

INSPECTION REPORT

MILBURN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Penrith, Cumbria

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112183

Headteacher: Brian Convey

Reporting inspector: Ian Jones
2758

Dates of inspection: 5 March 2001 – 9 March 2001

Inspection number: 182611

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:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Ray Healey
Date of previous inspection:	26 June 1996

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		Information technology	How well are pupils taught?
		Art	How well is the school led and managed?
		Design technology	What should the school do to improve further?
		Physical Education	
Shirley Elomari 11072	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the schoolwork in partnership with parents?
Diane Lever 13132	Team inspector	English	The school's results and pupils' achievements
		Science	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
		Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		History	
		Music	
		Religious education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Milburn Primary is a very small rural school situated in the centre of the small Cumbrian village of Milburn. Currently, there are thirty-two boys and girls between the ages of four and eleven attending the school. The school has two classrooms. Three reception and seven infant pupils aged four to seven years are taught in one classroom and twenty-two junior pupils aged seven to eleven are taught in the second classroom. Pupils live in the village or the local rural area. The very small size of year groups, ranging from two to eight pupils, results in the attainment on entry to the Reception Year varying considerably from year-to-year, being highly influenced by the attainment of individual pupils. When averaged over recent years, the attainment on entry has been broadly similar to that expected for pupils of their age. The number of pupils on the school's register for special educational needs is lower than the national average, but the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is higher than is found nationally. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. All pupils attending the school come from a white British background and speak English as their first language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective and happy school. Teaching is of high quality. Pupils make consistently good progress as they move through the school and achieve well when their prior attainment is taken into account. The pupils' behaviour and their attitudes towards the school and their lessons are excellent. Relationships in the school are outstanding. The personal and social development of the pupils is excellent. The leadership and management of the school have a clear focus on the specific learning and social needs of the pupils. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching throughout the school is of high quality
- Overall, pupils make consistently good progress as they move through the school
- Standards in writing, music and art are particularly high
- The pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are excellent
- The pupils are very well cared for and the relationships within the school are excellent
- The management in this very small school is highly effective in promoting pupils' learning.

What could be improved

- The planning of pupils' work and the recording of their achievements in the junior class are currently effective; but some aspects are informal and rely on the memory of the teacher.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The overall rate of improvement since the last inspection in June 1996 has been good. The number of teaching and support staff has increased to accommodate the increase in the number of pupils

attending the school. There have been notable improvements in the quality of teaching. The planning of the curriculum has been reviewed to ensure that all subjects receive appropriate time. Since the last inspection, there has been a pattern of overall improvement in the percentage of pupils attaining the levels expected at the end of their junior years in the national tests, albeit with some variations from one year to another. The recently introduced national guidance for the teaching of pupils in the Reception Year (Foundation Stage) appropriately influences the planning of work for these young children. Improvements have been made to the assessment procedures that enable the academic progress and personal development of each child to be tracked systematically throughout their time in the school. However, these remain predominantly informal and rely on the memory of teachers. The school now sets academic targets for individual pupils, which are realistic and achievable.

STANDARDS

The results of the national tests completed by pupils at the end of Year 2 (Key Stage 1) and Year 6 (Key Stage 2) are not published in this report because of the very small number of pupils involved, and the resulting possibility of identifying individual pupils.

The very small numbers of pupils in any individual year group make meaningful comparisons for each year with national data unreliable. The inspectors, therefore, examined the overall trend in the school's performance over the last five years. They also tracked the progress and standards attained by individual pupils as they moved up through the school by reference to the pupils' previous work, portfolios of work and assessment records.

Over the last five years, the overall attainment of pupils in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science has improved. This trend in improvement since 1996 is above that seen nationally. These comparisons do, however, need to be treated with some caution because of the very small numbers of pupils involved, especially as there is considerable variation year-on-year.

The inspectors tracked the progress and achievements of individual pupils from when they joined the school. On the basis of the evidence available, there were clear indications that the pupils, including those with special educational needs, were making consistently good progress and were achieving good standards when compared with their previous attainment. Pupils make good progress in developing the skills of literacy and numeracy. In most of the lessons observed during the inspection, however, the pupils made very good gains in their learning.

The findings from the inspection confirm that by the end of both the infant and junior years, almost all pupils are currently attaining standards similar to those expected for their ages. However, there are just three pupils in Year 2 and five in Year 6. When the performance of pupils in other year groups is considered, a different picture emerges. Taking account of all pupils, standards in both the infant and junior stages are above the levels expected in English and some aspects of mathematics and science.

Overall in the school when taking account of all thirty-two pupils spread over seven school years, the standards achieved in creative writing, art and music are clearly well above those expected for their respective ages.

Academic targets are set for individual pupils to attain by the age of seven and eleven. These targets are based on the outcomes of annual assessments and the tracking of individual pupils' progress over time. The targets set are appropriate, realistic and challenging. The school is on track to achieve the targets forecast for the current Year 6 pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils enjoy their school life because the activities provided for them are interesting, varied and taught in a way that makes learning fun.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. The behaviour seen during the inspection was always of the highest standard. Pupils were courteous, respectful and sensitive to the needs of others at all times.
Personal development and relationships	The pupils' personal development is excellent. The quality of relationships in the school is outstanding.
Attendance	Very good.

These aspects of the school life are commendable strengths. The pupils are happy and relaxed, but respectful and keen to learn. Together they make a major contribution to the good progress that pupils make.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	Aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The inspectors visited this very small school for two and a half days and observed the teaching of sixteen sessions. Eight observations of teaching by qualified teachers were made and eight by teaching assistants. Although this is a small overall sample, it does provide an overview of the quality of teaching in the school.

The quality of teaching throughout the school is consistently very good. The teaching seen ranged from good to excellent. No teaching observed during the inspection was less than good. Sixty-two per cent of teaching (ten lessons) was very good or better and thirty-one per cent (five lessons) was excellent. This high quality of teaching of all pupils in the school is very commendable and has a very positive effect upon the progress, achievements and learning experiences of all the pupils. The school takes full advantage of the pupil / teacher ratio to ensure that the needs of all pupils are fully met, often through one-to-one support. The teaching observed during the inspection of the skills of

literacy and numeracy was very good

All the staff in the school work together as a team. This is a particular strength and helps to ensure that there is a common approach to helping the pupils to develop confidence and learn in a secure and settled environment. All members of the staff have high expectations of what the pupils can do and how they should behave.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The pupils experience a broad and rich curriculum. A programme of well-planned educational visits and visitors to the school, who bring a wealth of expertise, further enrich the curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The learning, personal and social development of pupils with special educational needs are very well provided for and help these pupils to make very good overall progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and personal development is consistently very good. Provision for the pupils' social development is excellent, and an area of particular strength.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent. The school is a very friendly and caring community in which all pupils are valued and supported.

The school works in close and effective partnership with parents of children attending the school. The staff of the school know the pupils and their families well and are very familiar with the particular strengths and development needs of each pupil. The pupils experience a rich and varied curriculum, which is carefully tailored to meet their individual needs.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The leadership and management of this very small school are effective and efficient, although generally informal.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Many of the governing body are new, but all governors are very involved in the life and work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school is clear about its strengths and weaknesses and takes appropriate action to support the improvement of pupils' development, both social and academic.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school makes very good use of all its resources. However, the limited space available does restrict the resources that the school can use.

The staff of the school are skilfully managed to ensure that their individual strengths are used to good effect. Accommodation is extremely limited and this does place some restrictions on the activities of the pupils and the resources that the school is able to use. However, the school is very adept at ensuring that pupils' learning is not adversely affected. The governing body effectively employs the 'Best Value' principles.

The school is run effectively and well, with a clear understanding of what works well and what needs to be developed. Many of the management procedures in this small school are informal, and written records, including those on pupils' work and progress are limited. This at times puts too much reliance on the memory of staff, particularly the headteacher.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school works closely with parents. • The children enjoy school. • The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. • The teaching is good. • The school is friendly and approachable. • Parents are kept well informed about how their children are getting on. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities offered outside lessons.

The inspectors fully support the positive views of the parents. The school does run a reasonably wide range of activities outside lessons. Many of these take place during the lunch break. The school has arranged activities with other small schools, such as team games, in its endeavour to overcome the limiting effect of the small number of pupils in the school and the restricted accommodation.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. This is a very small school with year groups ranging in size from just two to eight pupils. The number of pupils taking part in national tests or assessments in a particular year group is thus very small. The attainment of one or two pupils can, therefore, have a significant impact on the overall results. Consequently, the assessments of pupils' attainment on entry and through the national tests and assessments at the end of both key stages do not, for any one year, represent a full and accurate picture of the attainment of pupils within the school as a whole. This means that the analysis of pupils' performance and its comparison with national and similar schools' data should be treated with the utmost caution.
2. The inspection took place during the spring term. A team of three inspectors was present in the school for a total of six inspection days. At the time of the inspection, there was a national epidemic of foot and mouth disease. In this rural community, the resulting restrictions on movement meant that almost a third of the pupils were absent from school. This increased the difficulties involved in reaching any valid conclusions about the attainment levels of particular year groups. The judgements that inspectors were able to make are based on the evidence gained from observing lessons and talking to pupils and teachers. In addition, the inspectors sampled both the current work of pupils and their work over time as demonstrated in their books and folders kept from when they joined the school.
3. The school carries out assessments of pupils as soon as they start in the reception year. These assessments indicate that, although there are wide variations in what pupils know, understand and can do, their levels of attainment overall are broadly similar to those found nationally. Evidence gained from observing the youngest pupils, looking at their work and talking to them demonstrates that they make good progress in the areas of speaking and listening, reading and writing, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and personal, social and emotional development. By the time they start compulsory education, most have achieved the national goals set for their early learning in these areas of their work. There is insufficient evidence from the inspection to make judgements about standards in physical development.
4. The results of national tests and assessments at the end of the infant stage in 2000 show that the percentage of pupils attaining the level expected of pupils aged seven (Level 2), in reading, writing, mathematics and science was very high compared with the national average. However, these results are based on the performance of only three pupils. When the results for the last five years are taken together, a varying picture of overall attainment emerges. From a drop in 1997, standards have fluctuated in reading and generally risen in writing. In mathematics, the steady improvement prior to 1998 has increased dramatically since then.
5. Similar analysis applied to the outcomes of national tests and assessments at the end of the junior years in 2000 is based on the performance of just eight pupils. The percentage of

pupils reaching the level expected in English and science, (Level 4), was very high compared with the national average, whilst the percentage reaching the same level in mathematics was close to the national picture. Over the past five years, a pattern of overall improvement in the percentage of pupils attaining the level expected can be traced, albeit with some variations from one year to another. When the performance of all pupils in English, mathematics and science is considered, the trend in improvement since 1996 is above that seen nationally. The small number of pupils in each year group means that it is not possible to draw any meaningful conclusions about the differences in the attainment of boys and girls.

