

## INSPECTION REPORT

**FULWELL INFANT SCHOOL**

SUNDERLAND

LEA area: SUNDERLAND

Unique reference number: 108764

Headteacher: Mrs S Alcock

Reporting inspector: Mr D Twist  
1492

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> February 2000

Inspection number: 215573

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	County
Age range of pupils:	3 to 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ebdon Lane Fulwell Sunderland
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C. Crann
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr D Twist	Registered inspector	Art Design and technology Information technology	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well is the school managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Mrs J Hughes	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	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?
Mrs L Traves	Team inspector	Provision for the under-fives Special educational needs English as an additional language English	
Mr B Ashcroft	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Physical education	How well are pupils taught?
Mr P Snelling	Team inspector	Science Music Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Fulwell Infants School is larger than average compared to most schools of this type, with 303 pupils on roll from age 3 to 7 years including 52 part time pupils in the Nursery. At the time of the inspection, 181 pupils were under the age of 6. These are taught in either the Nursery or one of the four Reception classes. The school is situated in a predominantly residential area in the northern suburbs of Sunderland and its pupils are drawn from a wide area with a mixture of privately owned and council housing. Statistics for the local area indicate that in terms of educational and social advantage, it is broadly in line with national averages. However, the percentage of pupils receiving free school meals is below the national average, as is the percentage identified as having special educational needs. There are no pupils requiring support on the grounds that English is their second language. Taken together, pupils' attainment on entry to Reception (where baseline assessments are undertaken) is slightly above average.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Fulwell Infants is a very effective school. It has maintained its high standards because there is a lot of good teaching that motivates children to try their best. The school offers high standards of care for its pupils and has created a successful partnership with parents and the community. The head teacher provides strong and purposeful leadership and is well supported by the staff and governors in working to continually improve the school. The school gives very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- It is well led and managed.
- It achieves high standards in English and mathematics.
- Relationships between all members of the school community are good and morale is high.
- Teaching is good overall and very good in Nursery and Reception.
- It takes very good care of its pupils.
- It offers a very good curriculum with interesting activities and pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development are all very well provided for.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to work and standards of behaviour are very high.
- The Nursery gives children a flying start by providing exciting experiences and building confidence.
- There is a very effective partnership with parents who support the school well.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards in handwriting and presentation of work, particularly for older pupils.
- Pupils' recording of science work.
- The use of assessment procedures to direct the next steps in pupils' learning.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in January 1997. The school has made good progress in addressing the weaknesses pointed out at that time. The interruptions to lessons in the hall and the library through their use as thoroughfares have been minimised as much as possible and lessons in those areas operate smoothly. Procedures to limit the access of vehicles to the school site at the start and end of the day are effective and the school has

done everything within its control to ensure pupil safety. The way in which the library is set out to promote pupils' access to non-fiction books has been improved and arrangements now work well. There are two issues from the last inspection in which the school has made excellent progress. The cultural and multi-cultural elements of the curriculum have been developed to the point where they are now a strength of the school and significantly stronger than in most schools. Also, the school's links with its partner junior school have been strengthened by a range of practical measures to improve the continuity of pupils' learning and to ease any concerns at the point of transfer. In a number of other areas, the school has further improved from an already strong position. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are now even stronger. The proportion of teaching which is good or better has increased and the small percentage of unsatisfactory teaching has been eradicated. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment in the major subjects have been improved, but further development is needed to gather the type of information which will enable the school to target specific skills for improvement. The school has the expertise and commitment to continue to improve in the future.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7-year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
Reading	A	A	A	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Writing	A	A	B	C	
Mathematics	A	A	A	B	

These are very good results and they show that by the time pupils leave the school, they have achieved at least what is expected of them and often well beyond. Standards in reading and in mathematics are both well above the national average and have remained so for the past three years. They are also above average when compared to schools with similar intakes. In writing, standards are above the national average, but in line with those of similar schools. In all three areas, more children attain higher levels than in other schools.

When the school's performance trends are compared to those found nationally, they reveal that other schools have caught up slightly in writing and mathematics although it must be remembered that when a school has consistently performed better than average, it is more difficult to continually get better. In the case of reading, however, the school has mirrored the national trend by maintaining a steady improvement from an already strong position. Work seen during the inspection confirms the above results, although within English, the standard of handwriting is seen as too low.

In the other subjects of the curriculum, pupils' standards are average in information technology and better than usually found in all other subjects. Attainment in religious education meets the requirements of the local syllabus. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress across the school.

Attainment by the youngest pupils in Nursery and Reception is good and most exceed expectations in the areas of language, mathematics and personal and social development.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good overall and excellent in Nursery and Reception. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They listen well and work hard. Their enthusiasm for learning is an important reason why they achieve well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The vast majority of children behave well both in lessons and around the school. They are polite and courteous and show consideration for others.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between all members of the school community are very strong throughout. Children work together well and respond well to all opportunities for taking responsibility
Attendance	Broadly in line with the national average. Pupils arrive in good time and lessons start promptly.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	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.*

11 percent of teaching is excellent, 31 per cent is very good, 36 per cent is good and 22 per cent satisfactory. There is no unsatisfactory teaching.

The teaching in Nursery and Reception is of consistently high quality and never less than good. Teachers carefully identify what pupils are to learn in lessons, expect a lot of them and teach at a lively pace. This high quality of teaching results in very good learning for these pupils.

In two of the Year 2 classes, there is a high proportion of more ordinary teaching, but in the other Year 2 class, and in the three Year 1 classes, the teaching is good and often very good. Factors which account for the more ordinary teaching are occasional dips in the pace of activity and inconsistent expectations of pupils' presentation of work.

Overall, teachers are very good at teaching literacy and numeracy skills, in particular teaching children how to read, and they conduct effective mental arithmetic lessons which help pupils to understand the relationships between numbers.

The teaching meets the needs of all pupils well. Those with special needs and higher achieving pupils are well supported and are mostly provided with work at the right level of challenge. In the majority of lessons, the teaching motivates pupils very well. As a result, they work hard and their enthusiastic approach makes a valuable contribution to their learning.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	It is very good. The quality and range of activities in the Nursery is a particular strength. The curriculum places a high priority on English and mathematics, but care is taken to ensure that pupils receive a good range of experiences in other subjects. Visits and visitors are very well used to enhance the quality of pupils' learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for these pupils is good. Their needs are carefully identified and individual plans are drawn up to support them. These plans are regularly used to guide their lessons but some of their targets could be set out in smaller steps. Parents are well consulted and the school monitors progress carefully.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is an extremely strong area of the school. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good in all areas. The development of pupils' multicultural awareness is excellent. There is a strong personal, social and health education programme and pupils have plenty opportunities to reflect upon relevant issues. As a result, the pupils have a strong understanding of right and wrong.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school offers a very high standard of care. Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety, including child protection are very good. Staff know the children very well and make sure that they are safe and happy at school. Very detailed records are kept to track pupils' progress, but the school does not yet record precisely what they can and can't do in writing and mathematics in order to direct future learning.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	There is effective leadership. The head teacher focuses the efforts of the school and is well supported by those with key responsibilities. This strong team puts the school's aims into action and there is clear direction for the school's work. The management of special needs is good and that of under fives is very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body fulfil all their key statutory responsibilities with the exception of the appraisal of teachers and the reporting of pupils' achievement to parents in some subjects.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school analyses its performance very thoroughly in terms of the levels of achievement that pupils reach, or are likely to reach. However, it does not always look deeply enough into why pupils attain as they do and what they need to do to improve further. The school has a good overall understanding of its main strengths and weaknesses and has identified sensible priorities for attention.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of the resources it has and there are no major shortages. It applies the principles of best value when planning to spend money and gets good value from the services and materials it buys. Staffing levels and the quality of accommodation are good. The governors and headteacher plan ahead successfully

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The staff are very approachable.</li><li>• The teaching is good and children achieve good standards.</li><li>• The school encourages very good attitudes and behaviour.</li><li>• All staff know children well and there is a high standard of care.</li><li>• The school provides plenty of information.</li><li>• Children are settled into school very effectively and like coming to school.</li><li>• The school is well led.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A few parents do not like the computerised elements of pupils' reports.</li></ul>

