

INSPECTION REPORT

YARM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Yarm

LEA area: Stockton-on-Tees

Unique reference number: 111554

Head teacher: Mr G Barber

Reporting inspector: Mr C Smith
25211

Dates of inspection: 30th June – 3rd July 2003

Inspection number: 247121

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Spitalfields Yarm
Postcode:	TS15 9HF
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs L Perry
Date of previous inspection:	February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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25211	Mr C Smith	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology	What sort of school is it?
			Music	How well are pupils taught?
				What should the school do to improve further?
9952	Mrs L Brock	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
				How well does the school care for its pupils?
				How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
21397	Mrs I Bradbury	Team inspector	Design and technology	
			Geography	
			History	
17709	Mr A Giles	Team inspector	Science	The school results and pupils' achievements.
			Physical education	How well is the school led and managed?
11611	Mr J Hall	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
			Art and design	
			English as an additional language	
8070	Mr J Haves	Team inspector	English	
			Educational inclusion	
23887	Mr P Nettleship	Team inspector	Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage	
			Religious education	
			Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Yarm Primary is large school situated in the market town of Yarm, near Stockton-on-Tees. The area served by the school is advantaged with only two per cent of pupils receiving free school meals. This is much lower than the national average. There are 468 pupils; 265 boys and 203 girls and 72 children attend the nursery, part time. The school's increasing popularity is attracting children from neighbouring areas. Most of the pupils are white. However, 17 children are from Asian backgrounds, a further two from African and 10 from white, but not English, backgrounds. Although the mother tongue of 11 pupils is either Urdu, German, Arabic or Danish, they have all learned to speak, read and write English very competently and do not require any additional language support. Fifty children have special educational needs (10 per cent), which is well below average, of which 10 pupils have statements. Approximately half of the pupils with special educational needs have learning difficulties, a third have social or emotional difficulties and the remaining ones have either physical or visual impairment. Most children enter the school with good attainment for their age.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a highly successful school that provides very good value for money. Pupils achieve well in almost all subjects and reach very high standards in English, mathematics and science by the age of 11. Teaching is good (and often very good). Pupils behave very well and thoroughly enjoy learning. The head teacher and senior staff provide excellent leadership and management. Pupils' learning is carefully tracked and very well supported, which enables all pupils to succeed.

What the school does well

- Infant and junior pupils achieve well in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and in almost all of the other subjects.
- Teaching is good overall and is very good in the nursery and in many junior classes.
- The head teacher and key staff provide outstanding leadership for the school.
- Excellent relationships ensure that pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- A very rich curriculum is provided, which caters very well for pupils' different learning needs.
- The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal development and assesses and monitors their learning and their development very effectively.

What could be improved

- Pupils' written work in religious education lacks the flair and inventiveness that is evident in other subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school emerged with much credit from the last inspection in February 1998. However, the head teacher and staff are not complacent and exhibit a strong drive to provide the very best for pupils and raise standards further. Standards in English, mathematics and science have climbed to very high levels and there have been significant improvements in the provision and standards in ICT. The school has concentrated its efforts on improving pupils' skills in subjects such as history, geography and standards in these subjects have risen as a result. In recognition of continuing improvements in teaching, learning and standards, the school has gained a national achievement award, an activity award for physical education and has been granted Beacon status. The head teacher took up his post shortly before the last inspection. His leadership has been excellent and his managerial influence has

been profound. All aspects of the school's work are carefully checked and any weaknesses are promptly remedied. The head teacher and key staff are committed to self-improvement and this is what drives the school forward.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	A	A*	A*	A
Mathematics	A*	A*	A*	A*
Science	A*	A	A*	A

Key	
Well above average	A
above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

Although children enter school with higher than expected attainment for their age, by the time they reach Year 6 their attainment has increased to very high levels in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. This illustrates the good progress made in all parts of the school. Children achieve very well in the nursery and make good progress in the reception classes. By the end of the reception year, most children's attainment is well above the levels expected in literacy, numeracy and in their personal development. Children also make good progress in their creative and physical development and in their understanding of the world to reach above the levels expected in these areas of learning. Infant pupils also achieve well because of the good teaching. The results attained by seven year-old pupils in 2002 were well above average in reading and science, above average in writing and very high in mathematics. This has been broadly the pattern over recent years and the current Year 2 pupils are also working at these levels. Infant pupils also achieve well in most of the other subjects, including ICT, to reach higher than expected standards by the end of Year 2, the only exceptions being religious and physical education in which they make steady progress and reach the levels expected.

