

INSPECTION REPORT

SOUTH STANLEY JUNIOR SCHOOL

South Stanley

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114031

Headteacher: Mr A Black

Reporting inspector: Mrs Barbara Crane
21227

Dates of inspection: 11 – 14 June 2001

Inspection number: 197810

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Tyne Road Stanley County Durham
Postcode:	DH9 6PZ
Telephone number:	01207 232 059
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Thompson
Date of previous inspection:	29 September 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21227	Mrs Barbara Crane	Registered inspector	English, art, religious education, equal opportunities.	The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
19430	Mr Trevor Hall	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22788	Mrs Sue West	Team inspector	Science, design and technology, music, physical education, special educational needs.	
11831	Mr John Brooke	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, history, geography.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school has 197 pupils aged seven to eleven, which is a similar size to most schools. It serves an area that was previously supported by work in the mining industry, but this is no longer the case. There has been extensive demolition of property in the area and some movement of families as they are re-housed. This has resulted in almost a fifth of the school's population changing over the past eighteen months. All of the pupils come from white families and none of the pupils are learning English as an additional language. Thirty-five per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above average. Thirty-three per cent of the pupils are on the school's register of special educational need, which is above average, and ten per cent of the pupils are at the higher levels of the register. Two pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. When the pupils enter the school, their attainment is well below average in reading, writing and mathematics and their speaking is poor.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school in which, against the odds, the majority of pupils achieve well, in most aspects of their work. While standards remain below average, more pupils are achieving the levels beyond those expected for their age, year-on-year. The teaching is good and the pupils have very positive attitudes and behave well. The curriculum is satisfactory. The school's planning is good for the more able and average ability pupils but is not as consistent for some of the pupils with special educational needs. The school is well led and managed. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Most pupils achieve well in reading, mathematics and science.
- The more able pupils are well catered for and there is good support for those pupils whose confidence needs boosting.
- The teaching is good.
- The pupils have very good attitudes to their work, behave well and relationships are very good.
- The school provides a good framework for the pupils to learn about what is right and wrong and become more mature and responsible.
- The staff are committed to improvement and are well led by the headteacher.

What could be improved

- Standards in writing could be better.
- Some pupils with special educational needs could be making better progress.
- The time given to some subjects is not consistent between classes and standards in geography and design and technology are too low.
- The pupils' attendance is too low.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in 1997. Standards and teaching have improved. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' progress now better support the teachers' planning for work in reading, mathematics and science. Standards in information and communication technology are now average and the teachers' understanding of how computers can be used to support the pupils' learning is better. The monitoring of teaching and learning is better than it was and the school has improved its provision for the pupils' cultural development.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	E*	E	E	D
Mathematics	E	E	E	C
Science	E	D	D	C

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

These results relate to the pupils who took the tests last year. They show that the pupils' performance was well below that seen in schools nationally in English and mathematics and below those in science. The pupils' performance was average in relation to schools in similar circumstances in mathematics and science, and below average in English. This represents an improvement on the school's previous results. There is an upward trend in standards and improvements have kept pace with the national trend. More pupils have achieved at the level that is higher than expected for their age year-on-year. The school met its targets for last year and is on track to meet the suitably challenging targets set for this year.

On the basis of the work seen now, the oldest pupils are reaching below average standards in reading, mathematics and science. The pupils are achieving well to reach these standards as they start from a low point. The progress made by the more able pupils is good, but a few of the pupils with special educational needs could do better if the work was more closely matched to their needs in English. Standards in writing are well below average and the pupils could be doing better. The pupils' spoken language is poor when they start the school and although they make good progress, standards are below average when they leave. Standards in all other subjects, except for design and technology and geography, are broadly average. Standards in design and technology and geography are below average.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The majority of pupils work hard and are keen to improve. They concentrate well in lessons and are keen to please the teachers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The pupils behave well in lessons and on the playground. They know the school's rules and keep to them. Their play is boisterous but good-natured. The pupils are polite and helpful.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is good and the pupils get on very well together. They work together well in lessons and enjoy taking on responsibilities around the school.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. There is little unauthorised absence but the overall rate of attendance is much lower than in most schools.

The pupils enjoy school and take full advantage of what is on offer. They cheerfully offer help to the teachers and to each other. Many arrive early at school and organise games

on the playground. While the school stresses the importance of good attendance to the pupils, more could be done to monitor absence and impress upon the parents that regular attendance is essential.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	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 teaching is good, overall. In 97% of the lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory or better. In 72% of the lessons teaching was good or better and it was very good in 25% of the lessons. Three per cent of the lessons were unsatisfactory. The strengths in teaching and learning are: the basic skills in literacy and numeracy are taught well and teaching in English and mathematics is good; the teachers work hard to make lessons lively and relevant and so the pupils are keen to learn and improve; they manage the pupils very well and the warm relationships create a good climate for learning in which the pupils readily seek help and express their ideas; the teachers' planning to meet the needs of the average and more able pupils is good and so these pupils learn at a good rate. The weaknesses in teaching and learning are: teachers' planning for a few pupils with special educational needs does not meet their needs in English and so the pupils learn at a slower rate; the teachers do not insist that the pupils of all abilities check their writing to find mistakes and so the pupils sometimes produce careless work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall, with a good emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Some classes receive more time for geography than the others. The planning in geography and design and technology does not fully meet the needs of the different ages or abilities of the pupils. These weaknesses result in some underachievement in these subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory provision, overall, ensures that nearly all of the pupils make sound progress. A few make slower progress because their individual education plans are not specific about how they need to improve and teachers' planning does not always meet their needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The pupils have plenty of opportunities to work together, reflect on how they feel and consider important questions. The school provides strong and effective guidance in what is right and wrong. The pupils gain an appropriate understanding of their own and other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The staff know the pupils well and give them good advice and personal support.

The school's assessment of pupils' work in reading, mathematics and science is good, but weaker in writing. Too little time is devoted to some subjects such as geography and design and technology. Some classes have more lessons in a subject than other classes. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have too few opportunities to plan investigations in science. There is a satisfactory partnership with parents. The school provides good information for parents and holds termly meetings to discuss the pupils' progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides a strong lead for the school and he is well supported by the deputy head and curriculum managers. The staff work well as a team to bring about improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors provide effective support for the school's work, although they are few in number.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school looks at how it is doing and identifies strengths and weaknesses. It works steadily towards the targets it sets in its planning for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school's priorities are supported by good financial planning. Good use is made of additional grants to support the pupils' achievement. The school seeks the best value in its expenditure.

The headteacher and subject managers have worked hard to raise standards in English, mathematics, science and information communication technology. The school's good planning has ensured that the more able pupils' needs are met. Everyone in the school has a clear view of the part they play in bringing about improvement. The headteacher gives strong support to maintaining the good standard of behaviour amongst the pupils and is quick to involve parents when problems arise. The staffing and resources are satisfactory and the accommodation is good. The provision of the computer suite is enhancing the rate of pupils' learning in information and communication technology.

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 expects children to work hard and do their best. • They feel that the staff are approachable. • The teaching is good. • The children make good progress. • Behaviour is good. • The school is well managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents feel children don't like school. • Some feel they are not well informed about their child's progress. • Some feel that the school does not work closely with them. • More extra-curricular activities.

The inspection evidence supports all of the parents' positive views but not their concerns. Pupils enjoy school and benefit from a range of activities outside lessons which is similar to that found in most schools. The school provides appropriate information about pupils' progress and parents are invited to meet the teachers each term. The school makes a good effort to involve parents in its work.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When the pupils enter the school, their attainment is well below average and their skills in speaking are poor. A third of the pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs and in the current Year 6, 40% of the pupils are on this register.