- 6 The findings from the inspection confirm that by the end of both the infant and junior years, almost all pupils are currently attaining standards similar to those expected for their ages. However, there are just three pupils in Year 2 and five in Year 6. When the performance of pupils in other year groups is considered, a different picture emerges. Taking account of all pupils, standards in both the infant and junior stages are above the levels expected in English and some aspects of mathematics and science. Standards in mathematics overall are similar to those found nationally. On the basis of the somewhat limited evidence available, standards in science also reflect national expectations overall. Pupils make good progress in their work in English, mathematics and science as they move through the school. Although, in most of the lessons observed during the inspection the pupils made very good gains in their learning. Their progress in developing the skills of creative writing is very good in all year groups. Inspection findings and the national test results indicate that the school has been successful in raising standards of attainment in these subjects since the time of the previous inspection in 1996.
- 7 In both the infant and junior classes pupils listen carefully to what their teachers and other pupils say. They speak clearly and with confidence, using a good range of vocabulary. They are willing to discuss their work and look for opportunities to engage in conversation with adults. All pupils are enthusiastic readers. Younger pupils use a range of strategies when reading, and are confident when tackling new words. Older pupils generally read fluently and with very good expression. They can talk about authors and express opinions about their preferences. Due to the very good support they receive, pupils with difficulties in learning make very good overall progress, achieving good standards in view of their learning difficulties. The skills of handwriting are taught systematically throughout the school. Younger pupils develop clear, well-formed letters of appropriate size. By the end of Year 2 most can write in accurately punctuated sentences. Throughout the junior years, good attention is paid to the different elements of writing. As a result, pupils' writing demonstrates a confident use of the structures and organisation of language. In many cases their work shows a mature awareness of the reader and the need to adjust the style of their writing to reflect its purpose. Handwriting is always legible and generally indicates the acquisition of a fluent, cursive style, whether using pencil or, as is more usual, pen and ink.
- 8 Pupils' attainment in mathematics is at least in line with the standard expected nationally. In number work very young pupils can count accurately to 10 and record simple addition facts. Older infant pupils work at an appropriate level when using money, and sequence numbers to 100. Pupils in Year 2 can count in twos, threes, fours, fives and tens, and understand the value of digits up to 1000. Junior pupils can calculate mentally with reasonable speed and

accuracy, using doubles, multiplication facts and positive and negative numbers. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 can measure accurately in centimetres. They can explain what perimeter is, and use the rule “length add width times 2” to calculate as well as measure the perimeter of four sided shapes such as squares and rectangles. Older pupils measure with precision in millimetres and express the outcomes as centimetres. They can describe the properties of a range of four-sided shapes, and explore successfully the likely size of the angles in a rhombus. They understand the concept of area, and apply this to the calculation of the area of triangles and irregular shapes.

- 9 In science, pupils make generally good progress as they move through the school. By the age of seven, they are able to classify materials such as paper, plastic, wood and polystyrene according to a range of properties including whether items are flexible, rigid, opaque or transparent. They use correct terminology and record their work using a variety of methods. Pupils in the later years of the junior stage are able to discuss their work and explain their findings, for example in relation to the exploration of force. They have a secure understanding of the notion of fair testing and how to ensure that an investigation reflects this. They compare their predictions with the outcomes of their investigations, and are able to identify reasons for any differences.
- 10 Pupils are able to apply and consolidate their numeracy skills well across a range of subjects, for example in their accurate measuring in science. Literacy skills are employed in the reading and writing tasks they complete in history, geography, music and art. Progress over time for most pupils in literacy and numeracy is good. In the lessons observed during the inspection, however, most pupils made very good gains in the development of the skills of literacy and numeracy. Progress in information and communication technology and religious education is satisfactory, and most infant and junior pupils attain the standards expected for their ages.
- 11 Pupils make very good progress in art and music throughout the school, achieving high standards. Due to limited evidence, it is not possible to make judgements about progress and the standards attained in history, geography, design and technology and physical education.
- 12 Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by their teachers and the teaching assistants. As a result, in the long term, they make very good overall progress towards achieving the individual targets set for them. However, observations at the time of the inspection indicated that they were making very good gains in their learning.
- 13 Since 1999 the school has set targets for pupils aged seven and eleven to attain in English. Similarly, targets for the oldest pupils have been determined for mathematics. The targets are based on the outcomes of regular assessments made each year and the tracking of individual pupils’ progress over time. Reflecting the abilities of each particular year group, the targets are adjusted annually. They are appropriate, realistic and challenging. The school is on track to achieve the targets forecast for the current Year 6 pupils.

Pupils’ attitudes, values and personal development

- 14 The pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school and learning are excellent. Their personal development is of a very high standard. The quality of all relationships within the school is outstanding. All of these are a strength of the school, and contribute to the good progress that pupils make in their learning. Attendance is well above the national average.
- 15 The pupils enjoy coming to school because the activities provided for them are interesting, varied and delivered in a way that makes learning fun. From the moment they arrive in the morning they want to be involved and make the most of the opportunities provided. The work they do voluntarily at home, in addition to the homework they are set, demonstrates this well. They enjoy learning, have a curiosity for knowledge and are eager to share and talk about what they have done. They are friendly, confident and courteous and make visitors to the school feel particularly welcome and part of the school "family". In this very small school, pupils of all ages work and play together very well. They work with concentration, perseverance and a determination to succeed, whether engaged as individuals, in pairs, or groups. This was very apparent in a music lesson when four pupils playing a range of instruments practised "Music for a Masked Ball" as an ensemble. In order to maintain the same tempo, each pupil followed an individual music score and at the same time had to listen to the others as they played their own instruments. They did this successfully.
- 16 Pupils under five settle very quickly in the secure situation where their brothers and sisters are either in the same room or next door. Reflecting the role model provided by older pupils, they behave very well indeed and are always keen to play an active part in the activities offered. Their willingness to learn and the developing independence they show help them move forward at a good pace in their learning.
- 17 The behaviour seen during the inspection, both in lessons and outside during playtimes and lunchtime, was always of the highest standard. Both the pupils and staff regard this as normal and to be expected. Consequently, it represents a solid foundation on which teachers can build their teaching and the learning that everyone comes to school to engage in. The pupils expect to work hard. They are enthusiastic in lessons, and respond very well to the activities provided. They show respect for their teachers, each other and the school building, materials and equipment. Parents feel that the school has high expectations of pupils' attitudes and behaviour and this was confirmed to be the case during the inspection. There have been no exclusions.
- 18 Pupils are aware of themselves as learners, and happily accept a share of the responsibility for ensuring they make progress. They welcome the opportunities their teachers provide to think about how well they have completed their work and reflect on how they could do better. For example, after an activity when pupils composed music on the theme of water, a pupil wrote, "If we had worked more as a group instead of listening to one person, I think we would have accomplished more". Pupils voluntarily take action to keep the classrooms tidy. They see what needs to be done and do it without reference to adults and with no idea of reward. Older pupils recognise their responsibility to set a good example for younger pupils. They understand the effect of their actions on others, for example modifying their

playground games when sharing the open space with infants. They fulfil their roles as monitors sensibly and with a sense of pride. From the time they join the school as under-fives, children welcome the chances they are given to acquire independence, for example when choosing the medium they will work in to decorate fish they have drawn during an art lesson. Opportunities to demonstrate their skills, for example by reading a poem they have written or singing a hymn alone in assembly, are seized upon eagerly with an obvious sense of pride but also of fun.

- 19 The pupils enjoy the close relationships with each other and the staff that are possible in this small school. Pupils want to please their teachers, acknowledging their expertise and striving to earn their approval. They know that they are valued as individuals. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect that underpins all that goes on. Pupils listen carefully to each other as well as to their teachers, and frequently make supportive and positive comments about each other's work. When a Year 5 pupil sang a hymn alone during an assembly, one pupil commented, "She's the next Charlotte Church!" and others agreed. No oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection. The overall feeling created is of an extended, happy family.
- 20 Attendance rates are consistently very good. For the year 1999/2000 attendance was very high compared with other schools. Authorised absence was below the national average, and there were no recorded instances of unauthorised absence. During the inspection, the attendance pupils was affected by the restrictions on movement imposed as a result of the national epidemic of foot and mouth disease. Registration is efficiently undertaken as a whole school, and used both as a social event and to mark the official start of the day. The small amount of lateness reflects local weather conditions rather than pupils' reluctance to attend.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- 21 The pupils are taught in two classes. The three reception children and the seven infant pupils are taught together in one very small classroom. The twenty-two junior pupils are taught in the second and slightly larger classroom. There is no other teaching space in the school except for a very small, narrow room which serves as the office, the kitchen, the staffroom, headteacher's office and withdrawal room for teaching up to three pupils. This room also forms the entrance to the school. Only one activity at a time can be undertaken in this small space. The limited accommodation for teaching and learning requires careful managing to ensure that it does not have a detrimental effect upon the quality of the education provided.
- 22 Sixteen teaching sessions were observed during the two and a half days the inspectors were visiting the school. Eight observations of teaching by qualified teachers and eight by teaching assistants were made. This is a small overall sample and is insufficient to make secure judgements about the quality of teaching in each subject of the school's curriculum. However, the sample does provide an overview of the quality of teaching in the school as a whole. The inspectors focused on the teaching of English and mathematics and observed the teaching of these subjects in both classes.