Very good teaching in many of the junior classes enables pupils to make rapid progress. The progress of all pupils is very carefully assessed and tracked. Teacher's use this information very well to set challenging targets for individual pupils, classes and whole year groups. School targets are always achieved and raised to the highest possible level for the following year. This is partly why standards have remained very high since the last inspection. In the 2002 tests, Year 6 pupils' results were amongst the highest five per cent in the country in all core subjects and their attainment was much higher than in similar schools. This has been the case over the last four years and the current Year 6 pupils are also reaching very high standards, particularly in mathematics and science. Junior pupils also achieve well in art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education to reach standards that are above the levels expected by the age of 11. Standards in ICT have improved and are now well above the levels expected by the age of 11. The high levels of challenge stimulate the more able, gifted and talented pupils and their progress accelerates in many subjects. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from very effective teaching and high levels of support, which enables them to make very good progress. There are very few areas in which there is

potential for improvement. Of these, pupils' achievements in the written aspects of religious education could be improved. Additionally, the school is very committed to raising pupils' attainment in writing, which although very good, is not at the very high levels of mathematics and science.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who give of their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are very attentive, responsive and do as they are asked immediately. They are also courteous and proud of their school.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils show high levels of maturity in the way in which they work together, relish responsibility and support each other.
Attendance	Well above average. Pupils arrive promptly and ready to learn.

The many good opportunities for pupils to show initiative in participating in school council projects, concerts and competitions are important factors in developing their sense of responsibility.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very Good

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

Teaching is good throughout the school and of particularly high quality in the nursery and in many junior classes. There are examples of very good and excellent teaching in all parts of the school, which is the major factor in pupils' good achievement. In the nursery and in the reception classes, very effective planning is a key to children's successful learning. A wealth of rich and stimulating activities are provided and children are encouraged to make choices and take some responsibility for their own learning. At the same time, the essential skills of literacy and numeracy are very well taught and this provides a strong foundation for children's future learning. Infant and junior teachers have good expertise in several subjects. This enables them to explain clearly, question pupils thoroughly and provide meaningful and purposeful tasks. All teachers are well aware of the differences in pupils' rates of learning. To this end, the work provided is carefully matched to their different learning needs. Whilst more able, gifted and talented pupils are challenged at the highest levels, pupils who find learning difficult, including those with special educational needs, are given valuable support. Although teachers ensure that pupils gain essential knowledge and understanding, they pay particular attention to developing their skills. This ensures that pupils become proficient in finding out for themselves and applying their well-developed aptitudes in literacy and numeracy to the learning of other subjects. There are many strong features in the teaching and very few weaknesses. However, more could be done to extend pupils' writing and improve their spelling through more consistent marking of their work. In particular, there is scope to set more challenging tasks in the written work associated with religious education.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The wide variety of rich learning experiences provided are carefully adapted to meet pupils' different learning needs.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Comprehensive education plans with clear targets provided, along with good levels of support, enable these pupils to succeed.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good in all areas; pupils have many worthwhile opportunities to reflect on moral issues and what life means to them. They are consistently encouraged to learn together and respect and value each other. Racial harmony is strongly promoted.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Pupils' welfare and academic and personal progress are very well monitored and supported throughout the school.

Children benefit from the school's good partnership with parents. Parents are kept well informed and are encouraged to become involved.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Excellent. The head teacher's leadership and management are outstanding. His clear vision and drive and ability to motivate and involve staff are prime factors in the school's success. Key members of staff lead and manage their year groups and subjects very effectively.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors take a keen interest in the school's developments and play a central part in decision-making.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Teaching and pupils' learning is thoroughly evaluated and the information is used very well to guide future planning.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Financial planning is founded on clearly identified priorities and full account is taken of parent and pupils' perceptions and of how the school compares with others to ensure that the best value is provided.

The school benefits from experienced teachers and well-trained support staff. Accommodation is satisfactory, although there is a shortage of space in some classrooms. Resources are good.

PARENTS AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like school and behave well.• The leadership of the school and teaching are good and pupils make good progress.• Pupils are expected to work hard and are developing responsible attitudes.• Parents are kept well informed and feel happy to approach the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some parents are not entirely happy with aspects of homework.• Some parents would like more out of school activities.

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views but takes a different view of the range of extra curricular activities, which are very good. The level and type of homework set is suitable but parents are justified in raising concerns about the inconsistent marking of homework.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 When children enter school their attainment and background knowledge are higher than expected for their age. They respond well to the varied activities given to them in the nursery and reception classes. They make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development to achieve levels above that expected at the end of the reception year. Challenges in literacy, numeracy, personal, social and emotional development are well matched to individual abilities, so much so that achievement in these areas are well above those expected at the end of the reception year.