The inspection team agrees entirely with the parents' very positive views of the school, but would also endorse the view that reports need to be improved so that parents are told more about what their children achieve.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. For pupils aged 7, national test results have been consistently well above average over the last three years in reading and mathematics. In writing, results have also been well above average in both 1997 and 1998, but are described as above average for 1999, the most recent cohort of pupils to take the tests. When results for the latest tests are compared to those of similar schools, (those with the lowest percentages of free school meals), pupils are performing at a similar level in writing, and an above average level in reading and mathematics. In all three areas, the percentage of pupils who exceed the expected level of attainment is higher than in most schools.
2. In science, pupils' attainment is assessed by teachers. In 1999 it was judged to be above average. Again, the proportion of pupils considered to be achieving a higher than expected level was well above that of most schools. Highest attainment is in the area experimental and investigative science.
3. Test results indicate that there is little difference in the performance of boys and girls in reading and mathematics. In writing, girls have overall performed slightly better than boys over the last four years, but both groups have been significantly above average over this period.
4. When assessed on entry to Reception classes, the overall ability of the most recent intake is slightly above average in most areas of learning, but in mathematics it is below average. By the time they are five, most will have met expectations in the areas of creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world. They will have exceeded these in the key areas of personal and social development, language and literacy, and mathematics as well as in physical development. Overall, achievement is very good for the children in Nursery and Reception.
5. Based upon the work seen during the inspection, findings are that pupils' attainment is still in line with the good standards that the school has been achieving, in English, mathematics and science. Within English, by the time they are in Year 2, pupils' standards of work are highest in reading and in speaking and listening where they are developing a good vocabulary. In writing, standards overall are closer to average for most pupils although some will exceed this. Spelling is strong, but in handwriting, progress is much slower than in other areas. In mathematics, pupils' achieve well in all the main aspects, but do particularly well in their number work. Their mental arithmetic is strong and they have a good grasp of basic calculation. In science, pupils have a good level of understanding across all the main strands of the subject and their experimental and investigative work is of a high standard. Their recording in science, however, could be better and needs more detail and a wider range of approaches. In information technology, standards have been maintained since the last inspection and are in line with expectations. Pupils are learning keyboard skills at a good rate and have a good understanding of a range of applications, but they do not fully utilise these during other lessons. In religious education, pupils make good progress and meet the standards set out in the local syllabus.

6. In art, design technology, geography, history, music and physical education, standards are better than those found in most schools. Pupils are given a sufficiently broad, well- planned and balanced experience which helps them to make good progress. An important factor in pupils' progress is that appropriate demands are placed upon them by teachers in most of their work.
7. Pupils who have special needs achieve well in relation to their ability and make good progress towards the goals set out in their individual education plans. Those pupils who can achieve more than is normally expected are also given work at an appropriate level and as a result they progress well to higher levels of attainment.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

8. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are very good and they have a very positive impact on the progress pupils make. Children under five demonstrate excellent attitudes to their learning; they make the most of the considerable opportunities the school offers to extend their personal development and they become increasingly independent as a result.
9. Younger children in Nursery and Reception classes are extremely attentive and show excellent listening skills. For example, during a circle time activity, Nursery children listened extremely well to their classmates as they talked about the favourite toy they took to bed. Most knew to speak only when holding the special rabbit and they listened carefully to the contribution of others. They were all confident enough to say something and enjoyed listening to what other children found comforting.
10. Behaviour of children under five is excellent and allows them all to benefit from the very positive learning environment which teachers create. They co-operate and share resources extremely well, without fuss or time wasting. They also follow instructions very well, mainly because they listen so carefully. For example, when the fire fighter came to speak to all Reception children, classes took turns to walk down the corridor to listen to him. They were very well organised, settled equally well in the staff room for his talk as they usually do in classrooms and asked very sensible questions. Such high standards of behaviour allow teaching to proceed at a brisk pace and children learn more as a result.
11. Young children show high levels of independence in all areas of school life and they achieve excellent levels of personal development. Children make the most of every opportunity the school offers to experience new ideas and participate in different activities. On their arrival in the morning, for example, Nursery children immediately find an engaging activity and Reception children settle quickly for registration. These young children also show good levels of co-operation, helping one another with problems. For example, one poured a drink for a child with special educational needs who found difficulty coping independently.
12. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 also demonstrate very good attitudes to school. They are keen and hardworking, enjoy coming to school and show many of the same attributes as the younger children. They are eager to be involved in all aspects of school life and many participate in the extra-curricular gymnastics club or the recorder club. There are a few times, however, when the attitudes of a small number of pupils are not quite as good and this slows the rate of the progress

they make in some lessons. This occurs during some of the more ordinary teaching when teachers' management of pupils' behaviour does not maintain their concentration at the usual high level.

13. Behaviour for the vast majority of older pupils is good, both in classrooms and around the school. There have been no exclusions from school in the past year. Pupils behave particularly well in the dining hall and usually during collective worship. Pupils are unfailingly well mannered and are keen to chat to visitors about what they like in school and what they have been doing. Parents have a very positive view of behaviour in the school. Lunchtime staff are consistent in their use of agreed school approaches and they maintain the high expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils value the stickers they are awarded by their lunchtime "nannies".
14. Pupils' personal development is very good and this helps them to become increasingly mature and independent. They work well together on the computer, for example and carry out any duties responsibly. Year 2 pupils act as cloakroom monitors and help to maintain a tidy and welcoming environment. The school provides many diverse opportunities for pupils to extend their personal development, offering them links with a school in Malaysia for example and teaching them about the diversity of other cultures in religious education and collective worship.
15. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Younger and older children play and work very well together and they also form very positive relationships with adults in the school. They feel secure in the very positive and friendly atmosphere created by all the staff and adults in school and this helps them to produce their best work. Lunchtime kitchen staff and "nannies" make sure lunchtimes are very pleasant social occasions for all the children. They help children with their meals and chat to them about what they have been doing at school and at home.
16. Levels of attendance are good in all year groups and are broadly in line with the national average, exceeding it by about one per cent. There are no examples of unauthorised absence. Pupils arrive at school on time and this ensures a prompt start to the day. Pupils and parents are clear about the school's expectations on attendance and punctuality and they are familiar with all the registration protocols. Children under the age of five also attend very regularly and are brought to school on time. Regular attendance across the school helps pupils to make good rates of progress in their learning.
17. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development were praised at the last inspection. All three have improved still further since then. Levels of attendance have also improved.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

18. Since the last inspection when there was some unsatisfactory teaching, there have been improvements and the quality of teaching overall has risen. In two Year 2 classes, there is a higher proportion of ordinary teaching, but in the other Year 2 class and in the three Year 1 classes it is good overall and sometimes very good. The best teaching is in the Nursery and Reception classes where it is consistently of a very high quality and often excellent. There is no unsatisfactory teaching.

19. The teaching in Nursery and Reception has many common features and is equally effective in both. No teaching was considered to be less than good in these classes. There is excellent management and organisation of pupils resulting in high standards of behaviour. The teaching of early reading skills and awareness of number is very well done and teachers share good ideas for their lessons through the system of joint planning. Very good day-to-day assessment is used by teachers to get a clear picture of what children can do so that they can adjust their teaching to create the right levels of challenge for the children. A good example of this was when the children were working with and naming common two-dimensional shapes such as triangles, squares and circles, to make a large mobile for the classroom. As the children became familiar with the shape they were using, the teacher guided them to a different shape and, as a result of her assessment, adjusted her teaching to move on to more difficult ideas when she was sure that the children had mastered the concepts. There is very good use of adult support and this helps particular groups of pupils such as those with special educational needs, to learn faster. Throughout the school, support staff make a valuable contribution to teaching, especially when they are working with the pupils on their activities. The staff create a stimulating learning environment to support a wide range of activities which engage and challenge the children. Prompts such as ideas for new vocabulary or reminders of basic number rules help them to both extend their writing and to check their work. Staff have a very encouraging manner which is positive and motivating and which fires enthusiasm and creates excitement in the children's learning. They bring learning alive and this helps the children to make good progress by improving their confidence and concentration.
20. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 ranges from satisfactory to excellent, with the majority being good. Teachers manage the vast majority of their pupils well and have high expectations of their behaviour. Relationships between the teachers and pupils are strong and most lessons are characterised by a purposeful working atmosphere, in which pupils co-operate well. In most lessons, good open questioning draws out and builds on pupils' prior knowledge. Their prior learning is noted in teachers' lesson plans as the basis from which to move forwards. Teachers plan in sufficient detail and usually set out clearly what they want pupils to learn and share this with the class. This means that the pupils know what they are doing and why they are doing it as, for example, when in Year 1, they practised reading a text with expression, using clues such as exclamation marks. Pupils were focused on the task in hand because they understood that their reading would be more interesting if they were able to use all the clues in a text. In most lessons, tasks of varying difficulty are offered to pupils of different abilities. This prevents pupils becoming bored with their work because it is too easy, or frustrated because it is too hard.
21. A weakness in some of the more ordinary lessons occurs when the pace of learning drops from time to time, particularly in Year 2. For example, number resources took a long time to organise in a Year 2 numeracy lesson and this frustrated the pupils who were ready to get on with the mental arithmetic activity. This reduced motivation and concentration. There are some inconsistent expectations of presentation and teachers sometimes accept work that is not the best pupils can do. A result of this is that overall presentation is not of a high enough standard, particularly for Year 2 pupils. In Key Stage 1 there are times when support staff could be more productively employed during introductions in

literacy and numeracy hour sessions when they are sometimes part of 'the audience'.