- 23 The quality of teaching seen in the school was consistently very good. In both classes it ranged from good to excellent. No teaching was observed that was less than good. This represents a considerable improvement on the quality of teaching reported following the last inspection of the school in 1996. Teaching in ten lessons (62%) was very good or better, in five of these lessons teaching was excellent. The quality of teaching in the remaining six lessons (37%) was good. This high quality of teaching by all members of staff is very commendable and has a very positive effect upon the progress, achievements and learning experiences of all the pupils.
- 24 At the time of the inspection there were three children in the reception year. These children were taught together with the seven infant pupils. The reception and infant pupils were taught by both qualified teachers and by both teaching assistants each week. The work of the class is very ably managed and organised by the part-time teaching. The quality of teaching in this class was very good, ranging from good to excellent. The children benefited from the four adults' very good subject knowledge and awareness of the needs of young learners, together with their ability to make learning relevant and fun. For example, the pupils benefit from the expertise of one of the part-time teaching assistants who is a music specialist. Her love of music, talent as a musician and sense of humour, combined with her very good teaching skills, made music in the school hugely enjoyable and helped the pupils to attain high standards in the subject.
- 25 The individual learning and development needs of these young pupils were clearly understood and met by all those involved in their education. The children were secure in the "family" environment, were confident and enjoyed the relaxed and close relationship with their teachers. They were encouraged to contribute to the organisation of the lessons and were gaining independence through being offered choices in how they might complete their work. The teachers' planning of work for the reception children reflected the different areas of learning appropriately. The teachers' planning for the Years 1 and 2 infant pupils was appropriately based on the national requirements for pupils of their age.
- 26 A number of factors contributed to the high quality of teaching of these young pupils. For example, the activities set for the pupils were closely matched to their individual learning needs and the teachers took full advantage of the favourable pupils / teacher ratio to work with individual pupils, encouraging and motivating them. In addition, the close, trusting relationships between the pupils and the teachers helped the pupils to feel secure in tackling new and challenging activities. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils, but at the same time make the experience of learning enjoyable.
- 27 Like the pupils in the infant class, the pupils in the junior class benefit from being taught by both teachers and both teaching assistants each week. The quality of teaching in the junior class was very good overall and ranged from good to excellent. A total of nine lessons were observed in the junior class and included English, mathematics, science, music, art and history. A common element in the teaching that made it so effective was the way in which teachers moved individual pupils on in their learning in a sensitive, but purposeful and challenging manner. In the lessons observed, the teachers had high expectations of what the pupils should achieve. The teachers demonstrated a very good knowledge of what

individual pupils know and can do. Work was set that appropriately stretched each pupil, without being so difficult that he / she lost heart and became demoralised. For example, in an English lesson, seven different levels of work were set to accommodate the needs of the pupils. In addition, the teacher provided individual assistance for pupils, helping them to overcome difficulties.

- 28 Lessons in the junior class were well organised, with the pupils being very clear about what they had to achieve. For example, in an English lesson designed to help the pupils to develop their literacy skills, the teacher explained clearly what he wanted each pupil to do. He treated the pupils with great respect and conducted the lesson in a very calm but purposeful manner. The pupils responded well, demonstrating considerable independence and maturity in managing their own learning. When they were required to work in small groups, they did so in a sensible and constructive way. The teacher of this lesson knew the pupils very well and was able to play on their strengths to give them confidence, whilst challenging them to think and learn. This promoted very good learning.
- 29 The teaching in the junior class is very effective in helping the pupils to make consistently good progress over time. In most the lessons observed during the inspection the pupils made very good gains in their learning. Although the approach to recording what has been taught and what the pupils have learned is mainly informal.
- 30 The skills of literacy and numeracy were effectively taught during the inspection. The teachers were guided by the strategies recommended nationally for teaching the skills of literacy and numeracy. The school had appropriately modified these strategies so that they more effectively met the needs of the wide age and ability range in each class.
- 31 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs was very good. Class work is carefully tailored to their specific needs and they receive much one-to-one adult support. For example, during one English lesson in the junior class, a teaching assistant with particular expertise in the English language worked with a pupil helping him to plan a piece of creative writing. With this focused and skilled support, the pupil made very good progress and was able to continue the activity on his own.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

- 32 The school provides a broad, reasonably balanced and rich curriculum that meets statutory requirements. This represents improvement since the previous inspection, when the balance of time spent on English, mathematics and science by infant pupils was judged to be unsatisfactory. The wide range of activities and experiences accurately reflects the school's stated aims and values and the pupils' interests and abilities. National and locally available guidance has been considered and appropriately modified to create a carefully structured plan for the teaching of the curriculum to all pupils regardless of age, gender or ability.
- 33 Literacy and numeracy are taught each day. All other subjects are included in weekly timetables, mainly as separate lessons, although history, geography and some elements of

design and technology are combined in a topic approach. Topics are generally planned on a termly basis. By giving a particular subject focus to each topic, the staff ensure that over time pupils acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding related to each subject. The locally agreed syllabus provides a structure for the planning of lessons in religious education. The teaching of art and music is organised in topics delivered by specialist teaching assistants and is extremely successful in providing curriculum opportunities of the highest quality in these areas.

- 34 There are only two classes in the school. The infant class contains all pupils aged 4 to 7 years (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2), and the junior class contains all pupils aged 7 to 11 years (Years 3 to 6). The school has adopted a combination of longer-term planning approaches to overcome the difficulties posed by the wide age-range in each class. Thus in the junior years most subjects are taught to a four-year plan, ensuring that the content is not repeated as pupils move from Year 3 to Year 6. The teaching of skills is related very closely to each pupil's stage of development, and matched to individual needs whenever possible. Swimming is taught as part of the programme for physical education in the junior years.
- 35 Policies for each subject give a brief outline of what pupils will experience each year. In addition, there are policies covering Early Years and liaison with other schools. The planning of the curriculum for infant pupils is detailed, structured and designed to build on what pupils have already learned. It enables the teacher to plan individual lessons that reflect this structure and effectively move pupils forward in their learning. This represents improvement since the previous inspection. However, the planning of the junior stage curriculum is less detailed. Its written form lacks the information necessary to ensure that a teacher new to the school could implement the curriculum effectively so as to enable all pupils to make progress from what they had already learned. It relies heavily on the memory and knowledge of the teacher who currently teaches the pupils for the majority of the time. Arrangements for the monitoring of planning in this two-teacher school are informal, relying on the daily discussions that take place about what pupils are to experience.
- 36 The curriculum is enriched by a well-planned programme of visits to places of interest and visitors who bring a wealth of expertise to school for pupils to benefit from. In addition to day visits to such institutions as the Halle Orchestra and Carlisle Cathedral, residential visits occur regularly and are very successful in enhancing pupils' personal and social skills such as self-organisation, group awareness and independence, as well as supporting the curriculum. The very secure knowledge teachers have of individual pupils and their home circumstances is used to very good effect in meeting pupils' needs in relation to health, sex and personal safety issues including drug misuse.
- 37 The curriculum planned for pupils below the age of compulsory education has been amended to reflect the national goals for early learning. These pupils are taught alongside pupils aged six and seven. The constraints of the building limit the flexibility and options available for the organisation of their learning. This does pose difficulties in providing these pupils – currently there are three – with the structured play, practical activities and physical development opportunities that their stage of growth warrants. The school does what it can

to compensate for these shortcomings. For example, a game approach is frequently used in many lessons. Drama, such as playing the role of soldiers in the Crimean War, stretches pupils' imaginations and encourages them to act out their ideas. Visits to places such as the Sands Centre in Carlisle give pupils the chance to use climbing apparatus and large construction equipment. The school's music teacher visits the playgroup attended by most pupils. This link is useful in helping to prepare pupils for their introduction to school.

- 38 The teaching of literacy and numeracy, whilst clearly reflecting the national strategies, has necessarily and successfully been modified to meet the school's specific circumstances. In the infant class, the teacher maintains a planning book covering the term's work, broken down into weekly units. A three-year rolling programme of content is effective in avoiding repetition of activities, although points for learning are revisited regularly. Whole class input is then geared to individual pupil's needs through the teaching of pupils in three distinct groups, sometimes with the support of a teaching assistant or parent helper. These arrangements are effective in moving pupils on at a good rate in their learning. Junior age pupils are taught whenever possible as at least two groups. Although these are usually based on pupils' ages, the groupings are reviewed annually and adjusted to reflect the overall composition of the class. The specific expertise of a teaching assistant is used to very good effect when she teaches creative writing to these groups on a regular basis. Lessons are very clearly focused on either reading or writing. Although the planning is less detailed, pupils' good progress is the result of the teacher's very secure knowledge of their needs and what he intends them to learn.
- 39 The constraints of the building are a limiting factor affecting the activities provided other than lessons during the school day. Nevertheless, with the support of parents, pupils take part in skills coaching in football and netball and activities including matches at another school. The headteacher provides literacy booster classes after school.
- 40 The school is passionate in its determination that all pupils will be given the same opportunities to engage in learning activities appropriate to their needs and interests. It is for this reason, for example, that all pupils are offered the chance to learn to play a musical instrument, regardless of their ability. Sensitive management of this situation ensures that all pupils experience success and are encouraged to persevere. The very good level of support made available to pupils who find it difficult to learn is successful in giving them access to the full range of curriculum opportunities and ensuring that they make progress at a rate similar to other pupils of their age. At the time of the previous inspection, the school was criticised for failing sufficiently to meet the needs of pupils of above average ability. In a variety of ways, for example enabling a pupil to work with older pupils in mathematics, the school has succeeded in improving the opportunities it offers such pupils. There were occasional examples noted of work in mathematics that did not sufficiently stretch the highest attaining pupils.
- 41 The school has joined with other local small schools to create a group offering one another mutual support. This takes the form of jointly planned residential visits, sharing resources and adding to project loan resources available through the Library Service. An example of this successful collaboration is the joint purchase of a CD-ROM system from which pupils

benefit directly when engaging in class activities and personal research.