2. The school's results for the national tests in 2000 show that:

- The results in English were well below the national average and below those in similar schools.
- The results in mathematics were well below those seen nationally and in line with those reached in similar schools.
- The results in science were below the national average and in line with those reached in similar schools.

3. The trend is one of steady improvement and the school has kept pace with the national trend in standards over the last five years. The school met its targets last year and is on track to meet the suitably challenging targets it has set for this year.

4. A greater number of pupils is reaching the higher level each year; this is reflected in the test results for 2000. In comparison with all schools, the number of pupils reaching the higher level (level 5) in national tests in 2000 for eleven year olds was close to the national average in reading, mathematics and science. It was below average in writing. In comparison with schools in similar circumstances, the number of pupils reaching the higher level was above average in English and science and was well above average in mathematics. The proportion of pupils not reaching the expected level, particularly in English and mathematics, was larger than average and this depresses the school's overall results. This is, to some extent, explained by the higher than average proportion of pupils on the school's special needs register.

5. On the basis of the Year 6 work seen now:

- Standards in reading, mathematics and science are below average but the pupils are achieving well in these subjects, from a low starting point.
- Standards in writing are well below average and while the pupils are making satisfactory progress overall, they could do better.
- Standards in all other subjects except for geography and design and technology are broadly average. Standards in geography and design and technology are below average.

6. There is a high proportion (40%) of pupils with special educational needs in the current Year 6 and this affects the standards achieved in the year group as a whole. Fewer pupils than last year are working at level 5 in English, mathematics and science, but more are working at the expected level for their age. The average attaining and more able pupils are achieving well in English, mathematics and science because their needs are well met through the teachers' planning. The great majority of the pupils with special educational needs are making steady progress in literacy and numeracy. Some pupils make good progress and this is because the work they are given is more frequently matched to their needs when they are supported in class. However, a small number of pupils do not make

satisfactory progress in literacy when they are withdrawn from the class; the work they are expected to do is similar to that presented to the other groups and is not adapted to their needs.

7. The pupils achieve well in most aspects of English. The pupils' listening skills are broadly average. They listen carefully in assemblies and lessons, both to the teachers and to each other. They are keen to contribute to discussions but often struggle to find the words to express what they mean and despite the teachers' good planning to extend their vocabulary, the pupils' retention of new words is weak and their ability to speak remains below average. Most Year 6 pupils read accurately and often with good expression. The more able pupils can infer from what they read and use the text to support their ideas. The pupils are keen to read, both to themselves and to adults and read from an appropriate range of fiction and reference books. They are better at locating information than analysing texts for significant incidents in the plot, or how the writer develops characters through the use of language. The pupils make good progress in handwriting, from a low starting point in Year 3, and handwriting is usually neat, joined and well presented by the end of Year 6. The pupils' writing and spelling is often careless and they could do better. They are keen to write but in the rush to put down their ideas, their spelling and punctuation is frequently inaccurate. When the more able and average attaining pupils read through their work they can often find the mistakes they have made, but they do not routinely check their work. There is some evidence of re-drafting work to improve the quality of spelling and punctuation, but many of the mistakes are very basic and easily recognised by the pupils. The lower attaining pupils often copy the vocabulary that they have been given inaccurately.

8. By the age of 11 most pupils work confidently with numbers and use a variety of short cuts to find answers such as rounding numbers up or down to help their mental calculations. They know the value of each figure in a seven digit number and have good recall of number tables. They understand the relationship between decimal fractions, vulgar fractions and percentages. They investigate and describe accurately the link between the internal angles of a quadrilateral and a circle, and produce line graphs to show the relationship between the angle of a torch and the length of the shadow's cast. They calculate the area of irregular shapes confidently by breaking them down into smaller units and display a sound knowledge of reflective symmetry and angles when recording that a circle has innumerable lines of symmetry and 360 degrees.

9. Pupils achieve well in science. By the time they leave the school, the pupils have a firm grasp of how to devise a fair test in science. The Year 5 and 6 pupils benefit from many good opportunities to investigate and test their ideas but the investigations for the younger pupils are too often planned and directed by the teachers. The pupils have a sound knowledge of the major organs of the body and the functions that these perform. The older pupils decide how to record their findings and use the computer to create tables and graphs.

10. At present the pupils' achievement in using computers is satisfactory, but there are indications that the provision of the new computer suite is speeding up their rate of learning. They have an appropriate range of skills and clearly enjoy using the computers. The pupils use the Internet with confidence, copy and paste pictures and incorporate these, and photographs taken with the digital camera, into their text. They know how to use spreadsheets and use the computer to present their findings in a variety of graphs.

11. In religious education, the pupils make good progress in relating what they learn about major world religions to their own experience. In history, the pupils use their skills in reading very effectively to find out information. Standards are below average in geography and design and technology because too little time is devoted to these subjects and the work is not well matched to pupils' different abilities.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. The pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Most pupils maintain concentration well throughout the school day. They are industrious and work very well independently. This is a direct result of good teaching and interesting lessons. The pupils willingly talk to adults about what they are doing, displaying very good interest and involvement in the various activities they undertake. They work well together in pairs or in groups, sharing ideas and equipment sensibly. They are good listeners as was evident in assemblies. They contribute positively to discussions in lessons, for example, in a geography lesson on the environment, when a good understanding of the impact of litter was evident. A number of parents feel their children do not like school but the inspection evidence supports the view of the great majority of parents who confirm that their children like school.

13. Behaviour is good. This view is well supported by most parents. The pupils behave well in lessons and are orderly when moving around the school corridors and stairways. They are cheerful and courteous and respect the property of others. The pupils co-operate well with the lunchtime supervisors and a notable feature at lunchtime is the extent to which the pupils organise games in large and small groups. Their play is good-natured, and although some pupils are boisterous they remain aware of those around them. The pupils know the school's rules and keep to them. They respond very well to the school's systems of rewards and are proud of certificates that are presented for good effort and behaviour. The occasional lapses in behaviour are dealt with swiftly and effectively. There have been several fixed term exclusions over the past eighteen months, involving a small number of Year 5 and 6 boys, most of whom have now left the school. This level of exclusion is unusual and the school has maintained a high level of support to enable pupils to remain in school. Several of the pupils display difficult and challenging behaviour. They are dealt with sensitively and given good support to enable them to grow in self-esteem and conform to the school's expectations.

14. The pupils' personal development is good. They willingly help with the daily routines of the school and are very good at showing initiative and taking responsibility. For example, they help to organise resources for assemblies, help with arrangements in the dining room at lunchtime and act as monitors at breaktimes. The pupils enjoy the team points system and enthusiastically applaud one another's achievements when these are recognised in assemblies. Most pupils use their home/school books positively, reviewing their own targets. Older pupils learn how to organise their work in preparation for secondary education. They enjoy the responsibility for looking after the new Year 3 pupils at the beginning of the school year. The pupils speak respectfully about visits by local clergy, representatives of charities or those who introduce schemes, like drugs awareness. Relationships between the pupils are very good and they also have very positive relationships with staff. The pupils feel that the staff treat them fairly and take account of their ideas and opinions. They work well together in groups or pairs in lessons and boys and girls of all ages and backgrounds play well together.