22. Teachers are good at developing pupils' skills in both literacy and numeracy. Books are well used to capture pupils' interest in both fiction and non-fiction material. Teachers are skilled at drawing out pupils' opinions on characters in the stories they read and at pointing out effective vocabulary and descriptions which in turn help pupils to write better stories. Phonic skills are taught well and pupils soon begin to use the strategies given to them in order to read new or unfamiliar words. Teachers are good at promoting the use of basic number skills as they demand explanations from pupils during effective mental arithmetic sessions for example. They build carefully on previous knowledge and give close attention to encouraging pupils to think of as many alternative ways of arriving at an answer as possible. This builds children's confidence in their number bonds and motivates them to attempt new challenges. Teachers all concentrate upon introducing the children to correct terminology and this helps pupils to recognise and use correct mathematical vocabulary in their work.
23. Pupils with special education needs are taught well throughout the school. They will often be involved in the same work as other children, but with additional guidance or support when necessary. When they are given specific tasks to complete, as for example in English and mathematics, this is set in line with their individual education plans. These are very focused on individual needs, but they would be easier to teach to if some of the broader targets were divided into smaller steps. The tasks given to them are well matched to their abilities and teachers and other adults give them as much support as possible. The pupils respond well by trying hard.
24. English, Maths and Science lessons all featured very good teaching. This was particularly strong in mathematics, where over half was judged to be very good or better. Between all the other subjects observed, there is no significant difference in the quality of the teaching, with a strong overall picture and no particular weaknesses. As a result, pupils show interest and motivation which helps them to achieve standards which are better than in most other schools.
25. A modest amount of homework is used to encourage pupils to practise skills such as reading and spelling and even the youngest pupils are asked to bring in contributions from home to classroom collections of same-coloured items for example. This is often done without a note for home in a deliberate and successful attempt to develop the children's sense of personal responsibility.

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

26. A very good quality curriculum is provided for children under five in the Nursery and Reception classes, which effectively promotes progress in all the recommended areas of learning. It has an appropriate emphasis upon the key areas of literacy and numeracy and is practically based, relevant to pupils' interests, and well planned to meet the requirements of all abilities. For example, pupils with special needs are provided with carefully chosen and appropriate work. Opportunities offered for outdoor play are very good.

27. In Key Stage 1, the curriculum is both broad and balanced, and it fulfils statutory requirements. All subjects receive sufficient attention, although a high priority is given to literacy and numeracy. The school has successfully adopted the national guidelines in these two areas and this results in valuable learning opportunities during the literacy and numeracy hours. It has also adopted the most recent national guidelines for other subjects and this has helped the school to continue to offer valuable experiences to children in all other curriculum areas. A particular strength is enrichment through the use of visits and visitors. This has a significant impact on work in literacy, religious education, science, geography and history.
28. The school has effective strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy. Provision for both areas is thoroughly planned and well resourced, both with commercial and teacher-made aids.
29. The school makes good provision for extra-curricular activities and this has a positive impact on pupils' personal and social development. The gymnastics club is very popular and different groups of children attend the two weekly sessions. Musical interests are catered for by a recorder group which is also popular with pupils and extends their musical knowledge and understanding.
30. Very good provision is made for pupils' personal, social and health education, which enables them to acquire basic skills and information about how to live a safe, healthy life and become a productive member of society. There is a clear structure to the school's programme, which is well co-ordinated by the teacher responsible. She gives a clear direction to the aims of the programme and ensures personal, social and health education is delivered throughout the school, primarily through circle time. The current focus is to gain a Healthy School Award and the school is well on its way to achieving this. Pupils' knowledge of health-related issues such as nutritious foods and healthy lifestyles and choices is improving as a result. The school's sex education policy is well considered and age-appropriate information is given to pupils on aspects of drugs' misuse.
31. The school delivers a very good, socially inclusive curriculum. Its policies pay due regard to issues of equality of opportunity and all pupils are encouraged to take full advantage of every aspect of the curriculum.
32. There is very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and all four aspects make a very significant impact on pupils' overall personal development.
33. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good and gives them the opportunity to experience moments of wonder at the world around them such as when science experiments on magnetism produce intriguing results. The daily acts of collective worship are carefully prepared and the lit candle symbolises a "special time" for the children. Joyful and tuneful singing is an important feature of collective worship. "God's wonderful world" is displayed in many classrooms and corridors and children regularly celebrate beauties of the natural world such as rainforests, mountains and planets, in their artwork. The school encourages children to think about the world in which they live and all were able to make an individual wish for the world during the recent millennium church service, held jointly with the junior school. Examples of children's wishes include "I wish people didn't die of hunger" and "I wish people didn't kill animals".

34. The school makes very good provision for moral development. Pupils have a very clear understanding of the differences between right and wrong. They treat each other and the school environment with respect. Collective worship, religious education and personal, social and health education programmes of study help pupils to realise that everyone is different but equally special. The school helps to raise children's awareness of the needs of the less fortunate members of society. They, along with their parents, raise large amounts of money for local and national charities such as 'Children in Need' day and to benefit a Nursery school in Gambia.
35. The school makes very good provision for pupils' social development and this helps them to become useful and mature members of the school community and the wider world. Personal and social development is given a very high priority by the school. Staff offer pupils the opportunity to experience a range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities, which extend their personal knowledge and increase their self-confidence. Lunchtime and welfare staff make a strong contribution to children's social development by providing very positive role models for them to emulate. This helps them to develop into caring and well-rounded individuals.
36. There is very good provision overall for pupils' cultural development and the school offers a very good insight into the local cultural heritage. Pupils visit the local church and make a pilgrimage, complete with banners, to Durham Cathedral. Children learn about the impact that famous people and their inventions have had on their lives - George Stephenson, for example, and they also study local housing and buildings from the past. Photographic evidence also illustrates some well observed Year 1 artwork, linked to map work studies in local geography. Work on the "Nutcracker Castle" as part of the music curriculum helped pupils to understand their musical culture.
37. The school makes excellent provision for pupils' multicultural development. Aspects of this provision are included throughout the curriculum and ensure children have a very firm understanding of the values of other cultures. This is achieved with much thought by the head teacher and staff, but is never tokenistic. It adds real value to the pupils' understanding of others' faiths and religions. One assembly for example, illustrated how the Chinese calendar came to be associated with twelve animals. Children participated in the role-play and learned how the Rat cheated and caused the names of the Chinese years to alternate. Pupils study and copy works of art by Van Gogh, Monet and Picasso and pupils in Year 1 prepare collages of national costumes from around the world. Some children listen to the Australian version of the Twelve Days of Christmas and there are also colourful examples of Aboriginal art. Celebrations linked to food such as American Thanksgiving are also well used to stimulate children's interest in other cultures. Harvest offerings from around the world and participation in the Faith Exhibition at Sunderland synagogue where children learned about dietary law and tasted foods, are a few examples of the extensive list of opportunities children experience during their time at the school. These are very well thought out by the school and help children become more aware of the diversity of cultures outside their own.
38. The school maintains very good links with the community and this adds an extra dimension to pupils' learning. Educational visits and visitors invited into school by staff make a very positive contribution to children's learning. They experience first

hand opportunities, such as life in Victorian Britain at the Beamish museum or travelling by train into the city, to listen to a story session at the library. Younger children are able to follow up the fire fighters' talks in school by visiting the local fire station themselves. This gives them a better understanding of how people in the community help others. Visitors, such as members of the local Jewish community, expand pupils' understanding of other faiths and cultures. There is no specific sponsorship from local businesses, but shopkeepers and retailers are generous in their support of the school's overall fundraising activities.

39. The school has established very constructive relationships with partner institutions which, in particular, promote a smooth transfer to junior school for pupils in Year 2. These links have improved considerably since the last inspection when they were a key issue for action identified in the report. The head teacher has worked hard to build a very productive links with her counterpart in the junior school and links are now firmly established. The schools have participated in a local infant/junior liaison project funded by the local education authority and this has been beneficial to staff and pupils. For example, one issue which always worried the Year 2 children was how they would find their way around the school, so junior pupils draw them maps of their building. Year 2 pupils also visit the junior school's wildlife garden to undertake a science project, working alongside Year 5 pupils and this helps to build the younger children's confidence and self-esteem. The schools now produce a joint newsletter and have a variety of planned curricular activities for the coming year, all designed to enhance the quality of communication and transfer. Some useful links are maintained with local Nursery providers, particularly those in the same cluster group. These help children from the two main feeder nurseries to settle well with the rest of the Reception cohort when they first begin school. Useful links are also maintained with some further education providers. Students from Sunderland University, for example, attend on work placements and the school ensures they make a useful contribution to children's learning.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

40. The school takes very good care of its pupils and this has a very positive impact on their attitudes to school and the progress they make. Very good pastoral care is a strong feature of the school and children mature both personally and academically in the secure and welcoming atmosphere created by adults who understand their individual needs.
41. Child protection arrangements are secure and staff are familiar with the procedures. The head teacher is very conscientious in her duty of care and involves outside support agencies whenever appropriate. The individual needs of children looked after by the local authority are also very well met.
42. All issues of health and safety are very carefully addressed by the school. The caretaker works closely with the head teacher to ensure a safe and well-maintained working environment for the whole school community. First aid procedures are effective and the school carefully records the provision and administration of any first aid.
43. The school has very effective procedures to promote good attendance and behaviour. Adults are consistent in their promotion of positive behaviour and the head teacher is careful to emphasise to parents the importance of regular

attendance during the year. The school secretary monitors pupils' attendance carefully and is quick to follow up any unexplained absence. The school works closely with the local education welfare officer to improve the attendance of any children causing concern.