2 Pupils continue to achieve well in the infant classes where teaching is good overall. Since the last inspection the school's national test results for pupils aged seven have consistently been very well above the national average. The group of seven-year-olds, tested in 2002, gained results that were above average in writing, well above average in reading and very high in mathematics. These are generally higher than those in similar schools. The current Year 2 pupils continue to achieve well above average standards in English, maths and science.

3 Pupils achieve very well in the junior classes where standards in teaching are the strongest. The school is not complacent about the successes in earlier years. In depth analysis is made of the progress pupils are making in English, mathematics and science so that challenges given are relevant to their needs and abilities. Results have continued to rise in recent years especially in response to the challenging targets set for the more able pupils. In 2002, results in English, mathematics and science were all very high. The current Year 6 pupils are attaining very high standards particularly in reading, mathematics and science. Standards in writing are well above the national average. The results in national tests for 11 year olds represents very good achievement from their starting points in school.

4 Standards in speaking and listening are well above average at age seven and are very high at age 11. Effective questioning stimulates discussion and pupils are challenged to respond. Pupils are attentive listeners; they respect one another's opinions and contribute well in developing ideas. Standards in reading are well above average by age seven and are very high at age 11. Infant pupils are carefully taught reading strategies, making good use of commercial schemes. Older and more confident readers quickly move onto more difficult stories. By Year 2 standards in writing are above average and by Year 6 standards are well above average. Pupils have good opportunities to write and these are effectively linked to their oral work and to reading. Pupils steadily acquire skills in handwriting, punctuation and spelling. However, letter size is variable and some work is untidy. A significant number of pupils, in both infant and junior classes, do not find it easy to combine writing at speed with legibility.

5 Pupils achieve very well in mathematics, particularly in the junior classes. The older pupils are very accomplished at using their skills in problem solving and investigative situations. This is a major reason why three quarters of the present Year 6 pupils have achieved the higher than average levels in the recently published but not yet nationally moderated 2003 national tests.

6 Pupils achieve very well in science. They acquire a very good range of scientific skills in all the different aspects of science and are able to apply these in a range of exciting experiments. This is a major improvement on judgements made in the last inspection. Pupils as young as seven have an excellent understanding of how experiments are conducted fairly. In the 2002 national tests nearly

three quarters of Year 6 pupils gained the higher levels of achievement. Further deepening of understanding would be achieved if pupils used their mathematical and computer skills to retest and analyse the results of their experiments.

7 Standards in ICT have improved considerably since the last inspection. The provision of a computer suite, strong leadership and better standards of teaching means that standards are now above the levels expected at the age of seven and well above by the age of 11. Standards are continuing to rise in both the infant and junior stages partly because pupils' skills in ICT are refined and improved further in the classroom.

8 Standards in religious education at the ages of seven and 11 reach the levels expected in Stockton-on-Tees schools. Pupils gain a good awareness of Christianity and a sound knowledge of Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism. However, there is a marked contrast between the good levels of knowledge and understanding in class discussions and the subsequent very limited written work in pupils' books. This is an issue to improve.

9 Pupils make good progress in art and design, design and technology, geography, history, and music with some excellent achievement in choral and instrumental music. These subjects are well led and managed and planning considers both discrete subject skills and areas of work that can be developed across several areas of the curriculum. Cross-curricular work has been addressed well since the last inspection. As a result, pupils reach levels above those expected at the ages of seven and 11 in these subjects. Infant pupils achieve steadily in physical education to reach the levels expected at seven. Junior pupils achieve well in this subject to reach above average standards by 11.

10 Pupils with special needs, throughout the school, make very good progress in meeting their individual targets. Skills are taught systematically, a wide range of resources is fully exploited and regular assessments ensure that levels of achievement remain high. The school includes those with outstanding gifts or talents amongst the pupils who have special educational needs. These pupils are extended well in those areas in which they have high ability. A wide variety of additional activities are provided, such as instrumental music lessons and sporting clubs. Pupils who achieve representative honours in sport often help their peers in lessons to achieve higher standards. Many pupils use their reading, singing, instrumental and dance skills in school assemblies and concerts. This was reflected in an excellent performance based on the 'rain forest habitat' performed to pupils and parents during the inspection.