- 42 Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and personal development is consistently very good. Provision for social development is excellent, and an area of particular strength.
- 43 In addition to moments of quiet reflection for pupils during assemblies, the curriculum provides a dimension to pupils' experience that goes beyond the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding. Through the richness of the experiences teachers provide, and the opportunities for discussion these give rise to, pupils gain awareness of their own reactions and feelings to particular issues. A good example is the study of war that pupils undertook through exploring Picasso's painting "Guernica". Here, they were asked to identify their own reaction to the horror depicted. Their work, and the way they still discuss it, demonstrates the depth of feeling they experienced and the self-knowledge they gained from the activity.
- 44 The school is very successful in developing in its pupils a clear understanding of right and wrong, as well as the foundations of a code of behaviour and set of values to equip them for the responsibilities of adult life. In their dealings both with each other and the pupils, all adults in the school set an excellent example for the pupils to follow. The family atmosphere promotes a sense of security but also of personal responsibility, as the impact on others of what each individual does is so immediately apparent.
- 45 The excellence of the school's provision for pupils' social development is a direct reflection of the quality of the relationships found within the school. Pupils in this school know they are valued for the individuals they are by all the adults there. They are also aware of the consistently high expectations the school has of them. Because they feel secure and part of the family community, they are caring of each other, thoughtful in their responses and eager to please. They work together easily and with a willingness to share, modifying their own wishes and views in response to others. As a result of the opportunities given them to gain independence, they are becoming self-reliant, articulate and confident young people.
- 46 In this rural and remote community, pupils come into contact, through the rich experiences their teachers provide, with cultures and lifestyles not represented locally but found in abundance in the wider society. Explorations of literature, music, drama, art and history and lifestyles of other peoples all make valuable contributions to the richness of pupils' experiences. For example, the stimulus for the puppets made by younger pupils during the inspection was a Javanese puppet made by their teacher. The school's very good provision for pupils' cultural development succeeds in preparing pupils for life in a multi-cultural society, as well as giving them a clear understanding of the traditions of their own culture

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 47 The school is a very friendly and caring community in which all pupils are valued and supported. All staff set high standards for pupils and act as very good role models. They have a clear understanding of pupils' academic and personal progress and very effectively promote exceptionally high standards of discipline and good behaviour.

- 48 The school ensures that the welfare of pupils is excellent. Arrangements for first aid and for medicines in school are good. There are appropriate arrangements in place to ensure pupils' health and safety. Regular health and safety checks are carried out and a governor has recently accepted responsibility for health and safety. There are no major health and safety issues outstanding. Teachers pay good attention to safe practice in lessons and pupils are taught to be aware of their own safety and that of others. The school has no playground. Pupils play on the common land surrounding the school. Staff ensure that pupils are very well supervised at all times when they are outside the building and that pupils know what to do on the infrequent occasions when traffic approaches.
- 49 The school follows the Local Educational Authority's procedures for child protection and all staff know these. The head teacher has responsibility for child protection issues and has received appropriate training in child protection issues. Liaison with outside agencies is effective.
- 50 The school has in place a wide range of strategies for successfully assessing and monitoring pupils' academic progress, including the Early Years baseline assessments, annual standard assessment tests and regular standardised reading tests. Information from these assessments is used well when teachers plan for future learning and this represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection, when this area was judged to be a weakness. However, there is inconsistency in the way records of assessment are kept, with the best practice in the early years and infant class. In the junior classroom, recording of assessment is informal, which limits its effectiveness, particularly if the permanent teacher is away. This has already been identified as an area for development by the school. However, work in lessons is in practice well matched to pupils' ability. Good records are kept of pupils' performance and progress in the infant class.
- 51 The school identifies any special educational needs at an early stage, and draws up individual plans for the pupils concerned. These plans enable staff to focus appropriate individual support very effectively; and pupils with special educational needs receive good levels of help that ensure they make good progress. The school carries out regular reviews of all pupils with special educational needs and complies with the conditions of the statements for the pupils with formal statements of need.
- 52 Procedures for monitoring behaviour and for promoting good behaviour are excellent and firmly based on the extremely high expectations of all staff. The success of the procedures represents a major strength of the school's work. There is a very high level of consistency in the way teachers manage behaviour and they use praise extremely effectively. This ensures that pupils are very well motivated. Pupils are almost always kept on task in the classroom and disruptive behaviour is not tolerated by staff or by the pupils themselves. The management of behaviour is generally unobtrusive so it is rare for lesson time to be lost. The ethos of the school ensures that little bullying occurs and pupils are confident that there is always an adult to turn to in time of need.
- 53 The school monitors attendance well. The expectations for the reporting of absence are

made very clear to parents, who almost always comply with them. The school promotes the importance of regular attendance to parents and is successful in achieving high levels of attendance. On the rare occasions when parents have not contacted the school to explain an absence, the secretary telephones home, usually by 9.30 a.m. The school has appropriate procedures in place to monitor punctuality but lateness is rare.

- 54 Teachers know pupils and their families very well and use this knowledge effectively and sensitively to guide their pastoral care. Across the school, pupils' personal development is effectively monitored and in the infant classroom this is well recorded. In the junior classroom monitoring is less formal, though of a very high standard. Pupils are confident to approach staff with any problems and know they are valued in school. Pupils with special educational needs receive well-targeted individual help and support. This enables them to make good and often very good progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 55 Parents support the school wholeheartedly. Nearly all families were represented at the parents' meeting with the registered inspector prior to the inspection and twenty-nine questionnaires were returned expressing the views of the parents. This indicates that all families with a child at the school return a questionnaire. Parents strongly believe that their children are happy to go to school. They consider that their children achieve their full potential. Parents are very supportive of the staff and consider that their children are very well taught. They believe that the school monitors progress, both academic and social, very carefully. It is seen as a very caring school where all children are well known as individuals. Parents also appreciate the excellent standards of behaviour, the moral values and respect for others fostered by the school. A significant number of parents have chosen to send their children to the school in preference to other schools in the locality because of its good reputation. Inspection evidence fully supports these positive views of the school. There were no major issues of concern arising from the parents' meeting or the parents' questionnaire.
- 56 The school provides a good range of information for parents. The prospectus and annual report of governors contain the full range of required information. Prospective parents are welcome to visit the school with their child. Very positive relationships are established with all parents and maintained through regular contact.
- 57 The school welcomes parents who wish at any time to discuss their child's progress or any concerns they may have. Parents are confident that any concerns are taken seriously. Two parents' consultation evenings are held each year, one towards the end of the autumn term and one after annual reports are issued in the summer term. Attendance at consultation evenings is good. The annual reports demonstrate clearly the excellent knowledge teachers have of their pupils and provide a clear picture of each pupil's strengths. However, progress is not consistently well reported in terms of specific gains in skills, knowledge and understanding in each subject and targets for improvement are not consistently included. The best practice is in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Other subjects including religious education share a page of the report; which prevents teachers

from giving any detail. Most comments on subjects such as history, art, music and physical education are restricted to a single sentence. This provides limited information to parents. However, the very high quality of marking seen in pupils' books ensures that parents are well informed about progress and about what their child needs to do in order to improve his or her work. Coupled with the excellent informal contact between parents and staff, parents are in practice very well informed and in a good position to help their child improve.

- 58 Parents provide considerable support for the work of the school. Some come in on a regular basis to help in the classroom. Others provide transport for visits, such as to Carlisle cathedral, and to sports activities at other schools. A parent runs the netball sessions after school. Very good support was provided recently when a parent brought a tame raven into school to stimulate some outstanding creative writing and art work in the junior class. The resulting book is being sold to support school funds. Parents make the costumes and sets for the school productions. The annual pantomime and other school events are very well supported, not only by parents but also by the community as a whole. The school benefits greatly from the fund raising activities of the Friends Association. In recent years, the association has raised money for computers and currently the focus is on the proposed extension.
- 59 Pupils take books home on a daily basis. All pupils have a reading record that provides a clear record of the books they have read and the progress they are making. Both parents and staff make effective use of the reading record, especially to encourage and praise. Other homework is set but there is no timetable for regular, weekly homework. Parents are uncertain about the amount and frequency of homework but are confident that the teachers always check it.
- 60 The school is very successful in developing a real partnership with all parents and benefits from the high levels of support it receives from them. This area of the school's work is a strength and was recognised as such when the school was last inspected in 1996.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 61 This very small rural school is effectively and efficiently led and managed. The headteacher is an effective leader. His quiet and sensitive approach is well matched to the specific needs of this small school. He is well respected by the parents and staff who appreciate his open, approachable and friendly leadership style. Under his leadership the school has made significant improvements since its last inspection and is well situated to improve further in a balanced and well-considered manner.
- 62 The headteacher is the only full-time member of staff. The systems and procedures that are in place for the day-to-day management of the school reflect its size and character and are appropriately informal and enable the school to operate without undue paperwork and time consuming administrative activities. The school is very effective in managing the limited accommodation and ensuring that it does not have a significant detrimental effect upon the education of the pupils.