44. The school keeps a very close eye on how well pupils are progressing by tracking their current level of attainment carefully, even predicting their future achievement levels for almost two years ahead. Teachers record pupils' level of attainment regularly across an unusually wide range of subjects and this information is passed on to successive teachers who plan their work at an appropriate level on the basis of how well most pupils have done. This gives the school a clear picture of its overall performance and particularly the way in which a whole cohort of children is progressing. What it does not do, particularly in writing and mathematics, is to analyse precisely what pupils can and can't do in a way which would allow the school to set specific targets for individuals or small groups. One result of this is that the school finds it harder to develop the work of lower achievers in these two areas because it does not know precisely enough which skills need further development.
45. The school provides very effective support and advice for its pupils and this has a positive impact on their academic progress, personal development, behaviour and attendance. Staff have a very good understanding of where pupils' broad strengths and weaknesses lie and a very clear knowledge of their backgrounds which helps them to offer the best possible support for pupils in both academic and pastoral areas. Provision for pupils with special educational needs for example is good. Pupils who need them are provided with individual education plans, which cover, as appropriate, literacy, numeracy and behaviour. Sometimes the targets set within these are too broad, but teachers use them well as the basis of their planning.
46. Teachers are generally consistent in their management of pupils' behaviour and this helps pupils to know what is expected of them and what sanctions will follow from any misdemeanours. For example, during a Year 2 circle time activity, one pupil interrupted the flow of the lesson on several occasions. The teacher alerted him several times to the final sanction of an official warning, which he eventually received. The rest of the class were disappointed that this stopped them from receiving a whole class award for good behaviour on this occasion, but his behaviour improved considerably as a result.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

47. Parents and carers have extremely positive views of the school, as expressed in questionnaire responses, at the pre-inspection parents' meeting and to inspectors during the inspection. Their responses are similar to those reported at the last inspection. Parents are particularly impressed with the pastoral care offered to their children and feel that this helps to develop very positive attitudes to school.
48. The school maintains very effective links with parents and carers and this ensures that a firm foundation is established from which parents can make a major contribution to their children's learning, both in school and at home. The school is seen by parents as a friendly and welcoming place and they appreciate the very good relationships which the school establishes, leading to security for their children and good channels of communication.

49. Nursery staff make initial home visits which set a positive tone for future home school links. As a result of the confidence they gain from these, children settle quickly into school routines and they make rapid early progress, particularly with their personal and social development. Parent notice boards, the school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents, along with regular parent teacher consultations, keep parents well informed about school life and the overall progress their children are making during the year. Teachers discuss individual achievement with parents and show them the regular assessments they make of their children. Although parents are happy with the information they receive throughout the year, the quality of the end-of-year written reports to parents is unsatisfactory. Detailed, evaluative comment is made on individual attainment and targets for improvement are often given in English and mathematics but, for all other areas of the curriculum, the reports simply record what children have been taught. The reports do not tell parents how well their children are performing, whether their work is of a good enough standard or what they need to do to improve their work in any of the foundation subjects or in the core areas of science, religious education or information and communication technology. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept very well informed of the progress their children make and are involved in all their academic reviews. This enables them to offer specific help to their children at home and support their classroom tasks more easily.
50. The school provides very good levels of curriculum information for parents, both in school and through letters home. This helps parents to understand what their children are learning and enables them to provide appropriate support at home. A particularly useful feature is found in the Nursery where the teacher extracts key activities from the planning displays and highlights them for easier reference on the parents' notice board.
51. There is a very effective school response to any concerns raised by parents. For example, the issue of their child's transfer from infant to junior school caused worries for many parents. The school has been very active in pursuing this as an area for improvement and now works extremely closely with the junior school to ensure pupils are very familiar with the physical environment and expectations of staff before they move on to the next stage in their schooling.
52. The very good levels of involvement by parents and carers with the work of the school have a very positive impact on children's learning and the standards they achieve. An unusually large number of regular parent helpers, for example, make a strong contribution in classrooms, working closely with teachers to ensure they make maximum impact on children's learning. Parents also offer very good support for children's homework activities such as reading and this increases pupils' achievement through providing more practise in basic skills. Parents regularly complete reading records and their involvement helps children to develop a love of books and reading. They also support the school's efforts to improve the independence of pupils. Most are willing to leave their children at the door in the morning, for example, and Nursery parents help their children to become more independent by responding to verbal requests their children make for objects representing, for example, the colour of the week. This encourages the youngest children to remember messages for themselves and not to simply rely on a letter from the school given directly to parents and carers. The simply worded

Home-School Agreement also sets a very positive tone for relations between parents, carers and the school.

53. This is a particularly strong area of the school's work and the school should be proud of how well it has developed its partnership.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

54. The school is very well led and fully deserving of the esteem in which it is held by its parents. The head teacher gives strong leadership and sets a clear direction for the work of the school. She is the driving force behind the school and is instrumental in focusing its work, but is very well supported by a committed senior management team, staff and governing body. Morale in the school is high.
55. The head teacher has given priority to the maintenance of high standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, whilst protecting the quality of other parts of the curriculum. Inspection findings clearly indicate that this has been achieved. A key strength in the school's leadership is its awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's analysis of its own performance data has provided a clear picture of where pupils are doing well and where there is some room for further improvement. This has enabled the school to predict future performance for some two years ahead, based upon the levels of attainment pupils have reached. Whilst this allows groups of pupils to be identified for extra support, there is insufficient information available about what they can or can't do to direct their next stage of learning to full effect in some areas. The head teacher, supported by the relevant co-ordinators, regularly monitors the quality of teaching, particularly in the main subjects, and discusses targets for improvement where necessary. One effect of this is that the unsatisfactory teaching noted in the previous inspection has been eliminated.
56. The current school development plan has covered three years of planned improvement and is coming to an end. Because of its length and the continuous amendments made to it, the plan is difficult to follow clearly and needs to be set out in a simpler way with annual priorities spelt out in detail. The head teacher has already recognised this and plans are in hand to produce a more accessible format for the coming planning cycle.
57. Leadership by teachers with responsibility for subjects is good overall. Whilst much of the school's energy has been directed at securing continuing high standards in Literacy and numeracy over the last two years, all subject leaders have continued to develop their areas through setting annual targets with the head teacher. Many of these have involved the introduction of new curriculum guidelines to help staff in the planning of well-balanced programmes of work. The system of joint planning within year groups, together with the regular monitoring of plans from other colleagues helps subject leaders to gain a clear picture of what is working well and what could be improved.
58. The school's budget is well managed. Expenditure is carefully targeted in line with the priorities identified in the school's development plan and funds allocated to increasing literacy resources have been wisely spent to provide a stimulating range of texts. Funds allocated to special needs are also used to good effect through providing effective additional help for those pupils with the most difficulties in very small groups.

59. The governing body identifies closely with the school and has a good awareness of the ways in which it is meeting its aims, particularly in the areas of pupil care, parental and community partnership, and the personal development of pupils. This has been achieved through a range of measures such as linking governors to curriculum areas and attending some staff in-service training and receiving reports from the head teacher. Awareness of more detailed features of the school's current levels of attainment including test results is not yet developed enough to enable the governors to fully check the school's performance, for example in how well the school is doing in different aspects of English against schools with similar features. Good attention is given to achieving value for money. Recent internal alterations for example, were carefully costed and planned to make the accommodation more suitable for delivering the school's literacy and numeracy strategies. This has been successful and the resulting improvements have met the criteria by which their effectiveness was to be judged. The governing body meets most of its statutory responsibilities with two exceptions. These are the appraisal of teachers, for which there are no formal arrangements, and reports to parents, which do not explain how well pupils have achieved in some subjects.
60. The school's accommodation is in very good condition and is clean and well maintained. The learning environment created by the staff is of high quality, with thoughtful displays to interest children and to celebrate their achievements. Resources for learning are adequate in all subjects and there are no serious shortages.
61. The school's leadership has been very effective in responding to the issues raised in the last inspection. The improvements in pupils' cultural development and in the links established with the junior school are particular examples as these are now rightly considered to be strengths of the school.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

**The head teacher, staff and governors should now address the following issues:**

- (1) Raise the standard of pupils' handwriting and presentation of work by the end of the key stage by:
- setting clear expectations for what each year group should be able to do
  - planning a consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting and the setting out of work
  - monitoring the standards which pupils achieve and the consistency of teachers' expectations.
- Paragraph references: 5, 21, 88.
- (2) Improve the quality and range of pupils' recording in their science work by:
- raising expectations of the amount of explanation given by pupils after undertaking practical investigations
  - increasing the variety of recording methods to include charts, simple diagrams and the use of information technology

Paragraph references: 5, 107, 109.

(3) Further develop the procedures for assessing pupils' work in writing and mathematics and their use to direct future work by:

- analysing and recording what pupils have demonstrated that they can and can't do
- setting individual and / or group targets based upon what pupils still need to achieve to reach the next level of attainment.

This is particularly important in raising the attainment of those pupils who are not currently on line to achieve average standards.