15. Attendance is unsatisfactory. There has been a slight improvement since the last inspection but this compares unfavourably with the improvement made nationally. Although there is little unauthorised absence, authorised absence is well above the national average and the school could do more to promote better attendance. Lateness is minimal and largely confined to a small number of families. Most pupils arrive at school early. Registration is prompt, and often accompanied by the teachers' enquiries of those who have returned from being absent. Pupils look forward to their lessons. This is a purposeful start to sessions.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. The teaching is good. In 97% of the lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory or better. In 72% of the lessons teaching was good or better and it was very good in 25% of the lessons. Three per cent of the lessons were unsatisfactory.

17. The main strengths in teaching and learning are:

- the basic skills in literacy and numeracy are taught well and teaching in English and mathematics is good;
- the teachers work hard to make lessons lively and relevant and so the pupils are interested, keen to learn and to improve;
- they manage the pupils very well and the warm relationships create a good climate for learning in which the pupils readily seek help and express their ideas;
- the teachers' planning to meet the needs of the average and more able pupils is good and so these pupils learn at a good rate.

18. The main weaknesses in teaching and learning are:

- the teachers' planning for a few pupils with special educational needs does not meet their needs in English and so the pupils learn at a slower rate;
- the teachers do not insist that the pupils of all abilities check their writing to find mistakes and so the pupils sometimes produce careless work.

19. Teaching in English is good. Most of the teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and teach the basic skills well. The pupils know what will be learned during the lesson and the whole class sessions are well paced. The teachers use good questions to draw out the pupils' ideas and they use a good vocabulary to extend the pupils' understanding. The teachers' assessment of reading is thorough and they promote the pupils' understanding of what they read very successfully when the pupils read in groups. The work planned for a small number of pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory and these pupils make slower progress. In an unsatisfactory lesson, the pupils' individual education plans were not sufficiently taken into account and they were not given sufficient opportunities to think for themselves or search the text for answers to questions. An additional weakness in the teaching of all ability groups is that the teachers do not sufficiently encourage the pupils to check through their writing.

20. The teaching of mathematics is good. Teachers enjoy good relationships with the pupils and so they respond well to the lively teaching and the positive use of humour. In the best lessons the teachers make good use of time by ensuring that the opening session is sharply focused with a range of mental activities and clear teaching points made for the activities that follow. The teachers encourage the pupils to practise and use a range of options for their calculations. Mathematical language is introduced well and teachers ask appropriate questions that challenge the pupils to think carefully about their answers. Teachers' planning is good and reflects the national strategy for numeracy. The good assessment of the pupils' progress leads to work being closely matched to their needs, and the teachers provide good guidance to the pupils when they mark their books. In some of the lessons observed, however, the pupils had too little time to practise the skills taught, or too much was attempted in the time available.

21. The lessons seen in science were either satisfactory or very good. This variation is also reflected in the teachers' planning. The most effective lessons are well structured and the pupils are given the opportunity to plan their own investigations and try out their ideas. The teachers ask questions to probe their hypotheses and alternative answers and support

and encourage without over directing the work. Very good use is made of resources to enhance the pupils' understanding of, for example, how the heart functions. In the lessons with some weaknesses, the pupils' investigations are too directed by the teacher and the pupils do not choose their own equipment or decide how to record their findings.

22. The teaching in information and communication technology is good. The teachers plan appropriate opportunities to use ICT to support learning across the curriculum. The teaching in the computer suite is effective and the teachers manage the pupils well. Lessons are characterised by a lively, confidence boosting approach and good subject knowledge. The pupils learn at a good rate in religious education because the good teaching ensures that their work builds well on what they already know and understand. The teachers' good questioning prompts the pupils to express how they feel about important issues and find answers to difficult questions. At the end of one lesson, for example, a pupil remained behind to ask the teacher to clarify the difference between trust and honesty. In all of the other subjects, the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory. Classroom assistants provide good support for group work and are well briefed by the teachers.

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

23. The curriculum is satisfactory. All statutory requirements are met. There is a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy and this has helped to raise standards in these areas. The National Numeracy and Literacy strategies are being effectively implemented. The school provides, overall, a broad range of learning opportunities for its pupils although the balance for some pupils is weaker and not all of the pupils with special needs have their needs met. The school reorganised the way in which it groups pupils for teaching in an attempt to provide a better match of work for the different abilities. The pupils are taught in classes that cover two year groups and are arranged by ability; there are three Year3/4 and three Year5/6 classes. These classes are further divided by ability into four teaching groups for English and mathematics. The planning to meet the needs of the more able and average attaining pupils is good and promotes their good achievement in English, mathematics and science. The Year 3 and 4 pupils have too few opportunities to plan investigations in science, however. The work for some of the pupils with special educational needs is not always as effectively planned to meet their needs in English. The time allocation for geography is uneven, with some classes receiving more time than the others. The planning in geography and design and technology does not fully meet the needs of the different ages or abilities of the pupils.

24. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities for its pupils. Sporting opportunities are offered for football and netball and teams compete in a range of local competitions and events, with some success. The school choir meets weekly at lunchtime and the school lending library is a popular extension to the school day. A cycling proficiency training course takes place annually over a period of weeks after school and is well attended. The curriculum is enriched through day visits to, for example, a lead mining centre, the lighthouse and beach at Marsden, a museum in Newcastle and to a residential centre at Middleton-in-Teesdale. These effectively support the pupils' learning and their social development. Some parents feel that the school does not give the right amount of homework but, on the basis of inspection evidence, homework is organised and set appropriately.

25. The contribution of the community to children's learning is good. Local clergy come in to share in assemblies and religious festivals, including the popular leavers' service. The choir sings for the elderly. They have also enjoyed the experience as part of a massed choir, in the Newcastle City Hall, singing songs of various cultures. The school seeks to widen the pupils' understanding of their environment and the world around them in a good

variety of ways. For example, by visiting musicians and artists running workshops for pupils, a visitor re-enacting Roman life for Years 3 and 4 and a lecturer from Durham University to talk about the universe. The school nurse and the police liaison officer talk to the children on a variety of topics including drugs education. The annual Year 5 and 6 residential weekend to a field centre was cancelled this year because of the foot and mouth epidemic. Nevertheless, the pupils indicate these are worthwhile occasions. They are looked forward to as opportunities to live, work and learn in a community spirit. Charity events have included fund raising for the Indian Disaster Appeal and Comic Relief.

26. The school has good links with partner institutions. The induction of the infant pupils is thoughtfully structured to ensure smooth entry into the junior school. Liaison between teachers is good. Staff visit the Year 2 pupils in their classes. These pupils spend time in the junior school and become familiar with their new surroundings. Transfer to secondary education is very well organised and secure. The liaison officer, Year 7 tutors and the special educational needs co-ordinator have an open dialogue with staff and talk to the pupils in class. Pupils enjoy time at the secondary school, meeting other incoming pupils and building up new friendships as they share sessions together. Year 5 and 6 pupils use student planners intelligently as preparation for more independent work in secondary education. The liaison officer and the school, as part of the pupils' personal development, have mutually introduced these. The educational welfare team are very short staffed making thorough liaison difficult.

27. The school makes good overall provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is reflected in the way that the staff and pupils relate to each other, and the friendly, thoughtful and supportive ethos that permeates the school.

28. There is good provision for the pupils' spiritual development. School assemblies, led by the headteacher and members of staff, along with religious education lessons, act as a focal point for the pupils' spiritual development. The thoughtful stories told in assemblies encourage the pupils to think about world issues such as the environment and to focus on their role in life. The appropriate prayers offer further opportunity for reflection. Until his recent move the local Anglican minister also led the assembly, on a half termly basis. Prayers are said in the dining room and the day usually ends with a class prayer. Pupils are given the opportunity to consider why they would want to get closer to God when discussing Hinduism and pilgrimage, and are able to reflect on common threads in religion.