- 63 All members of staff are fully involved in the life and work of the school and take an active part in supporting its development. The part-time teacher takes overall responsibility for the management of the reception and infant pupils, and plays a major part in the development of the school's curriculum, policies and practices. The two part-time teaching assistants also make major contributions to the development of the curriculum and school policies. The staff, including the non-teaching staff, work together as an effective team and ably support the work of the headteacher in the smooth running of the school. The school staff team has a clear, shared commitment to improving the education provided by the school and has the capacity to succeed.
- 64 Many members of the governing body are new. However, they are very involved in the work and life of the school and are effectively led by the Chairman, who is very knowledgeable about the responsibilities of the governing body and the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties, has a clear long-term vision for the school and takes a full and active part in shaping the direction of the school's development.
- 65 The school evaluates the performance of its pupils and makes comparisons with national expectations and averages. The very small number of pupils in each year group does mean that any comparisons are treated with great caution. However, the school does use the information to monitor its overall rate of improvement.
- 66 The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Some weaknesses, such as the limitations of accommodation, are difficult to resolve in the short term. However, the school's development plan does correctly identify the important areas for development.
- 67 The governing body sets the school budget after careful consideration of the financial needs of the school's development plan. The finances available to the school are appropriately allocated to staffing, resources for learning, premises and improvements. The governing body has in place effective financial control and administration procedures. The school is fully aware of the principles of 'best value' and employs them to good effect.
- 68 The effective leadership and management of the school have a very positive effect upon the quality of the education provided. The school provides very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 69 This is a very effective small rural school. It has correctly identified areas for improvement in its development plan and should continue to follow this programme for improvement.
- 70 As a priority, the school should develop and introduce procedures that ensure that more detailed written records are kept of teachers' planning of pupils' work and of pupils' achievements in the junior class.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	16
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
31	31	37	0	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	32
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		4

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	3.1
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	32
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y R – Y 6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18
Average class size	16

Education support staff: Y R – Y 6

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	21

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	99195
Total expenditure	98295
Expenditure per pupil	2730
Balance brought forward from previous year	1223
Balance carried forward to next year	2123

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	32
Number of questionnaires returned	29

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	79	17	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	79	21	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	76	24	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	59	31	10	0	0
The teaching is good.	90	10	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	90	10	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	93	7	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	90	10	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	93	7	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	90	10	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	83	17	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	24	21	0	0

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

- 71 This is a very small two-class school with a total of thirty-two pupils on roll. At the time of the inspection, there were three children in the reception year, although due to the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the locality, only two were present. Prior to entering the reception class in September, most children have attended a local playgroup. Children in the reception year are taught in the same class as the rest of the infant-aged pupils.
- 72 From evidence provided by the class teacher and the assessments made early in the autumn term, there are indications that, although there are wide variations in what individual pupils know, understand and can do, their levels of attainment overall have been in recent years broadly similar to those found nationally. Evidence gained through observing lessons, looking at the children's work and talking to them and their teacher indicates that these young children make good progress in the areas of speaking and listening, reading and writing, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and personal, social and emotional development. By the time they start compulsory education, most have achieved the national goals set for their early learning in these areas of their work. There is insufficient evidence from the inspection to make judgements about overall standards in physical development.
- 73 The children are taught during each week by both of the school's qualified teachers and the two teaching assistants. From observations of lessons seen during the inspection, the teaching they experienced ranged from good to excellent, and was of very good quality overall. The specific expertise in music and art of the teaching assistants was exploited well. The children benefit from all adults' very good subject knowledge and awareness of the needs of young learners, together with their ability to make learning fun. Pupils are secure in the "family" environment and quickly become confident, enjoying the relaxed and close relationships with their teachers. They are encouraged to contribute to the organisation of lessons and gain independence through being offered choices in how they will complete their work.
- 74 Teachers' planning of work for these pupils reflects the different areas of learning appropriately, and is based on the school's policy for the Early Years. This represents improvement since the time of the previous inspection. The small size of the infant class – there are eleven pupils aged four to seven – means that much of the teaching and learning is matched to individual pupils' needs. Resources are easily accessible and pupils are expected to obtain them for themselves. However, the limited space available and the needs of older pupils in the class do restrict the opportunities for structured play, dressing up and role-play, sand and water exploration and the use of large play equipment and balancing and climbing apparatus. The school does what it can to compensate for these limitations.

Personal, social and emotional development

- 75 In this very small school where a family atmosphere permeates school life, children in their reception year find it easy to settle and quickly feel secure, conscious of their older brothers and sisters in either the same room or next door. The close relationships established between the children and all adults are the key to the successful development of the children's social skills. Whether working alone, in a small group or in the larger whole school situation, the children are confident to take part. They learn school routines quickly, and know what is expected of them. As a result, they work hard and with good levels of concentration and perseverance. Their enjoyment and enthusiasm, for example during a literacy lesson when they supplied the correct letter sounds for 'Croaker', a confused tiger puppet, are indications of how secure they are as individuals within the school community. They welcome opportunities to become independent, such as choosing which medium to work in during an art lesson, and clearing up later on.

Communication, language and literacy

- 76 Pupils listen well and are able to follow instructions. They speak clearly and confidently, using a vocabulary appropriate to their age. They join in class and whole-school discussions, expressing their ideas and communicating well with others about the work they are doing. They listen to, enjoy and retell stories, their comments on events and characters demonstrating their understanding and interest. They make a good start in reading, and are able to name individual letters and the sounds they make. They have begun to put sounds together to make simple words, and recognise by sight a growing number of words. Through their enjoyment of the stories they are told, they are already developing a love of literature including poetry. They show good control of writing tools and can form letters correctly. They tell an adult what they want to write, and this is then written for them. As a result, they feel ownership of their work and are keen to write more. From writing over the teacher's words, they progress to copying accurately what she has written. They attempt to write simple words independently, and are very proud of what they achieve.

Mathematics development

- 77 The children count confidently and accurately from zero to ten and beyond. They have a secure understanding of the concept of addition, reinforced through the singing and action games they enjoy. During a very effective lesson observed, a child created the mathematical statement $5 + 2 + 3 = 10$. The children recognise the value of coins and, in a shop game, bought and gave the correct change for items up to 10p. With help they perform simple subtraction calculations. They are already working beyond the goals set for the end of their reception year. The attention they receive as a small group when taught by either the teacher or the teaching assistant is successful in promoting their good rate of progress.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- 78 The children's knowledge of the world in which they live and beyond is good for their age. Through role-play when they became soldiers wounded during the Crimean War, they have a growing awareness of the past and some important figures who lived long ago, for example Florence Nightingale. They use their senses to explore their environment, expressing their likes and dislikes of what is around them, and increasing their understanding of the similarities and differences between such materials as wood, plastic and paper. They can name different parts of their bodies and are aware of how these features vary, for example by comparing the colour of each other's eyes. They are familiar with computers and how these can be used to help them work.

Physical development

- 79 The children demonstrate good levels of control in their use of writing, drawing, cutting and painting tools. They have many opportunities to develop these skills through activities planned across the subjects of the curriculum. They use the outside play area confidently and with appropriate awareness of others during lunch times and breaks in the day. Opportunities for them to engage in activities involving larger apparatus and play equipment are very limited due to the constraints of the building and lack of storage space. No physical education lessons were seen during the inspection. There is therefore insufficient evidence on which to base secure judgements about the children's levels of overall body control and co-ordination.

Creative development

- 80 This is a particularly effective aspect of provision. The richness of the curriculum they enjoy constantly stimulates the children's imaginations and enables them to express their ideas through opportunities for discussion, art, music and design. High expectations of what they will achieve encourage children to take risks in how they respond, and they grow in confidence as a result. They explore colour, texture, shape and form, for example when painting fish to use as puppets in a story they will later act out. They show good control of their voices when singing, joining in with older pupils to clap a rhythm and adding movements to a hymn during assembly. Through regularly observing and listening to instruments such as recorders, violin and guitar being played, they have a clear awareness of the different ways in which sounds can be produced, and use this knowledge when creating their own musical responses to poems, stories and visual stimuli.

ENGLISH

- 81 In this thirty-two pupil school, the number of pupils taking part in national assessments in any one year is very small. The performance of one pupil can have a marked impact on overall results. Similarly, inspection findings relating to standards attained at the end of the infant and junior stages are based on equally small numbers of pupils in any one year. The analysis of pupils' performance in such assessments or based on their current work, together with any conclusions drawn, should therefore be treated with great caution.

- 82 Evidence from pupils' class work and portfolios and talking to them about their work indicates that their progress as they move through the school is good. Pupils currently aged seven and eleven are attaining standards close to those found nationally at the end of the infant and junior stages. However, when the performance of all pupils in this very small school is taken into account, the standards attained by most pupils in English are above the levels expected for their ages. The standards of their imaginative writing and of their speaking and listening skills are high.
- 83 The inspectors' judgements about current standards at the end of the infant stage reflect improvement on the results of national assessments for the year 2000. No pupils attained the higher Level 3 in either reading or writing. These results are also reflected in the teachers' assessments of the pupils.
- 84 Also in the year 2000, pupils aged eleven attained standards in English that were very high compared with the national average; and were well above average when compared with those attained by similar schools. Their results compared with their test results when they were seven indicate a good rate of progress. The number of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 was very high compared with the national average. Inspection findings for the standards of the oldest pupils currently in school generally reflect these recent results.

Speaking and listening

- 85 All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in developing speaking and listening skills. As a result, they are confident speakers in a variety of situations and effective listeners. In both the infant and junior classes, pupils listen carefully to what their teachers and other pupils say. In a climate where teachers welcome their contributions to discussions and encourage them to express their thoughts, their comments show respect and sensitivity to the feeling of others. During a literacy session when young pupils were practising writing individual letters, a pupil said of another's work, "Hey, . that's a good letter b". They speak clearly and with confidence, using a good range of vocabulary that all teachers are skilled in finding opportunities to extend. During the sharing of the story "The Whale's Song", the teacher invited infant pupils to discuss the use of words such as *jetty*, *dawn* and *pounding*. She successfully probed their level of understanding, enabling all to gain increased awareness of the meaning and use of these words. In a whole school assembly, the teacher's questioning of pupils' understanding of the phrase *following his nose* had a similar impact on all pupils' learning. Pupils are willing to discuss their work and look for opportunities to engage in conversation with adults. They ask questions to clarify their understanding – a pupil asked, "What does homeless mean?" and older pupils who had written about this the previous day were eager to explain. Pupils of all ages are confident to speak in a whole school situation and in front of a large audience. Their participation in school dramatic productions is an example of this. Their confidence in speaking and their willingness to listen to and respect what other say add significantly to the progress they make in gaining knowledge, skills and understanding in all subjects.