Paragraph references: 44, 55, 85, 105.

The following issue, whilst not a key issues for action, should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- improve the quality of reports so that they give parents a clear view of how well pupils are doing in subjects other than English and mathematics

Paragraph references: 49, 132.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	64
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	27

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
11	31	36	22	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 – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	26	277
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		14

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		36

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	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.2
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
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 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	44	60	104

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	41	39	39
	Girls	57	56	56
	Total	98	95	95
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (90 )	91 (89)	91 (97)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	37	41	41
	Girls	54	59	56
	Total	91	100	97
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (81)	96 (85)	93 (86)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

*Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	
Any other minority ethnic group	

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.1
Average class size	27.7

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y2**

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	152

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: Nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	32

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	30

Number of pupils per FTE adult	13
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

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

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

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1998-1999
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	£
Total income	526969
Total expenditure	522057
Expenditure per pupil	1505
Balance brought forward from previous year	4052
Balance carried forward to next year	8964

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	303
Number of questionnaires returned	199

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	23	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	62	35	1	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	43	2	1	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	43	43	9	0	5
The teaching is good.	71	28	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	53	38	8	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	25	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	29	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	59	38	3	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	68	29	2	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	65	34	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	35	18	6	21

## **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**

62. The Nursery admits children on a part-time basis from the September after they reach three years of age. At the time of the inspection, more than half the children in the Reception classes were also under five, having been in school for one term. The Nursery caters for 52 part-time children in all, while the Reception classes cater for around 90. Almost all Nursery children enter the school Reception classes. Most of the other children who enter the Reception classes have attended other local nurseries and playgroups.
63. Both the Nursery and the Reception classes provide a very good foundation for pupils' learning. Teachers' assessments, which are undertaken as children enter Reception show that the majority have skills slightly above those expected nationally, except in mathematics, where their skills are slightly below. Most children are on course to reach the levels expected nationally in all areas of learning by the age of five. However, in personal and social development, literacy, mathematics and physical development their attainment will exceed this. Their good progress is due, first and foremost to high quality teaching, which skilfully balances self-chosen activities with those directed by the teacher. Teachers also keep children enthralled with their imaginative, enthusiastic approach to each activity they introduce. The curriculum is very good, being broad and balanced and ensuring that children of all abilities receive a very wide range of practical, 'hands-on' experiences. Detailed assessment ensures that staff know their pupils well and can therefore cater well for their needs. A strength of teaching is the high level of teamwork between all the adults who work with the children. The atmosphere created is also a strength; it is warm, happy and relaxed, yet purposeful.

#### **Personal and social development**

64. Children in both the Nursery and the Reception classes make very good progress. Their attainment by five is likely to exceed the learning outcomes expected. All children demonstrate very positive attitudes to school. They are happy, confident and eager to learn. In the Nursery, children are already relating to each other very positively. For example, they help each other at snack-time. They take turns, share and carry out tasks co-operatively. They choose eagerly from the range of activities on offer and can concentrate on tasks for long periods. Most have good levels of independence, for example, tidying things away when they have finished with them, pouring their own drinks and switching on the listening-centre to enjoy a taped story. In the Reception classes, this very strong foundation is built on and extended very well. For example children make choices about how they will approach an activity and work with good levels of independence on tasks during literacy and numeracy lessons.
65. Teaching in personal and social development is very good. In both Nursery and Reception classes, staff take every opportunity to develop social skills and encourage positive behaviour and attitudes. For example in the Nursery, the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' was well used to provoke a discussion about right and wrong behaviour. Children in Nursery and Reception behave very well

and have excellent manners, because teachers have very high expectations in these areas.

### **Language and literacy**

66. The majority of children are on course to exceed the standards expected of them by the age of five. Good progress is made in the development of spoken language. All pupils under five are happy to talk to adults about their work and their play. In Nursery they develop their conversation skills as they produce a show in the puppet theatre or act as workers on the building-site. Reception children develop these skills further, as they work together in the baby clinic, the office or the doctor's surgery, booking appointments and giving treatment. Children in both Nursery and Reception love stories, poems and rhymes. They join in enthusiastically with well-known tales such as 'Goldilocks', using appropriate voices, and listen attentively as teachers read to them. Reception children have particularly well-developed listening skills and this has a very positive impact on all aspects of their learning because they retain teachers' instructions so well.
67. In the Nursery, children are making good progress in understanding that print has meaning and that we write for different purposes. They make their own little books, 'writing' the stories they have listened to. Proper emphasis is placed on the development of pencil control and letter formation, without inhibiting children's desire to write. In Reception, early writing skills are built on well, with children given every encouragement to 'have a go' at different types of writing. For example, children were making information books with captions about fire fighters, after a visit from a local fire-officer.
68. Very good progress is made in both Nursery and Reception, in the development of reading skills. From the time they start Nursery, children are encouraged to recognise their own names, firstly with a picture clue and then later, independently. Most can pick out some of the letters in their own names. Many know already that the pages are turned from right to left and that words on a page are read from left to right. They show a love of books and share them with adults willingly. This very good early start is extended into Reception, where a good proportion of children of all ability levels are beginning to read words and simple stories. Again, high emphasis is placed on children enjoying books.
69. Teaching of all under five pupils in literacy is very good, and on occasions, excellent. A strong feature is the exciting, imaginative story-telling techniques used, which hold children's attention and create the expectancy that learning will be fun. Teachers and other adults use every opportunity to develop children's vocabulary as they talk with them during planned activities, such as using small figures in the doll's house to act out the story of 'The Three Bears'. High quality, stimulating activities are planned to develop pupils' skills in all areas of literacy.

### **Mathematics**

70. Children make very good progress and most are on course to exceed the expected learning outcomes by the time they are five. All staff skilfully guide them into activities which develop their mathematical ability. For example, during the inspection, Nursery children were making 'mobiles' based on a variety of 2-D shapes. They matched small and large circles, squares, rectangles and triangles, and the majority could name them all. Many are able to count to five and well beyond and recognise number shapes. Children are able to compare objects, by

size and by colour, and use positional words, such as under and on. These aspects are reinforced constantly through all Nursery activities and particularly through the use of stories and rhymes.

71. In Reception, number skills continue to develop very quickly and children continue to make good progress. They can count and recognise higher numbers and develop their mental strategies well, through work in numeracy sessions. For example, children learned to identify a number that was first 'one more than' and then 'two more than' as they worked towards completing sums such as 4 add 2 makes 6. Reception children apply their growing knowledge of numbers through role-play as they learn to share food between two in the home corner, for example.
72. Teaching of mathematics is very good overall for under fives, and is sometimes excellent. In both Nursery and Reception, teacher's planning is of very high quality and staff use assessment well to move pupils quickly on to the next stage. All support staff make a valuable contribution, by reinforcing, for example positional language and counting skills as they talk with the children during activities. Excellent questioning encourages children to look closely at shape, size and pattern during practical activities and resources are used very well to support their understanding. Very good classroom management and organisation ensures that all children have access to a wide range of exciting, practical mathematical activities. This ensures that they become confident and enthusiastic mathematicians.

#### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

73. In their knowledge and understanding of the world, all children are likely to achieve the levels expected by the time they reach five. They make good progress. In Nursery they are provided with a wealth of interesting, practical experiences, such as making dough, examining spaghetti, before and after cooking. In Reception, children develop additional skills through the topics they study. For example, as part of the topic on 'People who help us', children discussed the role of doctors, nurses and fire fighters. Their imagination is captured by experiences such as a visit from a fire fighter, who told them about his work, or the school caretaker who demonstrated how to build a wall. He allowed the children to help mix the sand and cement and lay the bricks. The children's sense of time is developed through celebrating birthdays and learning about daily routines and seasonal events.
74. Teaching is very good. The well-planned activities excite the children and encourage them to observe and listen closely. They are challenged to think about questions such as what happens to spaghetti when it is cooked and why the fire fighter wears a helmet and to draw conclusions from their observations.

#### **Physical development**

75. Children's physical development is in line to exceed the expected standard by the time they are five, and they make good progress. Children develop very good control of their body movements through learning to move in space, practising movements such as hopping, skipping and jumping. They also have good opportunities to use climbing and balancing equipment. Children can manoeuvre a good range of wheeled vehicles, such as pedal cars, prams and tricycles, which often require the co-operation of two or more. Reception pupils' skills are extended well as they use a range of apparatus in gymnastics lessons and take part in dance.

76. In both Nursery and Reception, children are provided with a wide variety of activities to develop their manipulative skills. Nursery children use scissors very well to cut round shapes and this is further refined in Reception through more complex tasks. All under fives are given interesting opportunities to choose materials and work out ways of joining them. They show good manipulative control as they make 'mobiles', cottages and 'junk' models for example. Children in Reception are able to make a wide range of increasingly complex models with small and large construction kits, linked to the topics they are studying. They also show good control as they use the computer to support their learning in English and mathematics and are adept at using the mouse to click on objects and to manoeuvre them on screen.
77. Teaching is very good. All activities are planned and resourced very well. They are practical and imaginative. All adults interact very skilfully with pupils to develop their individual abilities and assess pupils thoroughly to decide on the next appropriate learning steps.