29. The school provides a very good framework for the pupils' moral development and social education. All members of staff encourage pupils to understand right from wrong and the school and classroom rules are used to support them. The staff provide good role models and reward the pupils with recommendations for a headteacher's award, verbal encouragement or a varying number of pieces of pasta that go in a class jar. When the jar is full, a class celebration follows! Moral issues relating to their own community, such as litter, are raised in lessons and assemblies whenever the opportunity arises, and visitors such as the police liaison officer reinforce many points when visiting school to discuss issues such as drugs. Social education is provided through a range of activities and events. Links with Sunderland Football Club involved coaching for all the pupils, and participation in the Junior Great North Run provided good opportunities for the pupils' social development. The pupils have been given the opportunity to decide on the layout for the school's millennium garden and they organise class assemblies. They sing at a local residential home and act as hosts to elderly people who are invited in to school for the harvest festival.

30. The school's provision for cultural development is satisfactory. This is an improvement on the last report when this was judged to be unsatisfactory, as there was a lack of opportunity for pupils to experience and appreciate the diversity of cultures represented in Britain and the world. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about different beliefs and

cultural practices through religious education, and a sound range of opportunities in music, dance, history and art. There are visits to school by actors in residence and a puppet theatre. An artist has worked with the pupils on a project that focused on improving the school environment. Cultural development through music has involved the pupils participating in the local radio station's 'Music on the Line' event in Newcastle when they sang with a thousand other voices. They sing local songs in Geordie dialect and appreciate a different culture when singing a water cycle rap in geography.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. The school's procedures for ensuring child protection and pupils' welfare are good. The pupils are secure in a supportive environment. All adults are aware of the strict criteria to be observed for child protection. There are no health and safety concerns.

32. The school promotes responsible behaviour very well and the high expectations of the pupils are made clear to them. The system of rewards encourages good conduct and the pupils respond positively to praise and encouragement. There are a few pupils in all age groups whose behaviour is challenging and the teachers support their individual needs sensitively. Procedures for monitoring and supporting the pupils' personal development are very good. The staff work well together in building up the pupils' self esteem and ensuring they are supported individually. Achievement and endeavour are fairly praised. Parents believe the staff help their children to become mature and responsible. Pupils confidently share their thoughts with the teachers. In partnership with the Durham Business and Education Executive, local businesses provide mentors for individual pupils to raise their self-esteem and achievement. The pupils involved speak highly of how this has boosted their confidence.

33. The school's assessment of how well the pupils are doing is generally good. This supports the pupils' good achievement in reading, mathematics and science because the teachers use the information from assessments to plan suitable work. Assessment in writing is weaker and is not as well used to help pupils improve. An up-to-date register for special educational needs is in place and pupils have individual educational plans but these vary greatly in quality. Following training by the local education authority staff earlier this year, most pupils' individual educational plans have been reviewed and the target setting is becoming more precise. A small number of pupils, however, still have targets that are too vague and do not clearly indicate what the pupils have achieved and what they need to do next to improve. The school gives very good support to pupils who have emotional or behavioural problems and actively involves outside services for advice and support.

34. The school could do more to promote better attendance. Absence is monitored, but enquiries about pupils' absence, where no explanation has been given, could be taken earlier. Levels of absence are reported to governors' meetings but the fact that they are well above the national average is not discussed. The school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents do not appropriately emphasise to the parents the importance of good attendance. However, the importance of regular attendance is stressed to pupils as a good habit to be fostered for the future. The school attempts to promote attendance through letters to parents of pupils who are frequently absent. Regrettably this does not have the full support of all parents. A number need several reminders to send in written explanations for their child's absence. The school has limited support from an Education Welfare Officer due to staff shortages.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

35. The school sets out earnestly to involve parents in most aspects of its work. Parents view the school highly, overall, and are pleased with what the school provides and achieves. Most parents think they are well informed on all school matters. There are regular letters from the headteacher and class teachers. The school prospectus and the governors' annual report conform to requirements but are not explicit about the low attendance. The aims of the school are well presented. A few parents expressed concern regarding information on their children's progress and the extent to which the school works closely with them. The inspection team found the quality of information provided for parents about their children's progress is good. Annual written reports are individual to the pupils and give good information about the pupils' attainment and progress. Curricular information was sent out to parents in the autumn and is being introduced on a more regular basis. The school gives parents ample opportunities to talk to teachers throughout the year, including consultation evenings each term. However, a number of parents do not take advantage of the opportunities offered. Communication with the parents of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties is good. Parents are kept informed and have every opportunity to visit school and talk to the headteacher when they feel the need or when problems arise. Parents of pupils with special educational needs that involve learning difficulties are not always given such regular opportunities to review with the teacher how work is progressing and what action needs to be taken.

36. The home and school reading diary is well used by some parents as a good means of communication about their children's learning. The home and school agreement, however, has had only a limited response from parents. A group of parents are happily involved with the Parents And Children Together group, in which they learn skills in computing alongside their children. This is resulting in parents' growing awareness of their children's literacy work and the parents and children are making some confident steps in using computers. Parents are encouraged to help in school and the staff value the contribution of those who do so and provide clear guidelines for them. A few parents expressed concerns regarding levels of homework. The inspection team found the level and quality of homework is appropriate. Good detail of the school's policy is published in the school prospectus. There is no parents' association and when social events have been organised, they have met with a limited response. However, many parents attend a variety of school events especially assemblies, sports' day and school performances.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

37. The headteacher provides good leadership and a clear direction for the school. He is well supported by the deputy head and subject co-ordinators. He has given a good direction to the school's drive to raise standards in the core subjects and information communication technology and to meet the needs of the more able pupils. This has been successful because all in the school have a clear view of the part they play in bringing about improvement. The headteacher gives strong support to maintaining the good standard of behaviour amongst the pupils and is quick to involve parents when problems arise.

38. The school has a good development plan that identifies the right areas for improvement. The professional development of the staff has been well planned to take account of both individual needs and the school's priorities. The staff work together well and share expertise and ideas willingly. They reflect on what works well and take an objective view of what needs to improve. The subject co-ordinators monitor the pupils' work across the school and then produce action plans for each subject that set out the ways in which improvements will be brought about. The newly qualified teacher has been given good support by the deputy head who acts as his mentor. The school has been

looking, over this year, at how the national guidelines for subjects can be adapted to fit the needs of the mixed age classes. In most cases, this review has been successful, but there is still work to be done to ensure that geography and design and technology are suitably planned to raise pupils' achievement. The time allocation for subjects in year groups has not yet been reviewed so that a better balance is achieved between the classes.

39. The headteacher has been acting as the co-ordinator for special educational needs, pending a permanent appointment. One of the school's priorities this year has been to improve the planning for these pupils, as weaknesses were identified in the progress that some pupils were making, particularly in literacy. Following appropriate training by the local authority, the school set about improving the quality of the pupils' individual education plans and this has mostly been successful. However, this review process has not been extended to all of the pupils and consequently, some are not making the progress that they should. The management of the provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural problems is very effective and results in the pupils making good progress towards the targets set for them.