Reading

- 86 All pupils, including those at an early stage or who find reading difficult, are enthusiastic readers, and several asked to read to the inspectors. Most young pupils are confident when tackling new words. They use a range of strategies when reading, including recognising words by sight, putting individual letter sounds together and using pictures as clues to the meaning of the text. A six-year old pupil read the words *illustrated*, *lanterns* and *candlelight* fluently. However, pupils rarely read a whole sentence in order to gain meaning of a word within it that they do not know. Pupils with special educational needs use a limited range of strategies and rely more on adult help. They nevertheless make good and sometimes very good progress due to the very good support they receive, and achieve standards that are good in view of their learning difficulties. By the age of seven, most pupils can make sensible predictions about what might happen in a story. They express opinions about their favourite part of a story, for example when reviewing the book ‘Kipper’s Toy Box’. When reading non-fiction texts, they are familiar with and use an index. They use dictionaries to help them in writing tasks. All pupils appreciate being given choices about what they will read. Older pupils generally read fluently and with very good expression, paying good attention to punctuation such as speech marks and using different voices for characters. During shared reading time, junior pupils sat very quietly, reading independently and with concentration. They can talk about authors and express opinions about their preferences. The range of material they read extends to newspapers and articles in magazines. They use a dictionary and thesaurus with ease, and most understand and use the skills of skimming and scanning. Reading records show that pupils read regularly at school and at home. They recognise the importance of this; one pupil commented, ‘By practice you get better, like playing the recorder’. The positive comments added by teachers and parents to pupils’ reading diaries are a good example of the way home and school work together to support pupils in their learning.

Writing

- 87 All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress throughout the school. They achieve good standards in handwriting and high standards in their imaginative and independent writing.
- 88 In handwriting, most younger pupils can write clear, well-formed letters of appropriate size, although one or two reverse letters such as *b*, *c* and *p*. They copy accurately and can rearrange a number of words to create and write a sentence such as ‘I like to play all day’. They make good progress and within a few weeks can arrange and order a number of sentences to tell a story. They begin to join letters in Year 2, showing appropriate control and good understanding of how individual letters are joined. By the end of the infant stage, most pupils can write in sentences, using capital letters, full stops and sometimes commas, exclamation and speech marks accurately. Their spelling of simple words is generally accurate, and their attempts at harder words reflect their secure knowledge of letter sounds. They sustain a piece of writing over a week, for example keeping a diary about the daily growth of seeds they have planted. Opportunities to practise and develop their writing skills are provided in other subjects of the curriculum, for example when they wrote an account of

a visit to Silloth and told the story of Princess Elizabeth through a sequence of illustrated events.

- 89 Throughout the junior years, good attention is paid to the different elements of writing. Handwriting is always legible and generally indicates the acquisition of a fluent, cursive style, whether using pencil or, as is more usual, pen and ink. Pupils work regularly through specific grammar and comprehension exercises to develop their understanding of how written language is organised and structured. They are given opportunities to apply this knowledge to an increasingly wide range of writing tasks covering a variety of purposes. These include reports of school events such as netball and football matches they have played and the infant production “The Wild Thing”. Their accounts are enlivened by reflective comments such as, “I felt I knew a lot about Victoria from the way she spoke”. After reading extracts from the diary of Anne Frank, their attempts to write their own version demonstrate empathy with the author. Poetry written following a visit to Dufton Church is written in a style appropriate to the subject. A Year 4 pupil wrote, “Upstairs in the balcony all is nice and quiet. Night comes and the church is still. Scented roses come alive.”
- 90 In addition, pupils also write instructions, play scripts, appreciations of books, music and art they have experienced and extended narratives. They plan, draft, revise and proof read their work, often using word processing skills to produce final copies. Their use of this drafting process is an improvement in practice since the previous inspection. The work of older pupils in response to the rich stimulation they experience is of high quality. A Year 5 pupil wrote of homelessness, “I gazed up at the night sky. It looked like velvet with crystals embedded in it. A single crystal-like tear rolled down my cheek.” In many cases the pupils’ work shows a mature awareness of the reader and the need to adjust the style of their writing to reflect its purpose.
- 91 Overall, the quality of teaching in English is very good. In the school as a whole, the teaching seen was never less than good, and on several occasions it was very good. This represents improvement since the previous inspection. Evidence gained from looking at collections of pupils’ writing and the work in their books indicates that the teaching of the skills of creative writing is an area of particular strength. Teachers cope well with the wide age and ability range in each class. Good use of teaching assistants and parents enable pupils to be taught in very small groups for much of the time. This provides opportunities for work to be matched closely to individual needs. The structure of lessons is based on the guidance contained within the National Literacy Strategy, suitably adapted to meet the specific circumstances of the school. The skills of handwriting are taught systematically throughout the school. Reading receives appropriate emphasis and pupils are given a good range of strategies with which to tackle unknown words. Lessons generally have good pace and employ a range of teaching approaches that hold pupils’ interest and attention. Good challenge is provided for older pupils, for example when they are limited to using only a hundred words to describe homelessness. On occasions, one or two younger junior pupils struggle to complete tasks pitched at a level slightly beyond their capabilities. The teaching of creative writing in the junior class is inspirational. As part of their study of Cumbria’s Celtic past, and following a visit to the Rheged Discovery Centre, pupils had the opportunity to paint and write poetry about Zeus. A raven brought into school as follow-up to the visit.

Their work is brought together as a publication entitled “ An Unkindness of Ravens”. The richness of the content matches the quality of the experience, and reflects the teacher’s skill in questioning pupils to challenge their thinking and probe their understanding. Teachers’ written comments on pupils’ work are generally helpful and informative, giving pupils a clear idea of how to improve.

- 92 All pupils respond with enthusiasm to the activities they take part in. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are consistently very good. They are keen to discuss their work and share their ideas. They appreciate the fun that teachers introduce into lessons, and are prepared to work hard and persevere in order to improve. They take responsibility for their part in their learning, and recognise when their work needs to improve. They are aware of their teachers’ high expectations of them and enjoy the challenge this represents.
- 93 Written plans for the teaching of English vary in their content and usefulness. In the infant class, planning is structured and detailed, giving a clear indication of what different groups of pupils will be taught. By contrast, plans for the junior class are brief and lack the information necessary to enable anyone other than the usual class teacher to teach effectively. They rely too heavily on the memory and knowledge of this teacher. The assessment of what pupils have learned and recordings of the progress they have made follow a similar pattern. The infant teacher’s practice represents improvement since the previous inspection.

MATHEMATICS

- 94 The small number of pupils in each year group does mean that any comparison of their performance in national assessments with national averages needs to be interpreted with great caution. The performance of one pupil can have a marked effect upon the overall results, especially where there are only two pupils in the year group.
- 95 To gain an understanding of the progress and achievements of the pupils in mathematics, the inspectors tracked the work of individual pupils through their time at the school. The national assessment results of pupils were used to provide additional information about the standards achieved by pupils at a specific time in their school career and to provide a marker for determining their rate of progress.
- 96 Pupils’ previous work indicates that they have made good overall progress in mathematics as they move through the school. Some pupils who struggled with mathematics when they first entered the school have made very good progress and have overcome their initial difficulties. The standards achieved in the school in mathematics are very variable, both across the school and within year groups. This variation reflects the different stages of learning, and specific learning needs of the small number of pupils in the school. However, the overall average level of attainment is at least in line with that expected for their age. Some year groups of pupils achieve well above the national average as reflected in the infant assessments in the year 2000. However, when the performance of other year groups is considered, a different picture emerges.
- 97 Over the past five years, a pattern of overall improvement in the percentage of pupils

attaining the level expected can be traced, albeit with some variations from one year to another. The general trend in improvement over the last five years is greater than that found nationally and represents a clear improvement since the last inspection.

- 98 The school has successfully introduced the National Numeracy Strategy, adjusting it to meet the specific needs of the very wide age and ability range in each class. Throughout the school, pupils' numeracy skills are good overall. The teachers have accurately identified where individual pupils need extra support and have provided it. This has been to very good effect and has had a positive impact upon the standards achieved by all pupils in numeracy, including those with special educational needs.
- 99 Pupils in the school are very confident in tackling challenging mathematical problems. They have developed a secure foundation knowledge of the subject and this helps them to learn new processes with a clear understanding of the underlying mathematical principles. In discussions with pupils, the inspectors were impressed with some of the pupils' general mathematical competence. For example, one Year 5 pupil discussed the different methods for calculating the area of regular and irregular shapes. He outlined the advantages and disadvantages of each method and, when challenged, could justify his judgements using well-considered mathematical reasons.
- 100 In all the lessons seen, the pupils' behaviour was excellent, they were well motivated, keen to learn and showed real enjoyment in their achievements. Their positive overall attitude towards their work was outstanding, it had a very positive effect upon their learning and is a tribute to both them and those who teach them.
- 101 During the inspection, four mathematics lessons were observed, two in each class. The quality of teaching overall in both classes was very good, with some excellent teaching seen. This represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection.
- 102 A strength of the teaching in mathematics is directly connected to the way in which teachers meet the learning needs of each pupil. For example, in one lesson the teaching assistant worked with the three reception children helping them to develop their basic number skills. The children's individual learning needs were well understood by the assistant who skilfully built upon what the children already knew and could do. Interesting resources were used, such as a bus with removable passengers, which made the process of learning to count and add both exciting and fun. By the end of the session, the children had made clear gains in their understanding of numbers and their ability to count and add. In the junior class, the teacher had planned the lessons to ensure that each pupil was appropriately challenged by the activities they were expected to do. In one lesson, however, the work set for the older pupils, whilst challenging, did not fully stretch them. However, in all of the lessons seen, all pupils made at least good progress.
- 103 All lessons observed in mathematics were well planned and organised. The teachers had high expectations of what the pupils should achieve. The teachers' high expectations were understood by the pupils, who were, as a result, spurred on to do well. Pupils were encouraged to think for themselves and not to rely on their teacher to give them the solution.