### **Creative development**

78. Pupils' creative development is in line to meet the expected level by the time they are five. In both Nursery and Reception classes, children are given plenty of opportunities to draw, print, paint, model and make collages. They develop their imagination through working with construction sets and bricks, for example, to make houses and rockets. All pupils who are under five enjoy singing and music making, and are given regular opportunities for this. In Nursery, particularly, imaginative opportunities are created for them to work with different textures and explore things to make using a variety of substances, such as sand, pasta and dough. Teaching is very good and all support staff work extremely well with children in this area, for example when showing them how to mix paints or helping them to choose materials to make model fire engines. Good attention is given to developing appropriate language, such as 'translucent', when discussing fire engine windows. Explanations as to how tools and materials can be used are very clear and draw, wherever possible, on children's prior experience. Good attention is always given to working safely with tools and materials.

### **ENGLISH**

79. In the 1999 tests at the age of seven, pupils achieved well above the national average in reading and above the national average in writing. Reading is above average when compared with similar schools and writing is in line. Teachers' assessments bear out these test results.
80. The school's performance in reading has been consistently well above the national average for the last three years. In writing, the school's performance was well above average in 1997 and 1998. In 1999 a good proportion of pupils achieved the expected level in writing, and also the higher level. However, a quarter of these pupils achieved at the lower end of level 2.
81. Inspection findings indicate that the majority of the current Year 2 pupils are in line to meet the average for their age in both reading and writing, and a very significant number will exceed this as in previous years. Attainment remains stronger, however in reading and in speaking and listening than it is in writing.

82. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment in reading is well above average. By the time they leave the school, the majority of pupils are very fluent, expressive and confident readers. They enjoy books of all types, know their preferences and express their ideas with growing confidence. Most pupils can talk about the differences between fiction and non-fiction books. They find words in dictionaries easily and know how to use index and contents pages. Almost all pupils can recall the stories they have read, talking about the main events and characters. They can make sensible predictions about what might come next, in an unfamiliar story and higher attainers are beginning to be able to 'read between the lines', suggesting reasons for character's actions and describing their personality traits.
83. Pupils of all ability levels receive an excellent grounding in basic reading skills. This is a direct result of high quality teaching, particularly in the area of phonics and word recognition.
84. Progress in reading is very good throughout the school at all ability levels, because teachers have an excellent understanding of how to teach it. They assess pupils' abilities well and record significant information about their reading behaviour, such as how many key words they know. Reading is presented to pupils as an exciting and rewarding experience through the way in which teachers demonstrate the reading process, particularly in the shared sessions of the literacy hour. For example, in a Year 1 class, pupils were joining in with 'Farmer Duck' using a variety of voices for different characters and changing their tone in relation to the character's mood.
85. Attainment in writing for the majority of pupils in Year 2 is above the average for their age. More able pupils attain well, as do pupils with special educational needs, relative to their abilities. However, a significant percentage of average and lower average pupils do not attain a high enough standard. This is partly because the school does not always closely identify and record what pupils can and cannot do. It is therefore less easy for them to provide the teaching and support, which will help them to improve further.
86. Pupils attain very good standards in spelling and this is a strength of provision. It is a result of high quality, systematic teaching, which follows a planned programme. Most pupils are able to spell a very good range of common words with a high level of accuracy. They use a wide variety of strategies for working out words which are unfamiliar to them. These include blending letters, 'stretching' words and breaking them into smaller 'chunks'.
87. Most children make good progress in writing throughout the school, because their early experiences and skills are built on steadily and they are given the opportunity to write for a range of purposes. For example, more able Year 2 pupils were writing newspaper reports about the visit of 'Granny Mainland' to the school, linked to their geography topic. Good, first hand experiences, such as the visit of a fire-fighter and a digging machine to the school stimulate the pupils' imagination and encourage them to write good first-hand accounts. However, there is inconsistency between classes in Year 2, as to the range of writing covered. In one class, children write up their weekend 'news' each week, and this limits their opportunities to try out different writing forms and consequently limits the progress they make. Pupils are given the opportunity to extend their writing and the skills

learned in literacy in other subject areas. This is particularly strong in R.E. where pupils are encouraged to retell stories and write descriptions of a visit to a church, for example. Opportunities are missed however, in science, to write full reports of their experiments.

88. Handwriting skills develop more slowly and pupils' attainment is just average for their age by Year 2. Children are given regular practice in letter formation outside the literacy hour because the school has recognised that this is an area for development. However as yet, there is an inconsistency of approach to the presentation of work and some teachers have expectations of pupils which are too low in this respect.
89. The majority of Year 2 pupils are very confident and articulate speakers and attentive listeners. Their attainment in these areas exceeds standards expected nationally and is a strength of provision. Teachers give pupils excellent opportunities to develop their vocabulary, formulate and express ideas and refine their explanations. They give children time to respond to questions, yet challenge them to give increasingly precise and detailed answers and explanations. Consequently, pupils speak well and are eager and willing to share their ideas and talk about their work.
90. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all areas of English. This is because teachers ensure that work is set at the appropriate level of challenge. As a result, these pupils have high levels of self-esteem and are well motivated because they succeed at their work. They are well supported by their teachers and other adults who work with them.
91. Teaching in English ranges from satisfactory to very good and is good in the majority of lessons. Where it is at its best, teachers show a high degree of creativity, energy and enthusiasm. This catches the interest of their pupils and they in turn work with enthusiasm and application and are willing to 'have a go'. Questioning is used skilfully to draw on pupils' previous learning, or to assess whether concepts have been understood. This ensures good progress. Where teaching is less effective, the pace of activities is too slow to hold the pupils' interest. For example, sometimes in the Literacy Hour, pupils are expected to listen for too long, without having input.
92. Homework is centred mainly around reading tasks. Reading diaries provide a useful link between home and school. These could be further developed to become more of a dialogue as comments in most are often brief and give little information about how children could improve.
93. Information Technology makes a satisfactory contribution to literacy development. Pupils are given the opportunity to play games to develop their phonic skills, for example and to build sentences on a particular theme, from selected banks of words.
94. The co-ordinator manages the subject well. She supports colleagues appropriately and is aware, through monitoring, of the strengths and weaknesses in English. For example, the school is aware of the need to raise standards in writing, so that attainment more closely matches reading. This is already part of the school's development plan.

95. High standards in English have been maintained since the last inspection and there have been some improvements. The percentage of good and very good teaching seen is higher. Also, library and resource provision is much improved. The library is now a well organised, user-friendly area with a very good range of high quality fiction and non-fiction material and computer equipment.

## **MATHEMATICS**

96. The school's performance has been well above the national average for the past three years. In the most recent national tests for pupils aged seven, the proportion of pupils achieving the level expected (91%) was close to the national average. However, The proportion of pupils achieving a higher level (38%) was well above the national average. Compared to similar schools, these results are above average. Since the last inspection the school has maintained its consistently above average results.
97. The inspection findings are that the standards currently being achieved are well above the national average for pupils aged 7 and that the proportion of pupils on course to achieve a higher level will be similar to previous years. More children are likely to achieve at the higher end of the expected level (level 2), as the school has put strategies in place to boost the attainment of those pupils whose previous performance indicates that they might struggle to reach this standard.
98. Overall, attainment is well above average in all the main strands of mathematics, although pupils show a broad range of attainment in all lessons seen. The majority of pupils demonstrate very good skills in Numeracy and are competent with number bonds. For example they know that because  $8+5=13$ , it is evident that  $13-8=5$ . They can explain different methods of mentally adding four digits together. For example in a Year 2 class, one child explained that  $7+5+2+4$  could be read as  $9+9$  by combining the numbers into two groups and that double 9 is 18. They can recognise odd and even numbers and count in sequences of 2, 5 and 10 both forwards and backwards. In the area of shape, they can name two-dimensional shapes of up to six sides, although some are as yet less confident when talking about solid shapes. The vast majority can recognise o'clock and half past the hour times, and most can recognise quarter past and quarter to the hour and in some cases, times in between. Most do not yet know about the relationship between digital and analogue time. They show a good understanding of the days of the week and months of the year and can put them in order.
99. Year 2 pupils gain awareness of different measures as they practise estimating capacity, length and weight whilst classifying different containers and boxes on the grounds of which unit they might use. They are able to match the unit of measurement to the correct objects when using grams, kilograms, ml and litres but lower attainers find difficulty when using centimetres, metres and kilometres.
100. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs are generally well supported by their class teachers and as a result they progress well with basic skills in relation to their ability. Classroom assistants and parent helpers are effectively deployed in enabling these pupils to make good progress. In particular, they help them to build their understanding and confidence when working with number calculations.