40. The governors provide good support for the school and fulfil all of their responsibilities, although a number of vacancies exist on the governing body and so the burden of work falls on a relatively small number of members. The governors have set performance targets for the headteacher and all teachers have had a performance management review. The chair of governors visits frequently to consult with the headteacher and monitor the school's progress. The governor for special educational needs has a sound overview of provision. The governors are kept well informed about the progress made towards the targets set in the school's planning for improvement. The governors consider how the priorities in the plan can be funded and allocate the budget appropriately. They seek the best value for money in the school's expenditure on staffing and make good use of additional grants to support the pupils' achievement. The very recent auditor's report highlighted some areas of weakness connected to the procedures for ordering goods and the school has plans to address these issues. The school makes appropriate use of new technology to support its work. There is an adequate number of teachers with a suitable range of expertise and experience to deliver the curriculum and other staff who support the pupils' learning. The accommodation is good. The new computer suite, which represents a considerable investment for the school, is having a positive impact on the pupils' learning. Other resources are satisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- **Improve standards in writing by:**

- ensuring that the teachers encourage the pupils to check through their work;
- assessing what groups of pupils and individuals need to do to improve and using this information to plan suitable work.

(Paragraphs 7, 18, 19, 33, 46, 47)

- **Improve the progress made by pupils with special educational needs by:**

- ensuring that all of these pupils have individual education plans that set out what they need to do to improve;
- ensuring that teachers take these plans into account when planning lessons.

(Paragraphs 6, 18, 19, 33, 46)

- **Improve the standards achieved in geography and design and technology and the balance of the curriculum by:**
 - ensuring that all year groups devote sufficient time to these subjects;
 - ensuring that the teachers' planning takes account of the pupils' ages and abilities.
(Paragraphs 11, 23, 64, 68)

- **Seek to improve the pupils' attendance rate by:**
 - providing better information to governors and parents about trends in absence;
 - monitor pupils' absence more speedily.
(Paragraphs 15, 34)

In addition to the issues above, the governing body should consider the following when drawing up its action plan:

- ensuring that pupils in Years 3 and 4 have better opportunities in science to devise their own experiments, choose their own equipment and decide how to record their findings.
(Paragraphs 9, 21, 23, 55)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

32

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

14

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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0	25%	47%	25%	3%	0	0
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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	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	197
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	69
Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	65
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	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.9
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	18	27	45

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	9	12
	Girls	16	17	20
	Total	24	24	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	53 (55)	53 (43)	71 (69)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	9	9
	Girls	16	14	18
	Total	24	23	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	53 (37)	51 (41)	60 (53)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest 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	197
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	7	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: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.3
Average class size	32

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	80

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	410863
Total expenditure	412833
Expenditure per pupil	1877
Balance brought forward from previous year	18179
Balance carried forward to next year	16209

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	171
Number of questionnaires returned	107

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	37	15	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	40	48	6	4	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	56	6	3	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	43	13	2	0
The teaching is good.	43	46	6	2	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	42	19	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	37	6	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	43	1	3	1
The school works closely with parents.	26	50	19	4	2
The school is well led and managed.	44	46	4	4	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	52	9	3	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	31	31	7	8

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

ENGLISH

41. The results of the 2000 tests for 11 year olds indicate that the pupils' performance was well below the national average and was below those in similar schools. The pupils' performance in the tests, however, shows an upward trend over the last three years. Standards are better than at the last inspection. A greater number of pupils are reaching the higher level 5 each year and this is reflected in the test results for 2000, where the number of pupils who achieved level 5 was above average when compared to schools in similar circumstances. The proportion of pupils not reaching the expected level is, to some extent, explained by the higher than average proportion of pupils on the school's special needs register. An additional factor is the low level of the pupils' spoken language when they enter the school. This affects the vocabulary that they use and their understanding of what they read, as well as the quality of their written work.

42. The standards achieved now, by the oldest pupils, are below average in reading and speaking, but average in listening. The pupils make good progress in these areas and achieve well. Standards in writing are well below average and while progress is generally satisfactory, the pupils could be doing better in this aspect of their work.

43. It was evident during the inspection that the pupils often struggle to express what they want to say in interpreting what they read, in responding to questions from the teacher or putting their thoughts in writing. In a Year 3 and 4 lesson, for example, the pupils could appreciate the difference in style of a formal and an informal letter. They knew that the greeting of 'Dear sir' in a formal letter indicates that the writer did not know the recipient personally. Their attempts to describe the differences between the different types of letter, however, focused more on describing the content than in explaining the characteristics of the different styles. In another lesson, a pupil had great difficulty in explaining that the poem about the Angel of the North was more effective because it was written in dialect. She knew that this style improved the rhythm of the poem but could not find a concise way of saying this. Most Year 6 pupils read text confidently and accurately, often with good expression. They change the style of reading to represent characters' speaking in the text. The more able pupils can infer from what they read and use the text to support their ideas. In a lesson in Year 5 and 6, for example, the pupils were able to deduce what words written in dialect meant in the poem 'Cushie Butterfield' from looking at the overall meaning of the verse or line. Lower attaining pupils in Year 5 and 6 were reading a poem about an argument between two cages that were taking miners to the coalface and appreciated its humour. They were very eager to read the poem out loud and did so with reasonable accuracy, given the use of dialect. They then wrote a series of questions for the cages, to which others wrote answers. This work indicated a sound understanding of why the cages were arguing and the outcome of the disagreement. The pupils are keen to read, both to themselves and to adults and read from an appropriate range of fiction and reference books. They are better at locating information than analysing texts for significant incidents in the plot, or how the writer develops characters through the use of language.

44. The pupils' writing is often careless and they could do better. They are keen to write but in the rush to put down their ideas, their spelling and punctuation is frequently inaccurate. When the more able and average attaining pupils read through their work, they can often find the mistakes they have made. They do not, however, routinely check their work and are not suitably encouraged to do so by the teachers. There is some evidence of re-drafting work to improve the quality of spelling and punctuation, but many of the mistakes are very basic and easily recognised by the pupils. The lower attaining pupils

often copy the vocabulary that they have been given inaccurately. More able pupils can extend a poem by writing the final four lines that match the previous rhythm and rhyme. They also write poems based on sporting heroes or television personalities, based on the rhyming pattern and reproducing the rhythms of 'Cushie Butterfield'. The pupils make good progress in handwriting, from a low starting point in Year 3, and handwriting is usually neat, joined and well presented by the end of Year 6.

45. Overall, the teaching is good. Most of the teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and teach the basic skills well. They make it clear to the pupils what will be learned during the lesson and their enthusiasm is caught by the pupils. The whole class sessions are well paced and the teachers use good questions to draw out the pupils' ideas. The teachers use a good vocabulary and give clear instructions. In a Year 3 and 4 lesson, for example, the pupils were asked to 'Read through the sentence in your mind to check that it makes sense before you commit yourself to using the conjunction you have chosen.' The use of individual whiteboards for pupils to use in lessons means that the teachers can quickly assess how well the pupils are learning as they display their written answers. The teachers promote the pupils' understanding of what they read very successfully when the pupils read in groups. Questions such as 'Can you find the other clue that tells us that she knows Edward well?' help Year 3 pupils to gain an understanding of how to infer from the text. In a good lesson with Year 3 and 4 pupils, the teacher asked 'How many times will we lift the pen off the paper in writing the word nonsense?' and so extended the pupils' understanding of how to make the handwriting joins and how to spell the word. In a very good lesson in Year 5 and 6, the teacher maintained a very brisk pace by setting time limits for the completion of tasks. The pupils were full of ideas when they moved to group activities because the teacher's introduction to the lesson was clear, interesting and delivered with great enthusiasm. By the end of the lesson the pupils had made rapid gains in their learning about the use of dialect and standard English in appropriate situations.