- 104 The teachers relate well to the pupils and treat them with considerable respect. All those involved in teaching have a genuine warm and friendly attitude towards the pupils, encouraging them to do well. The serious business of learning is made exciting and fun.

SCIENCE

- 105 Conclusions based on the analysis of data about pupils' performance in national and teacher assessments must be treated with extreme caution, as the performance of one pupil in this very small school can make a significant impact on overall results.
- 106 Evidence about standards in science was gained from looking at pupils' work and talking to them and their teachers. In addition, the inspectors looked at planning documents. The one science lesson observed provides insufficient evidence on which to base secure judgements about the quality of the teaching of science overall.
- 107 Teachers' assessments of pupils' work in science at the end of the infant stage in 2000 indicated that all pupils were attaining the level expected of pupils aged seven (Level 2). In this respect their performance was very high compared with that of similar schools and the national average. However, as no pupils attained the higher level (Level 3), their performance at this level was well below the national average and the performance of similar schools. These results are based on the performance of just three pupils. When the same comparisons are made about the performance of pupils aged eleven in national tests for science, a similar picture emerges. As all eleven-year-old pupils gained the level expected (Level 4), their performance at this level was very high. At the higher level (Level 5), their performance was below the national average and low compared with similar schools. Just eight pupils were involved in these assessments. Since 1996, the school's performance has varied year on year but overall shows improvement.
- 108 Inspection findings, based on the somewhat limited evidence available, confirm that all pupils are working at the levels expected for their ages at the end of both the infant and junior stages. The knowledge and understanding of forces and the process of scientific investigation shown by older juniors, including pupils in Year 5, is above the average level. This shows some improvement in standards since the previous inspection and latest national test results. However, the findings are again based on the performance of a small number of pupils.
- 109 Infant pupils can, for example, name facial features and parts of the eye such as pupil, iris, lashes and eyebrow. They can explain the difference between non-living and living things, and are aware of some of the characteristics of the latter. They observe cress seeds as these grow and, sometimes with help, use their writing skills to record their observations. They study a range of materials and classify them according to their properties. They use correct terminology, for example *attract* and *repel* when describing the behaviour of magnets, and *flexible* and *rigid* when exploring paper. A seven-year-old pupil wrote, "If you fold it small it gets hard. A triangular shape is rigid". This link with mathematics is further developed when pupils test the strength of rolled paper by placing weights on it – "

One sheet of paper held 750 grams”.

- 110 Junior-age pupils are aware of the different kinds of joints made by bones and what their purpose is. They have a clear understanding of the need to ensure that a test is fair when conducting an investigation. Older pupils can explain how to use a control factor to help this process, and give examples of the variables they considered when testing the insulation properties of a range of materials. Through their work on forces, they understand what friction is and are able to give examples of forces and how these can be measured. They make sensible predictions, for example of what will happen when oil and water are put into the same bottle, and can explain what happens and why. A pupil said, “The oil is lighter so it floats”. They record their work in a variety of ways including diagrams, charts, graphs and written accounts. An older pupil was able to explain a chart recording the amount of force, measured in newtons, required to extend a spring.
- 111 The one lesson observed was in the junior class where pupils were continuing their work on forces. The teacher challenged the pupils to use catapults they had made with elastic bands to project a small plastic brick two metres across the room into a box. Working well in pairs, they discussed the factors affecting their catapult’s performance and how they could improve the accuracy of the projection. The teacher was skilled in probing their knowledge and understanding and encouraging them to apply this to the task in order to find a solution. He recognised the moment when it was appropriate to stop the lesson and give pupils the chance to discuss together the variables they needed to consider in addition to the length of the elastic band. The pupils were totally immersed in their work, showed great enjoyment and became desperate to modify their designs successfully before time was up. At this point the teacher showed very good awareness of safety issues before allowing pupils to attempt the challenge. The testing of individual catapult designs, the success achieved by some pupils and the discussion surrounding this activity demonstrated the extent of the learning that had taken place as a result of the very good teaching.
- 112 Science is taught as a separate subject; and through a series of topics planned over a two-year period in the infant class and over four years in the junior class. Lessons occur regularly throughout the year, and use an appropriate amount of curriculum time. Planning is based on national guidance modified to the school’s specific circumstances. It demonstrates that the science curriculum meets national requirements and is suitably broad and balanced. This represents improvement since the previous inspection when provision for reception, Year 1 and more able pupils was judged to have weaknesses. As in other subjects, the planning in the infant class is more detailed than that for the pupils of junior age, and consequently more useful as a guide to what pupils will learn and are expected to do. The assessment of pupils’ progress, although occurring in both classes, is more accurately recorded in the infant class. Details of the individual progress of pupils in the junior class rely heavily on the junior teacher’s memory and therefore limit their value and availability to others.

ART

- 113 Two art lessons were observed during the inspection. Both lessons, one in the junior class

and one in the infant class, were taught by one of the part-time teaching assistants who has a particular expertise in the subject. The observation of just two lessons does not provide sufficient evidence to make a secure overall judgement about the quality of teaching of art. However, in both lessons the quality of teaching was extremely high and resulted in the pupils making at least very good progress. The standards achieved in the lessons observed were well above that expected for pupils of their age. The scrutiny of pupils' previous art work confirmed the inspectors' judgements that the overall standards achieved by pupils in art are well above those found nationally for their age.

- 114 In an excellent art lesson in the junior class, the pupils moved on from their work on Picasso to learn about Warhol and iconic images. The pupils used computers to produce 'iconic' images of themselves from digital photographs. During the introduction to Warhol, his place in time was clearly established and understood by the pupils. One boy quoted the Warhol statement about 'famous for 5 minutes'. This led to a vibrant, lively and informed discussion in which all pupils participated. The pupils were motivated and enthused by the teacher's own enthusiasm for the subject.
- 115 The pupils talked to the inspectors with great enthusiasm about their previous work in art. For example, the pupils told of their studies of Picasso and in particular his painting 'Guernica'. They were able to describe in great detail the story behind the painting. They told of the bombing and killing of innocent people and animals in the town and the horror of war. The pupils explained how they had each thought of a word to express their feelings about such wars. They explained that they had used words such as horrified, anger, nervous, upset, frightened and traumatised. Each pupil, having identified one word to express his or her own feelings, pulled a face that expressed this feeling. This expression of feeling was recorded by digital camera. The pupils then used the photograph of their own face to design and make a head in the style of Picasso. The artistic results from this short project were of high quality. However, the pupils' gains in learning extended well beyond the bounds of the subject.
- 116 The planning for art is informed by the requirements of the national curriculum and the school's own guidance. Over a school year the pupils experience a wide range of art techniques and their artistic skills are developed systematically. The teaching assistant knows the pupils very well and is able to ensure that the learning needs of each child are met. All pupils in the school, including those with special educational needs, are fully included in all aspects of the subject.
- 117 To enrich the pupils' experiences of art, the school regularly links with another local primary school for art trips. Visits are made to the National Trust's Acorn Bank Garden, which is used as an outdoor studio. Approximately every two years there is a visit to the Grisedale Forest Sculpture Park in the Lake District. On other occasions the school visits art galleries in towns such as Carlisle and Kendal. In addition to the art visits, local artists come to the school to talk about their work. The junior pupils have both school and home sketchbooks. The infant pupils have all their work preserved for them in large 'books'.
- 118 Teachers' records of the pupils' progress and achievements in art are comprehensive. At

the start of each school year, the pupils' artistic achievements are assessed. This assessment is used to plan what each pupil needs to learn next. After each lesson, comments are recorded on the reverse of the teacher's lesson plans to help inform future planning and the end-of-year reports.

- 119 The teaching of art in the school is well organised and provides the pupils with broad and rich experiences that help them to make consistently very good progress as they move through the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 120 Design and technology is mainly taught as a part of topic work and through science. During the period of the inspection, design and technology did not feature as part of the work observed. It is, therefore, not possible to make a secure judgement about the quality of teaching in the subject. Much of the pupils' previous work in design and technology had been taken home when it had been completed. For example, the pupils had designed pop-up cards and had taken them home to present to their families. The school did keep a photographic record of some of the pupils' finished work and this provided an indication of the achievements of the pupils. However, it was not possible to make any reliable judgements about the standards attained from the available evidence.
- 121 When pupils were discussing their previous work in the school, some referred to the card technology they had undertaken. The pupils had designed and made fridge magnets and designed and made boxes to put them in. Other pupils recalled making curved stitching patterns that were linked to their work in mathematics.
- 122 The school plans its work in design and technology with reference to nationally produced guidance. Individual teachers' planning for the subject is normally included in topic planning. It was evident from talking to teachers that they are clear about what the pupils know and can do in design and technology and what each pupil will do next.

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

- 123 History and geography are taught as topics planned over a term and with a particular subject emphasis for each topic. An appropriate amount of time is given over a year to each subject. The long-term programme for infant pupils covers two years, and that for the junior pupils extends to four years. In this way, the staff ensure that pupils acquire the appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding related to each subject. Only one topic lesson was seen during the inspection. Limited evidence of each subject was available from the sampling of pupils' work. Consequently, it is not possible to make secure judgements about the standards pupils attain or the quality of teaching they experience.
- 124 Teachers' planning is based on the school's policy and schemes of work covering these subjects. The planning records, reflecting national guidance, indicate that the requirements of the curriculum are satisfactorily met. Planning for the infant class lessons is more detailed and informative than that outlined for the junior class.