101. The quality of teaching in mathematics ranges from satisfactory to excellent. One in five lessons was excellent, almost half were judged to be very good and the rest were satisfactory. The best teaching was seen in Reception. In these lessons teachers have excellent subject knowledge and plan the work meticulously to cater for all levels of ability in the class. Through clear demonstrations and explanations and by going on to set activities at three different levels of challenge, the teacher helped to improve pupils' knowledge of addition at a rapid pace. Teachers use well thought out resources to match the concepts they are dealing with. This was seen when in one Reception class the teacher was combining coloured plastic shapes on a magnetic board to develop shape recognition, and in another class where the teacher was using a dice game to help the pupils reinforce their knowledge of number.
102. In all lessons teachers ask open and challenging questions to bring out the pupils' previous knowledge and help to develop their learning. Lessons are always thoroughly prepared. A good example was seen in a Year 1 class where the teacher had brought in various items of shopping to illustrate the use of different solid shapes in day-to-day life. Lessons are generally well structured and begin with clear direct teaching during the mental arithmetic session, followed by appropriate activities and, in most cases, ending with an effective discussion of the main learning outcomes.
103. Homework is set which is directly linked to the teaching. For example, in a Year 2 class, the children were asked to find something from home which would be used for measuring in the next lesson.
104. In the other two Year 2 classes lessons were generally more ordinary. Although outweighed by the lessons strengths, weaknesses centred around the pace of activity, which was often slower than in other mathematics lessons. This reduced the volume of work for the pupils and progress was slower as a result. Expectations of pupils' presentation and setting out of work are inconsistent across classes and in some cases they are not high enough.
105. There are some weaknesses in the way the school's systems keep a check on what pupils have shown that they can or can't do. This particularly affects lower attaining pupils and as a result, the rate at which this group makes up ground on the average expectations has been slowed down. Initiatives have now been put into place to support lower attainers, and their progress is satisfactory, but more precise targeting of particular difficulties would speed it up further.
106. The Co-ordinator leads the subject well. Teaching has been monitored in conjunction with the head teacher and resulting issues have been raised with staff. Planning is looked at regularly to ensure the curriculum is appropriate and that it is being fully covered.
107. Standards in mathematics have improved since the last inspection.

## **SCIENCE**

108. By the time the pupils leave the school, their attainment in science is above the national average. The level of knowledge and understanding of the present Year 2 pupils reflects the results of the most recent teacher assessments, in which

more pupils achieved and exceeded the level expected than in most schools. Pupils achieve good levels of knowledge and understanding in all aspects of science, including practical work and investigations. However there are weaknesses in the way they record and present their findings.

109. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good knowledge about living things, such as the main parts of plants and what they need to live. For example they can describe what happens if you put a plant in the cupboard and deprive it of light and water. They know that fruit and vegetables are good for you and that you should not eat too much butter because of the fat it contains. They can describe materials and give good reasons why some are not suitable for particular uses. They can explain how to make simple circuits.
110. Pupils make better progress in gaining knowledge and skills than they do in recording the outcomes of the tests that they undertake. Whilst recording is largely appropriate for the abilities of younger pupils, older pupils are not expected to record in more challenging ways. For example, pupils often record simply by drawing a picture and sometimes writing a few words. Where they do use another method, for example a labelled diagram, the quality is often low. They do not create tables or graphs, complete charts, or write accounts of the process they have followed. All pupils tend to follow the same recording method although lower attainers are sometimes given extra help. Higher attainers are not given additional challenge and the expected levels set out for them in the assessment portfolio are too low. Information technology is little used, for example to write up accounts or produce graphs.
111. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to excellent, being mainly good or better. In first rate teaching seen in one Reception class, pupils were captivated by the teacher's approach to a demonstration on magnetism. This involved drawing paperclips from a cup of water without wetting fingers or tipping out the water. Pupils were challenged to answer questions such as 'where should I put the magnet?' and later to predict how many clips the magnet would draw out. Careful attention was given to developing appropriate language, for example by naming each type of magnet used. The lesson continued with a range of activities, well chosen to back up the main objective of the lesson. Learning in these groups benefited from the support of a classroom assistant and helping grandparent who worked closely with the children to reinforce their understanding. In the summary session at the end, pupils showed they had learned that plastic, wool and wood are not magnetic but that some metals are. In a parallel class, the same attention was given to careful explanations and to language development; for example ensuring pupils became familiar with the meaning of the word 'attracts' and the initial letter sounds of the names of materials to help them with sorting.
112. In all classes, a strong feature of the science teaching is the 'hands on' approach which involves pupils in demonstrations and investigations. These activities deepen their understanding, as seen for example when Year 1 pupils were trying to decide whether they were 'pulling or pushing' when putting on a glove. Teachers start lessons well by checking that pupils have remembered what they learned in the previous lesson. They usually ask questions that make pupils think and encourage them to explain fully what they know. At times there is not enough challenge for older pupils in Year 2 in the written tasks they are given nor in the standards they are expected to achieve in completing them.

113. Management of the subject is good. Since the previous inspection the school has adopted the latest national guidelines for the science curriculum and this ensures good progression in pupils' learning from year to year. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning and pupils' work and is aware of the weaknesses in the recording of work. In a promising initiative, links have been made with the junior school to develop this aspect.

## ART AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

114. Whilst some teaching of art was seen during the inspection, no design technology teaching was observed. Evidence has been drawn from sampling pupils' work and discussing it with them. Photographic evidence and teachers' plans were also scrutinised and discussions were held with the two members of staff who take responsibility for the subjects.
115. Standards in both subjects are better than those found in most schools and the progress of all groups of pupils is good. Displays of work around the school show a good range of activity and demonstrate that pupils have developed a variety of skills and techniques. In art, younger pupils have been developing their painting techniques and show confident brush work in their portraits and in the way they decorate three-dimensional mobiles of fish or the masks made to celebrate Chinese New Year. A particular strength in painting is the way in which pupils are expected from the start to mix their own colours and are encouraged to experiment with colour in their painting. By Year 2, pupils can mix shades accurately and their observational drawing is also of a good standard as illustrated by their lively portraits of each other, showing a strong grasp of shape and details such as hairstyles. Across the school there is a good standard of collage work with good examples of the use of a wide range of unusual materials.
116. In design technology, pupils are learning about the options open to them as they join materials together. In Reception for example, children use glue and sellotape to assemble their models of fire engines as part of their current topic. Pupils making vehicles with axles first examine a range of vehicles in the class display before attempting to draw out a design for their products and going on to make them. Older pupils have made some advanced models with winding mechanisms using construction kits and have designed and put together some 'shoe box interiors', using junk materials with great care to make small furniture.
117. Evaluation of pupils' work is mostly by discussion, but they are able to comment sensibly upon the quality of their finished products. For example, one boy remarked of his vehicle 'I had to try hard to make the wheels round because anything else would be very uncomfortable for the people inside.'
118. The teaching in art is very good. Staff are well prepared and hold pupils' interest through the pace of their demonstrations and the way in which they motivate the children to want to get going on the practical activity. For example, well-chosen pictures helped a Year 2 teacher to get across the idea that the sky meets the land before children attempted a colour wash landscape. In Year 1, teachers showed pupils how they might use a range of modelling tools and how to make a slip joint before they began their clay modelling activity. This encouraged them to experiment and produce very individual products.
119. The co-ordinators have sensibly concentrated on giving guidance to colleagues on how to provide pupils with a variety of experience whilst developing their skills. The adoption of a recommended scheme for design technology has helped in this, and the school's own art scheme has given a useful template to support staff in addition to the co-ordinators' advice at the planning stage. This has resulted in the maintenance of high standards since the last inspection despite the reduced time available for these two subjects. Assessment in both subjects is satisfactory,

giving a broad summary of ability, but reports to parents do not pass on this information.

## **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

120. Only one geography lesson and two history lessons were observed during the inspection. These lessons, together with further evidence provided by teachers' planning files, discussions with pupils and with the co-ordinators, indicate that the standards are above those found in most schools and that progress is good.
121. Since the last inspection standards have improved in geography and have been maintained in history and the school has ensured that its coverage of the curriculum provides a well- balanced experience for pupils in both subjects.
122. Pupils in Year 2 can place their local area on a map of the British Isles but have some problems recognising major geographical features on a world map. They talk about local rivers and know that London is the capital city of England. They can describe places as being far away or near to where they live, and older pupils can describe countries they have visited on holiday. They understand for instance that these countries have different climates from England.
123. Reception pupils find out about their immediate locality by following a route around school and older pupils can identify man-made and natural features around the school and in the wider locality. Year 1 pupils can describe their own type of house but a few have difficulty describing unfamiliar dwellings such as flats or bungalows.
124. Pupils enjoy looking for evidence of the past from photographs to distinguish between old and new, and can sequence some events from the past to the present day. They are developing a sound sense of chronology. Older pupils develop their sense of history when learning about George Stephenson and his inventions or significant historical events such as the Great Fire of London.
125. In the lessons observed, the teaching ranged from satisfactory to good, the majority being satisfactory. The good history lesson in Reception made effective use of the pupils' own experiences and drew upon links with the Beamish Museum, which many of the children had visited. In the other lessons seen, the strengths outweighed the weaknesses, but one of these was the level of challenge in recording work, which was not high enough for more able pupils, particularly in Year 2. Here the pupils had to draw pictures of the different occupations of Sunderland and the imaginary Isle of Struay to examine differences in human geography. No written explanations were required to enhance the drawings. The use of visitors such as 'Granny Mainland' to talk to the children from the point of view of a character who visits a Scottish isle, helps pupils to visualise a different environment, at the same time as developing their speaking and listening skills in literacy.
126. The history co-ordinator leads the subject well. Teaching has been monitored and planning is looked at regularly and advice given to colleagues. In geography, planning is also monitored, to ensure that a good range of geographical understanding is covered.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