46. The planning of work for a small number of pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory and these pupils make slower progress. This is usually, but not always, when pupils are withdrawn from the class and taught in a separate group. In the unsatisfactory group lesson seen, the teacher's handwriting on the board provided a poor model for the pupils to follow and the slow pace of the lesson resulted in the pupils losing interest. Praise was given for speed in writing, regardless of its accuracy. The pupils' individual education plans were not sufficiently taken into account and they were not given sufficient opportunities to think for themselves or search the text for answers to questions. An additional weakness in teaching for all ability groups is that the teachers do not sufficiently ensure that the pupils check through their writing to correct careless mistakes.

47. The teachers set individual targets for the pupils in all years. The targets for reading are more closely focused than those in writing and this leads to the pupils' better progress in reading. Samples of the pupils' writing are gathered each term but the teachers' analysis of these does not sufficiently pinpoint how the pupils need to improve.

48. The management of the subject is good. The co-ordinator analyses the pupils' performance in tests and picks out common weaknesses in their attainment. This has helped to raise standards in reading, particularly. She has monitored teaching and learning and provided good feedback to teachers. The subject has a good action plan which identifies the improvements necessary in writing.

MATHEMATICS

49. The results achieved by the 11 year olds in the 2000 national tests were well below the national average but in line with those of similar schools. On the basis of the work seen now, standards are below average but the pupils' achievement is good. The trend is

upwards and more pupils are now achieving at the higher level. This is due mainly to the successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, and the increased attention given to problem solving and investigative work that was judged to be unsatisfactory at the last inspection. There is no noticeable difference in the progress of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall, but a small number of pupils do not do as well as they might because the work is not tailored sufficiently to meet their needs.

50. By the age of 11 most pupils work confidently with numbers. They use a variety of short cuts, often by rounding numbers up or down, to help their mental calculations and they are able to explain and use extended methods when setting out their work. They know the value of each figure in a seven digit number and have good recall of number tables. They understand the relationship between decimal fractions, vulgar fractions and percentages. They investigate and describe accurately the link between the internal angles of a quadrilateral and a circle, and produce line graphs to show the relationship between the angle of a torch and the length of the shadows cast. They calculate the area of irregular shapes confidently by breaking them down into smaller units and display a sound knowledge of reflective symmetry and angles when recording that a circle has innumerable lines of symmetry and 360 degrees.

51. The pupils' good progress relates closely to the good quality of teaching seen throughout the school. Teachers enjoy good relationships with the pupils and the pupils respond well to the lively teaching. A feature of many of these is the pleasant and supportive atmosphere created and the positive use of humour. In the best lessons seen the teachers make good use of time by ensuring that the opening session is sharply focused with a range of mental activities and clear teaching points made for the activities that follow. In one lesson, for example, Year 3 and 4 pupils were constantly reminded to use the experience of what they know and what they have already achieved to solve new calculations by a range of methods. In Year 6 the more able pupils were challenged to use letters and numbers to make mathematical statements and were constantly encouraged to achieve success. In many of the lessons observed the teachers gave the pupils a range of options for their calculations and reminded them that, although there are many ways to calculate an answer, some methods are easier and quicker than others. Mathematical language is introduced well and teachers ask appropriate questions that challenge the pupils to think carefully about their answers. In some of the lessons observed, however, the pupils had too little time to practise the skills taught, or too much was attempted in the time available.

52. The quality of teachers' planning is generally good and although pupils are set by ability into three groups across two year groups, teachers differentiate work well within the classes. The National Numeracy Strategy is planned well. Good use is made of the classroom computers to record data and produce tables to show the results of investigations. The pupils' progress is carefully monitored and assessment is used to pinpoint areas of weakness and assist with the setting of targets and this is helping to raise standards. This good assessment of the pupils' progress has led to work being more closely matched to their needs, and teachers have become clear about what pupils need to do to reach the levels expected. Pupils' books are regularly marked and suitable guidance is passed on to the pupils although occasionally unacceptably untidy or unfinished work is accepted from a few of the pupils.

53. The management of the subject is good and has had a positive impact on raising standards. The co-ordinator has a clear view of what needs to be worked on next and has a good action plan for the subject. The pupils' performance in tests is analysed so that areas of weakness can be addressed through adaptations to teaching or the curriculum. The co-ordinator's monitoring of pupils' work across the school and monitoring of teaching and learning has had a positive effect on raising standards.

SCIENCE

54. In comparison with all schools, the results of the national tests in 2000 indicate that by the time pupils leave the school, standards in science are below those expected. Standards are average compared to similar schools. The work seen during the inspection period confirmed that while standards are below average the pupils are achieving well. Standards have risen since the last inspection. Standards are rising steadily and more pupils are achieving at the higher level 5 in the national tests year-on-year. This improvement is due to more emphasis being placed on investigational work. Fewer pupils are working at the higher level in Year 6 this year as it is a lower attaining year group.

55. The pupils have benefited from better opportunities to investigate and experiment than at the last inspection and they achieve well. Overall, however, the pupils' oral work is generally better than their written work in Years 3 and 4. These pupils have too few opportunities to decide how to record their investigations and to evaluate the results.

56. Where lessons have good pace and teachers make them interesting by good use of pertinent visual resources and equipment, the pupils learn well. This was particularly noticeable in a very good lesson with Year 3 and 4 pupils who were looking at the ways that plants disperse their seeds. The teacher used magnified pictures of seeds to form a quiz, and a suitable variety of plant seeds were available for pupils to examine. The lesson was made more fascinating for pupils as they were encouraged to hypothesise what might happen to a dandelion clock in a gentle breeze, a wind or a heavy gust. Pupils then carefully demonstrated this with gentle puffs and enormous deep breath blowing.

57. In Years 5 and 6, the scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that the pupils have good opportunities to decide for themselves how to record their findings. They are currently learning about body systems, particularly the function of heart and lungs. In a successful lesson, they learned quickly through the use of red balloons, red liquid and tubing to simulate the function of the heart. They devised suitable experiments to investigate the affect that activity has on the heart and lungs. They carried out experiments responsibly, acknowledging that each person in their group had a significant part to play. They understood the need for fair testing and were careful to ensure that this was so. They suggested recording results in a table before translating these into a line graph. Together they examined results with interest discussing why they were so and hypothesising as to what might have happened if they had carried on. They recognised that breaths become shorter with increased activity but seemed to slow after prolonged activity and that the heart beat also increased. The pupils demonstrated, however, that they have poor retention powers in terms of vocabulary to explain what they were doing. Teachers make every effort to remedy this by emphasising scientific vocabulary and using spare moments to clarify scientific phrases and language. The quality of pupils' writing affects their recording of work. Appropriate opportunities are planned to use computers in creating graphs and handling data.

58. The quality of teaching seen was always satisfactory and had some very strong features. Effective lessons were well structured to develop ideas and gave pupils responsibility for their own learning by providing good investigative tasks. Teachers asked questions to probe hypotheses and alternative answers and support and encourage without directing work. There are also some weaknesses: in Years 3 and 4 some lessons are planned where investigations are too directed and do not allow pupils to devise their own experiments, choose their own equipment or decide how to record their findings.

