers exercise firm control over their classes whilst still making rigorous activity fun to join in. During minor games, involving throwing and catching, there is sound emphasis on technique, but more use could be made of available resources, pupil demonstration, reflection and opportunities for self-evaluation. Most older pupils in particular are able to improve their techniques following adult support and further practice. All observed lessons paid due attention to pupil safety with approved periods for warm-up and cool down. Staff and pupils dress to a good standard for exercise.
81. The subject is led and managed satisfactorily by a relatively new co-ordinator who has begun to compile a basic action plan aimed at improving staff confidence and pupils' standards in certain areas of the curriculum. A standard method for assessing pupils' standards is shortly to be trialled. The curriculum is extended and enriched by a series of visitors during the year such as coaching by Sunderland Football Club and a world class gymnast. Older pupils can participate in competitive sport such as netball and football, and extra-curricular clubs such as The Basic Moves Club introduce healthy activities to pupils as young as Year 1. The accommodation for activities is very good with a large hall and extensive grounds comprising fields and playground surfaces. The school also holds an annual residential weekend when pupils can enjoy a wide range of adventurous activities under the care of skilled instructors.

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

82. This aspect of pupils' development is still relatively new to the school and there is no structured programme of work to complement what is done informally on a daily basis. Some classes have introduced short periods of social and moral reflection during 'circle time' and others make effective use of the good school ethos to help develop good relationships.

Assemblies often centre on moral issues and the need to act in harmony with others. To date, the governors have not agreed to extend the school's sex education programme which is mainly given to Year 6 pupils about to transfer to high school. A programme of drug awareness is already in place. Year 4 pupils showed good awareness about accident prevention. Year 6 pupils were also observed taking part in 'The Community Kids Project' aimed at teaching them about the part they should play in keeping their community clean and safe. The deputy headteacher is soon to present a more formal programme for PSHE based on the implications of the green paper 'Every Child Matters.' This is aimed at ensuring progression and continuity in terms of personal development. Plans are also well advanced to begin a school council aimed at developing social responsibility and involving all pupils in the life of their school.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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