- 125 The work in the infant pupils' books includes map work connected with a visit to Silloth, when pupils followed a town trail. Such visits, which include residential opportunities, take place regularly as pupils move through the school. They make an important contribution to pupils' personal, social and cultural development as well as to their learning in geography and history. On this occasion, pupils subsequently identified specific features of the town on a map by adding illustrations to appropriate points. A good link with religious education was made when pupils studied the distinctive Pasta Cross. Older infants produced a lively account of their visit, demonstrating appropriate levels of writing skills. History work reflects a study of the Tudor period and also the lives of famous people such as Louis Braille and Florence Nightingale.
- 126 The geography work seen completed by junior-age pupils was predominantly related to their individually planned topics on the theme of water. Pupils display good skills in the organisation of their work, outlining the intended content as a web. The work covers such areas as the properties of water, how rivers are formed and the water cycle. It is well presented and demonstrates the care pupils take and their pride in their work. In history, a timeline is used effectively to indicate the important events of the Tudor period. Pupils study the lives of the monarchs and research the key features of their reigns. Their drawings of letters and symbols used at that time add an artistic dimension to their work.
- 127 In the lesson observed, the focus was history and pupils continued their study of the Tudor period. The majority was working independently using a range of source materials, including a computer program, to find information. The teacher encouraged pupils to develop their skills of independent research, guiding them and monitoring their progress. The pupils worked hard and supported one another when problems occurred. They took responsibility for the organisation of their work, and accepted the challenge presented by the task. The teacher brought the class together at the end of the lesson to share what they had found out. This strategy was effective in recognising the achievement of individual pupils and also helping all pupils increase their knowledge of Henry VIII.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 128 No information technology lessons were observed during the inspection. It is not, therefore possible to make a secure judgement about the quality of teaching in this subject. However, pupils were observed using computers and receiving individual support from teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils also spent time talking to the inspectors and demonstrating their computing skills.
- 129 The school has invested in laptop computers rather than desktop computers because of the limited accommodation. This does, however, mean that before pupils can use a computer it has to be set up, and following use, stored away. The junior classroom has a network installed that enables pupils to link individual computers directly to the Internet and the school's central printers.
- 130 The pupils are very confident using the computers. The older junior pupils are skilled at

word-processing and accessing the Internet to gain information. For example, the school has linked to a history web-site. Pupils can access this site to seek information, using a password, from the school computers or from their homes. Pupils demonstrated how they could find out information about events and people from the Tudor times. The computers are used as an integral part of teaching and learning in the school. In art lessons, for example, the school's digital camera is well used to enrich the pupils' learning. During the inspection, the pupils took photographs of themselves and then manipulated the images using a computer program to reflect the iconic images associated with the artist Andy Warhol. The pupils undertook these activities with great skill and confidence, to very good effect.

- 131 The pupils' skills of information technology are developed systematically as they move through the school. The small number of pupils in each class enables the teachers to move individual pupils on in their learning at their own pace, carefully building upon what has already been learned.
- 132 The school makes good use of the national guidance for information technology to assist its planning. The individual teaching approach is highly effective and there are clear indications that pupils make consistently good progress and are, on average, achieving well for their age.

MUSIC

- 133 All pupils attain high standards in music, due to the quality of the teaching they experience. The teaching of music and the standards pupils attain are a particular strength of the school.
- 134 Music is taught as a separate subject delivered through a series of topics. Such is the importance attached to this area of the curriculum that opportunities for pupils to listen to, appreciate, compose and perform music of all kinds occur regularly in addition to those provided in music lessons. For example, infant pupils listened to carefully chosen background music both when they watched a story acted out using shadow puppets and when they subsequently created their own puppets in an art lesson. The whole-school musical productions are of high quality. They are eagerly awaited, and provide a focal point in the social life of the local community.
- 135 The inspectors observed instrumental music being taught to small groups of pupils as well as whole class lessons in both the infant and junior phases. They also heard pupils sing in assemblies, listened to taped excerpts of music composed by pupils and examined their music folders.
- 136 The pupils sing confidently and with good control, their voices blending together harmoniously. Their singing is tuneful and words are clearly pronounced. They sing hymns unaccompanied, keeping together and maintaining the correct speed. They show obvious enjoyment in this activity, adding appropriate actions with enthusiasm. Younger pupils follow the lead given by older juniors who understand the role they have in setting an example. Individual pupils, including the youngest, are confident to perform alone in front of the assembled school, knowing that their efforts will be praised and appreciated by other

pupils and their teachers.

- 137 Pupils listen with concentration, focusing on specific features of recorded music such as the instruments being played and the patterns they hear within the piece. Both infant and junior pupils have very good knowledge of composers whose work and lives they have learned about. Junior pupils can name composers belonging to the Baroque, Classical and Romantic movements, and explain the different features of each. They offer reasons for their musical preferences, and discuss the appropriateness of music written for a specific purpose, such as music for dancing in Tudor times.
- 138 Pupils from each of the junior years perform together as an ensemble. This requires them to play different instruments – recorder, flute and guitar – and follow different musical scores. In order to keep together as a group they must listen to each other as well as maintain their own part. They do this successfully and are further challenged when the teacher asks them to repeat the piece but faster. The activity is greatly enjoyed and they are justifiably proud of what they achieve. All pupils have the opportunity to learn to play the recorder, regardless of their musical aptitude or ability. Pieces of music are carefully chosen to ensure that every pupil experiences success.
- 139 Earlier in the year, all pupils created their own compositions based on the theme of water. Infant pupils performed their work, “The Musical Beach” for the juniors. Describing some of the images their work represented, an infant pupil wrote, “I like the diamonds and the sea and the lights that flicker in the distance”. Older pupils worked in groups using tuned and untuned percussion to create musical effects such as waterfalls. They planned their work based on descriptions they had written earlier of the movement of water. They selected instruments such as drums, egg shakers, xylophone, cabasa, Indian bells and castanets to achieve specific effects. They wrote descriptions of how they developed their compositions and evaluated their work, recognising how it could be improved. A pupil wrote, “It didn’t sound much like water. It was pretty short and I think we needed more time.”
- 140 The teaching of music seen during the inspection was never less than very good. Most was of the highest quality. The pupils benefit greatly from the expertise of a part-time teaching assistant who, as a music specialist, is responsible for the majority of the teaching of this subject. Her love of music, talent as a musician and sense of humour, combined with her very good teaching skills, make music in this school hugely enjoyable and great fun. This was evident during a lesson involving junior-age pupils, who, in order to develop their knowledge of rhythm and tempo, acted the role of conductors as they listened to Brahms’s Hungarian Dance. Pupils revel in the demands she makes of them, persevering and making real effort to improve. The teacher’s sensitivity when using pupils’ misconceptions as teaching points reflects the mutual respect that is the basis of the excellent relationships. Pupils know that their work is valued, and are prepared to take risks in their learning as a result. It is their willingness to try something new, together with the quality of the experiences they enjoy that helps them move on and achieve such high standards in their work. The school succeeds in developing in its pupils a feel for and a love of music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 141 It was not possible to observe the teaching of physical education during the inspection. As a practical subject, this means that it is not possible to make secure judgements about the quality of teaching or the standards achieved in this subject.
- 142 The school has very limited accommodation. It does not have a hall or gymnasium for indoor physical education activities and it does not have a playground or playing field for outdoor activities. The school, however, makes good use of the village hall for two afternoons per week for dance, gymnastics and small games. The village hall is equipped with gymnastic mats and benches, but does not have larger equipment and climbing frames. In good weather, the school makes use of the village green for games and athletics.
- 143 During the autumn term, a football coach visits the school and runs a course for boys and girls in the junior class. For the first part of the autumn term, an after-school football club takes place at a local primary school. Parents help by providing transport. This club starts again in the spring term when the weather improves. A netball skills lesson is run by a parent who has attended a training course so that she could support this work with the school. Whilst this parent is teaching half of the class, the headteacher takes the other half for basic ball skills.
- 144 During the spring term, the junior pupils attend swimming lessons once per week. In the summer term the school concentrates on outside games and athletics. The length of the grass on the village green / common land sometimes restricts small ball activities such as tennis. However, after the grass has been cut and baled the problems are much reduced.
- 145 The school is generally very successful in overcoming the effects of the limited accommodation and the wide age-range in each class. In a complete year, the pupils experience a full range of physical education activities. The range of activities is considerably extended through the involvement of parents and governors.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 146 Evidence from the work in pupils' books indicates that they make satisfactory overall progress as they move through the school and achieve standards appropriate to their age by the end of both the infant and junior stages.
- 147 Religious education is taught in accordance with the local education authority's Agreed Syllabus. The provision for the development of religious education is satisfactory. No lessons were observed during the inspection and therefore it is not possible to make judgements about the quality of teaching.
- 148 The school plans the teaching of religious education on a termly basis, following a two-year plan in the infant class and a four-year plan for the junior stage. The work in pupils' books indicates that all aspects of religious education are taught appropriately in lessons and through the acts of collective worship. Pupils learn about different religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam. They compare the key practices of these religions

communities, such as the festivals they observe, their places of worship and their holy writings such as the Qur'an. They look in detail at the symbols associated with these and other religions, including Hinduism and the Jewish and Chinese faiths. In their writing and drawing they have described some of the stories and parables associated with these religions, such as Guru Nanak's story of the twenty rupees and the Christian parables of the Good Samaritan and the lost son. They study key figures relating to the various faiths, such as Muhammad and Moses, recognising similarities in the accounts of events in their lives. Their work reflecting the Christian faith includes baptism rituals, the celebration of harvest and a detailed study of the birth of Christ.

- 149 Although no lessons were observed, evidence gained from looking at pupils' work indicates that teachers make good use of the opportunities afforded by religious education lessons to engage pupils in writing tasks that will strengthen and consolidate their skills. For example, older pupils are challenged to write the story of the Good Samaritan from the point of view of the donkey. On other occasions, they are encouraged to identify the moral in a story such as "The Timid Hares". Recognising the need for rules in any society, they create codes of conduct for different groups. These include parents who should "try to love their children and be kind to them", and themselves, the older pupils in the school, who should "set a good example to younger pupils".
- 150 The care pupils take in the recording and overall presentation of their work indicates an interest in the subject and a sense of pride in what they achieve.