59. The management of science is good. The coordinator has ensured that changes in the curriculum have been successfully addressed and has encouraged teachers to plan more investigatigative work for the pupils. She has worked hard to produce a very good portfolio of

investigation work, accurately moderated to support teachers in their planning and assessment procedures. She has monitored teaching and planning, looking particularly at the cycle of work planned and ensuring all requirements in science are met. Statutory assessment tests are scrutinised carefully and trends identified. Planning is then modified to overcome areas of weakness. Bearing in mind the high percentage of pupils with special educational needs, this has resulted in a significant number of pupils making good progress and in some measure accounts for the steady improvement in the standards in science over the last three years.

ART AND DESIGN

60. No lessons were seen during the inspection. Evidence is drawn from teachers' planning, pupils' past work and discussions with pupils. By the time they leave the school, the pupils' work reaches the standard for their age; this is similar to the last inspection. The pupils make good progress in working in a range of media and expressing their ideas visually. They are keen to learn about the work of different artists and find out more from using the Internet.

61. Year 3 and 4 pupils have made good observational studies of leaves and plants using pencil, pastels and a computer program. They extended the work into tonal studies of leaves using paint. Their work on conservation in geography has led to a large scale collage of a landscape that depicts environmental changes. The pupils explain what they like and dislike about the 'Angel of the North' and how its colour has changed with weathering. The Year 5 and 6 pupils have studied the work of Kandinsky and created pictures in his abstract style. These show a sensitive use of colour and good control over line, with smudging and blending of oil pastels. These pupils know that Kandinsky's work changed from representational studies to abstract forms. In their current work on Henry Moore, they understand that the sculptor was heavily influenced by natural forms. When looking at photographs of different sculptures, they can identify the different characteristics such as size, surface, form and colour. They have produced charcoal drawings of body parts and have started to transform these into small scale sculptures in clay and wire.

62. No judgement is made on teaching, but the teachers' planning indicates a satisfactory knowledge of the subject and a good balance of work. The subject is led satisfactorily and the co-ordinator ensures that the teachers' planning covers all aspects of the subject and is well resourced. There are good opportunities for the pupils to learn about art from their own culture and they have been involved with an artist in residence to create clay sculptures for the local 'green pathway'. There are, however, too few opportunities planned for the pupils to gain a wider knowledge of art from other cultures.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

63. No lessons of design and technology were observed during the inspection period. Evidence was gained from talking to teachers and looking at teachers' planning and pupils' work, displays and photographs. By the time pupils are eleven, overall the standard of their work does not meet the expectation for their age. The decline in standards since the last inspection is due mainly to the limited time given to the subject and weaknesses in teachers' planning to meet the pupils' different needs.

64. The pupils frequently do the same work, regardless of their abilities and so their progress in gaining knowledge and skills is not assured. Younger pupils record methods of construction and results of their model making but they all use a very simple work sheet to do this. Although this supports pupils who are lower attainers, it restricts the individual ideas of average and higher attaining pupils and encourages notes rather than detailed

written work. Moreover, in the mixed age classes, both year groups use the same simple method and evaluation sheet and too little account is taken of the pupils' ages and different abilities. Some Year 5 and 6 pupils have constructed good quality models of Tudor houses with detailed attention to the finish of the product, but these lack sufficient individuality as all of the pupils have worked to a similar design. Consequently, pupils have not sufficiently developed their own ideas and designs and opportunities for them to evaluate their work and improve it are limited. Photographic evidence reveals that lower ability pupils are well supported by the teacher in using tools for cutting and joining materials. However, for both this work, and the often interesting work on Egyptian jewellery, the design process is not sufficiently recorded and there is limited written evidence of evaluation, testing and improvement procedures. Food technology is suitably addressed as part of the healthy living programme. Some pupils have conducted interesting surveys on what is in their lunchboxes. They have collated information on sandwiches, fruit, drinks and biscuits and crisps and have then drawn up suggestions for a healthy meal. Pupils have taken care with this work and it is well presented and attractively displayed.

65. Overall, the subject is managed satisfactorily. The coordinator is aware of the lack of emphasis given to the subject and the effect that this has had on standards and on completing projects. A good action plan has been drawn up to address the integration of the Curriculum 2000 requirements as current planning does not fully assure development of skills and experiences in all of the suggested areas of work. Although individual teachers assess the standards pupils achieve, these assessments vary in format and detail. As there are no consistent assessment procedures in place, the teachers in the following year groups are not able to securely plan to build on the pupils' prior knowledge and understanding.

GEOGRAPHY

66. The pupils' attainment in geography does not reach the standards expected for their age. This is a decline in standards since the last inspection. Too little time is devoted to the subject for the older pupils to gain a worthwhile experience and reach the standards for their age. In the lower school, the amount of time for geography varies from class to class.

67. No lessons were observed at the upper end of school and there is little detailed written work. The pupils have made a brief study of rivers and can explain in diagrammatic form a range of terms such as source, meander and estuary. They have a satisfactory understanding of where their own region is on a map of the United Kingdom and identify a number of major cities and other physical features. In Years 3 and 4 the pupils have had more opportunity to study the subject and their work is generally satisfactory. They are very aware of the key environmental issues in the world and discuss these maturely. Pupils consider the good and bad areas in school and in the locality, and consider their own role in any improvements. They produce information related to shopping surveys recording where they would go to buy such items as clothing, furniture and food, and draw maps showing how the area has developed and changed. The field trip for Year 5 and 6 pupils did not take place this year due to foot and mouth disease in the area to be visited.

68. In the two lessons observed, in Years 3 and 4, the teaching was satisfactory and the teachers engaged the pupils' interest in conservation and re-cycling and set work that was well matched to the pupils' abilities. Work in these lessons does, however, contrast sharply with the overall picture. There is evidence of an imbalance in the time allocated to the subject from class to class and inconsistency in delivery of the curriculum. For example, the teacher's good planning and the work produced in one class, such as a local study involving detailed research and map work, are not covered in a parallel class. The coordinator, a part time member of staff, has not had responsibility for the subject for very

long. She is aware of many of the shortcomings and is working to produce a suitable development plan.

HISTORY

69. Standards in history are in line with those expected nationally and the pupils make good progress. This is a similar picture to the last inspection. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 know that Henry the Eighth is 'remembered mostly because he had six wives' and enjoy explaining how and for what reason his wives met their fate. They know how a Tudor house was constructed and that daily life in towns was crowded, busy and noisy. They understand the reasons, following research into local parish records, why the majority of those who died over 100 years ago were aged 10 and under. They know why there are no nineteenth century records of their town and understand how the settlement grew because of mining. In Years 3 and 4 the pupils compare life in Ancient Greece with their lives, and list differences in the ancient and modern Olympic games. They are able to label accurately the main buildings in a Greek town such as stadium, council hall and the agora. The pupils use their reading skills well to find out more information about the topics they study.

70. The very good teaching observed and the response of the pupils to the lively and interesting lessons ensures that they gain much from the subject. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 enjoy learning about mummification during Egyptian times and are enthralled when the teacher explains how the heart was balanced against a feather to judge the quality of a person's life. The good range of group tasks set by the teachers in these lessons adds much to the knowledge gained and range from research skills to archaeology tasks involving the search for buried 'treasures'. The teachers provided clear instructions and guidance for each group that ensured that all pupils had a clear understanding of what was expected from them.

71. The enthusiastic co-ordinator provides good leadership and has revised the scheme of work in line with the new National Curriculum and this is reflected in the teachers' planning. This now needs to be considered alongside the two-year cycle with geography, and the imbalance in time allocation that allows some classes within the same age group more time than others.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

72. The pupils' attainment is in line with that expected nationally and their learning is satisfactory. This picture indicates a marked improvement from the previous inspection when standards in information communication technology (ICT) were judged to be below average and both the teaching and the pupils' progress was unsatisfactory. Much of this improvement is due to the careful planning for the use of computers to support the pupils' learning and the use that is being made of the new computer suite. This is having a very positive impact on the rate at which the pupils' are learning new skills.