127. By the end of the key stage, pupils' standards in information technology are average.
128. By Year 2 , pupils are familiar with all the main applications of computers including word processing, using graphics packages and handling basic information such as data on the classes' favourite fruits, car colours or pets, which they build into a series of simple graphs. Pupils show a good knowledge of the basic keyboard functions as they work confidently to open files, access various activities or print out their finished work. Their ability to move text around on the screen is good as, for example, they alter a long line of words into a more readable list using line breaks. Samples of work show that older pupils can write instructions to control the direction of a screen cursor or floor robot so that it will follow a set course such as a rectangle. Older pupils have been introduced to some of the functions of the Internet, but awareness of its possibilities is still limited for many.
129. Overall, progress for all groups of pupils across the key stage is satisfactory. Most pupils are leaving Reception with a sound grasp of how to operate the mouse to manipulate images and select icons and these basic skills are built upon throughout Years 1 and 2. By Year 1 many pupils have very good mouse control and can move a cursor around the screen selecting and 'dragging' items with some speed. Keyboard skills develop steadily throughout the school with pupils showing a growing awareness of the options that are open to them. Year 1 pupils for example, are becoming familiar with techniques for changing the size or style of their lettering. Although pupils are developing sound levels of skill in word processing, a weakness in their experience is that they make insufficient use of their capability to produce any extended writing other than short statements, labels or titles for display.
130. Younger pupils are familiar with some of the everyday uses of technology. They understand that many of the household appliances, such as televisions and video recorders, operate and are controlled through technology. They are confident users of other communications technology such as tape recorders, which they regularly use to listen to stories as they follow the text in their reading books.
131. Although not much direct teaching of information technology was observed, that which was seen was good as it focused upon teaching specific skills. Effective strategies were used to challenge pupils to rearrange text into a more appropriate format for example. Open questioning such as 'Has anyone got any ideas about how we could make it more readable?' made pupils think hard about the most appropriate solution. Opportunities for all pupils in the group to demonstrate that they had grasped the agreed technique enabled the teacher to assess their skills in this area. For younger pupils (even those in the Nursery) teaching is often supported by opportunities for children to work with the supervision of support staff or parent helpers. This is very effective in giving the children confidence to have a go. For example, using the 'Write Away' program, Reception children select words from a list on screen to build their own sentences about 'I want to be a .... when I grow up'. Their talking with the parent helped to focus their ideas and to keep up the pace of their work.
132. The school has made a number of improvements in the subject since the last inspection. There are more up to date computers available in the classrooms, the

curriculum is better organised to provide progressively more challenging experiences, and the staff are now more confident in teaching the subject, after a useful programme of training. Their teaching is best when they are giving direct instruction to develop pupils' skills, but there is still some further improvement to be made in their ability to organise best use of computers in their everyday teaching. The co-ordinator has recognised this and is producing guidance on ways to use information technology in the teaching of literacy and numeracy. This is having a positive effect on pupils' learning as they practise their number work through mathematics games and work on phonics skills and sentence building with literacy based software. Other subjects are still some way behind in the contribution which information technology skills make to understanding.

133. Assessment in the subject is good, with teachers keeping regular records of how well pupils cope with their key tasks. However, this information is not included in the annual reports to parents.
134. The subject is being well managed, with the co-ordinator giving colleagues a good level of useful support on such aspects as which software they might use to develop particular skills. Colleagues' planning is scrutinised to ensure that adequate coverage of the subject is being provided. Plans are in place for future development, but these will need more detailed consideration of how the organisation of a possible computer suite might be directed.

## **MUSIC**

135. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection and are better than those found in most schools. The highest standards are in singing and in listening and appraising.
136. Older pupils are confident singers who can pitch their voices correctly to sing in tune. They can follow a melody closely and they produce a sound that has good quality and tone. Year 1 pupils can echo each other singing the same parts and they keep in time very well. Younger pupils can keep a simple beat and they join in action songs with great enjoyment. They start and finish well together. Year 2 pupils listen carefully and closely when music is played to them and they can explain how it conveys mood and feeling; for example some could recall how, in listening to excerpts from Scheherazade, the music became louder and faster in the storm scene.
137. Teaching of music is good and teachers link it well to other curriculum areas. For example, number songs are used with the youngest children whilst pupils in Year 1 tackled the 'triangle song', which helped them to remember the properties of the shape. In Year 2, pupils listen to the 'Hebrides Overture' at the same time as studying the geographical features of the imaginary Scottish island of Struay. In a dance lesson in Year 1, pupils were successfully encouraged to express a range of moods and emotions suggested by the music. Teachers help pupils to build up their knowledge about different composers and encourage them to listen for the sound of particular orchestral instruments. For example in the lesson where older pupils listened to the Hebrides overture, the teacher made links for them by explaining the composer's background and how the piece came to be written. Singing sessions for each year group in the school hall have clear objectives and are effective in teaching pupils new songs. They enjoy these occasions, in part because all adults join in enthusiastically.

138. The coordinator is at present on secondment but the school has made effective arrangements to ensure standards in music are maintained. The scheme is up to date and the planning ensures pupils' progression from year to year. Fifteen pupils take part in a lunchtime recorder club, which is beneficial; for example as they become familiar with the way music is written.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

139. Standards in physical education are above those found in most schools and have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils acquire skills at a good pace.
140. No outdoor games lessons were observed but gymnastic lessons and dance lessons were seen. Pupils throughout the school show very good control of their bodies and have a good awareness of space. They can stop and change direction quickly as was seen in a gymnastics lesson in Year 1. In the same lesson pupils showed very good skills in stretching, jumping and rolling and linked actions together to form some very good sequences, whilst using the large apparatus. In a dance lesson, in a Year 1 class, pupils were interpreting the story of Little Red Riding Hood whilst listening to music from the Planet Suite. Whilst most of them developed a reasonable response, some were restricted by the teacher's expectation of their interpretation. In a Year 2 class pupils developed a good understanding the effects that exercise has on their bodies. Pupils enjoy the lessons and their attitude to the work is good. They work well together and enjoy demonstrating their skills to others.
141. Teaching of physical education is mostly good, occasionally satisfactory, and in one gymnastics lesson observed in a Year 1 class, excellent. This showed all the features of the best teaching. It began with lively warm-up activities, maintained a good pace throughout and ended with cooling down activities. Pupils were successfully encouraged to demonstrate their movements to others and explain how they could improve these. Close attention was drawn to specific skills and techniques and the teacher explained how these could be improved. The management of pupils was always good and close attention given to safe practices; for example the number of pupils allowed on the apparatus at any one time. With such engaging teaching, pupils were motivated to work hard and achieve good quality of movement.
142. The co-ordinator manages the subject well. Guidelines for work are in use and support a balanced programme of dance, gymnastics and games. In addition to the curriculum, there is an out of school gymnastic club, run by a parent, which pupils from Years 1 and 2 attend. This activity provides opportunities for the pupils to extend their skills and helps to raise the standard of work throughout the school.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

143. Older pupils meet the standards set out in the locally agreed syllabus as they did at the time of the last inspection. However the present syllabus is new and changes the school has made in introducing it have improved pupils' progress, which is now good.
144. By Year 2, pupils have a very good knowledge of Christianity and a growing understanding of the other religions they now study; Buddhism and Judaism. For

example, they can recall a range of stories from the Bible such as the parable of the loaves and fishes, and they can describe in some detail major events in the life of Jesus. Their knowledge of other religions is not yet as strong but pupils are clearly learning more as the revised curriculum begins to have an effect. Older children produce a wide range of good quality written work, recorded in a different ways. For example, they write accounts of their visits to places of worship, sort stories into groups, rewrite stories, and draw and describe religious symbols.

145. Teaching is good. Pupils' learning is enriched by the variety of approaches taken by teachers and by the wide use of visits and visitors. For example, two ladies from the local Jewish community come into school to explain the celebration of Shabbat and to share some of the food rituals. Pupils visit the local synagogue, church and Durham Cathedral. In lessons, teachers also use a variety of approaches to gain the interest of pupils. For example in a Year 1 lesson, following the visitors, the teacher and pupils set the Shabbat meal table. Good use of resources, demonstration and explanation helped to reinforce what they had learned previously. In a Year 2 lesson based on a Bible story the teacher successfully involved pupils in acting it out. The lesson developed pupils' speaking and listening skills as well as their knowledge of the story. Pupils are encouraged to reflect; for example on caring for the natural world in their work on Buddhism.
146. Management of the subject is very good. The coordinator keeps a check on teachers' planning and on pupils' work. The implementation of curriculum changes has been effective. Training for teachers has been provided to support teaching about Buddhism and this has raised their confidence. A valuable file showing examples of pupils' work for each year group helps teachers to know what should be achieved in each year.