73. By the time they are 11 the pupils have an appropriate range of skills and clearly enjoy using the computers. They have a good knowledge of the opportunities available from ICT. They use the Internet with confidence. They were observed during an art lesson researching Henry Moore and were able to download pictures of his sculptures and details of his life. In history, the pupils have researched details of mummification during work on the Egyptians. They copied and pasted pictures from the Internet and incorporated these and photographs taken with the digital camera into their text. They used the computer to present their findings, in a variety of graphs following a healthy eating tuck shop survey.

They recorded the results of a breathing survey, connected to science work, on to a spreadsheet and converted the data into a line graph. The pupils have a sound knowledge of the opportunities available on the tool bar when using the computer, and they are eager to demonstrate a range of short cuts when editing their work. They know how to combine text with a graph and use this to present the findings of a survey about the most popular low fat spread.

74. The teaching is good. The teachers plan appropriate opportunities to use ICT to support learning across the curriculum. This was particularly noticeable in Years 5 and 6 where teachers were observed confidently planning the use of the computers to support the pupils' learning in history and poetry. The teaching in the computer suite is effective and the teachers manage the pupils well. Lessons are characterised by a lively, confidence boosting approach and good subject knowledge. The pupils are encouraged to work independently on a range of tasks and also with the support of a partner. This enables them to try new ideas and to appreciate the opportunities available. There were often gasps of wonder when a new skill was put into practice by the pupils. A few of the teachers, however, still lack a little confidence in the subject. The subject is well managed and the enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator is aware of the need for further staff development. A yearly programme for ICT along with the action plan for improvement are helping to develop the subject and ensure the most effective use of ICT in other subjects.

MUSIC

75. Three lessons of music were seen. Other evidence was gained from listening to music in assembly, scrutinising teachers' planning, talking to pupils, looking at displays and photographs and listening to tapes. Although isolated instances of good work were presented, overall there was insufficient evidence to make a secure judgement on the standards pupils reach in composing, performing or appraising music by the time they are eleven. However their standard of singing is in line with expectations for their age by the time they leave the school.

76. Encouraged by the coordinator, singing is beginning to take an important role in the life of the school. The choir has many opportunities to perform in public and to bring their enjoyable experiences back to school to share with their classmates. A good example of this was their participation in a massed choir when they sang songs from many countries of the world. They then enjoyed sharing some of these in the appropriate language in assembly creating a pleasurable experience for all. In assembly the pupils sing two-part songs well clearly holding the tune and rhythm of verse against chorus. They pay attention to tempo and dynamics and their diction is clear. In lessons the younger pupils repeat short melodic phrases accurately, carefully copying a variety of rhythms. Teachers frequently add to the pupils' enjoyment and hold their interest, as they make lessons fun by encouraging appropriate actions to songs. Older pupils are enjoying learning a 'Geordie' folksong 'Cushie Butterfield' as part of English work on dialect, whilst others have composed and recorded a good 'Water Cycle Rap' in association with science. Although pupils remember songs well they have great difficulty in retaining other musical information, consequently the isolated examples of percussion and notation work were of a low standard. Good provision is made for pupils to have tuition in cello and violin and those who do so benefit greatly from this experience and reach an appropriate standard.

77. The quality of teaching seen was always satisfactory and often good. Planning indicates that all teachers are aware that pupils do not have a firm foundation of musical knowledge and so they make every effort to make lessons enjoyable to motivate pupils and hold their interest. The quality of lessons is varied, however, as there is no progressive scheme of work for teachers to follow, they do not always build on prior learning either from

term to term or across year groups. Moreover, classes have a mixed age range and lessons do not provide suitable differentiation to match the varying needs of year groups.

78. Overall the subject is managed satisfactorily. There are some strengths and some weaknesses. The coordinator has tried to raise the profile of music in the school by supporting teachers and providing rich singing experiences for pupils. She is aware of the shortcomings and has started to put in place appropriate support for teachers.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

79. No lessons were observed during the inspection period. Some evidence was gained by talking to pupils and teachers and by looking at photographic displays. However there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the standards pupils attain by the time they are eleven.

80. Photographic evidence and newspaper cuttings show that, encouraged by their teacher, thirty pupils enjoyed taking part in the Junior Great North Run and this led to organising a two mile inter school run. All pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 have swimming lessons and by the end of the school year most are able to swim twenty-five metres. Pupils also have the opportunity to play in netball and football teams, competing against other schools with a good degree of success. They are conscientious at lunchtime practices and girls in Year 6 discussed their netball successes with enthusiasm.

81. There is currently no permanent coordinator for physical education, but a teacher is reviewing the scheme of work. She has ensured all aspects are covered and has drawn up a long and medium term cycle of skills for teachers to follow. Teachers take their individual lesson plans from the Local Education Authority's own guidelines. Their choices are not monitored for content or differentiation or to ensure that skills are progressively developed through year groups.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

82. By the time they leave the school, the pupils' work reaches the standard expected in the locally agreed syllabus and the pupils make good progress in the subject in all years. This reflects the situation at the last inspection. The pupils study a broad range of religions and display a good level of interest.

83. In Years 3 and 4 the pupils broaden their understanding of other religions through studying Buddhism. They know the story of the first Buddha and the ways in which Buddhists try to lead a good life. When they look at pictures of hands in symbolic positions, they suggest what the gestures might mean by using what they know about Buddhist practices and beliefs. The pupils often struggle to express their ideas but show a good level of concentration. They extend their understanding of symbols by devising one to represent what they see as a characteristic of a friend and by identifying symbols in everyday life that guide their behaviour. In Years 5 and 6 the pupils were studying Hinduism during the inspection and displayed a good understanding of the significance of puja. They could explain how the rituals of puja promote meditation, rouse the senses and demonstrate respect for a god. They knew that Sikhs try to make a pilgrimage to Amritsar and used their knowledge of this religion to suggest why Hindus go on pilgrimages, such as, to become closer to God, or to follow in a person's footsteps.

84. The teaching is good and has some very good features in Years 5 and 6. The work is challenging and makes the pupils think about how different religions affect people's way of life. The pupils learn at a good rate because the work builds well on what they already

know and understand. In the lesson seen in a Year 3 and 4 class, the teacher's skilful management of the class discussion about symbols enabled the pupils to understand the significance of the lotus flower. Her sensitive prompting of pupils to explore their ideas and express opinions resulted in a pupil suggesting that the lotus flower was a symbol of change from bad to good because 'it grows out from the mud into a beautiful flower'. In a very good lesson with a Year 5 and 6 class, the pupils' eagerness to learn was displayed in the speed with which they organised themselves after returning from a swimming lesson. The teacher's very good questioning pressed them to express why they might want to get closer to God and how that would make them feel. The pupils were encouraged to use what they knew about the use of water in Christianity, and the significance of water in the ritual of puja, to suggest why Hindus immerse themselves in the Ganges.

85. The subject is well led and ensures that the teachers' planning closely reflects the local guidelines. The resources are well used to promote the pupils' interest and involvement in practical activities. The school extends the pupils' understanding through their involvement in dance and drama. For example, a group of pupils in Years 5 and 6 were involved in a dramatic dance based on the Hindu creation story and at Christmas the school production was based on how the Nativity would have unfolded in South Stanley.