11 The small minority of pupils with English as an additional language are fluent speakers, readers and writers in English. Consequently, they make rapid progress in all subjects and their presence in the school is highly beneficial in widening all pupils' understanding of cultural diversity.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and their personal development is excellent. Attendance is well above the national average and there are no unauthorised absences. Pupils arrive punctually and registers are completed quickly and accurately so that no time is wasted. Many of the strengths in these areas of school life have been maintained and in some instances built upon since the time of the previous inspection.

13 Pupils have very good attitudes to school and this contributes significantly to the progress they make. They enjoy school life, are keen to learn and show an interest in all they do. Pupils work together very productively in pairs and small groups and they contribute well to class discussions. Pupils listen very well to their teachers and one another and instructions are followed quickly and

quietly. When presented with challenging and stimulating questions pupils offer thoughtful and confident replies. For example, Year 3 pupils offered original and sensible ideas of God in many forms during a lesson about the Hindu religion.

14 Pupils are a credit to the school. Their behaviour is very good overall and often excellent. Pupils are proud of their school and take good care of it, reflecting the very good example set by adults. For example, teachers speak to pupils with courtesy and this promotes mutual respect. The behaviour of children in the nursery is excellent. As they practised kicking a ball during a physical education lesson, everyone behaved impeccably. In the playground and around the school, pupils are very friendly and polite to one another and to adults. 'Respect for all' is a theme which runs through all aspects of school life. Year 6 pupils state that they have no concerns about bullying and there have been no recent exclusions.

15 Relationships throughout the school are excellent and create a pleasant atmosphere for learning. Younger pupils feel safe and secure in the dining hall due to the good support they receive from their older 'buddies'. Peer mediators offer friendship and support to any child who is feeling lonely or left out of playground activities. Children in the Foundation years show a great enthusiasm for learning and they respond well to the teachers' high expectations of good manners and co-operation with each other. Pupils with special educational needs are cared for and supported well by staff and other pupils. Pupils' personal development is also excellent and very evident in the way Year 6 pupils take charge of the office at lunchtime. For example, they answer the telephone politely and take clear messages from callers. The school council meets regularly and gives pupils a real opportunity to influence what goes on in school as well as a chance to learn about democracy. Personal and social education lessons are a major influence in developing pupils' awareness of themselves and others. For example, Year 1 pupils decided which foods were healthy and which were not.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16 The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, particularly in the junior classes where teaching is now of a very good standard. Teaching in the nursery and reception classes and in Years 1 and 2 continues to be at least good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. The improvements are attributable to the head teacher's wisdom in encouraging teachers to work in year group teams. This necessitates a high degree of joint planning with good opportunities for teachers to compare and evaluate the success of their teaching. In addition, teachers' work is frequently observed and constructive feedback enables them to know how they can improve further.

17 Teaching in the Nursery is very good. The planning and the provision of activities are first-class. Much attention is given to developing children's curiosity and encouraging them to talk about their learning. At the same time, children are expected to make choices and take some responsibility for organising what they do at specific times, which helps them to become independent learners. Every opportunity is taken to develop and extend children's literacy and numeracy skills. For example, when nursery children were learning about transport, teachers and assistants interpreted many labels and signs to raise their awareness of letters, words and numbers and children gained a whole new vocabulary about travel. Teaching is mainly good in the reception classes. At this later stage in the school year, children are being prepared well for whole class lessons. The literacy and numeracy sessions are taught effectively and play a major part in equipping pupils with the essential skills to enable them to read, write and handle numbers. Good opportunities are provided for children to engage in creative and physical activities and to extend their knowledge and understanding, although opportunities for them to investigate and find out more for themselves are not as plentiful as in the nursery.

18 Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent and pupils are sensitively managed and disciplined in every class. Teachers only have to make a comment such as, "Show me your best listening" and pupils respond immediately by giving the teacher their full attention. These very good habits ensure that pupils concentrate on their work and give of their best.

19 Teachers have very good expertise in several subjects, including mathematics, science and ICT. Such certainty in knowing what and how a subject should be taught enables teachers to select the most effective approach. For example, in an English lesson the teacher put himself in the 'hot seat' pretending to be an animal in danger. Pupils were encouraged to ask questions about his feelings, which led into some good analysis of poetry. Teachers explain new learning very clearly and share the aims of the lesson with pupils at the outset. Instructions are made crystal clear and teachers make very effective use of questioning to make pupils think hard and to probe their understanding. Consequently, when pupils are asked to work on their own or with a partner, they invariably know exactly what they are expected to do. Teachers know that young children cannot learn just by being told. In fact, teachers very seldom tell pupils the answer, instead they find interesting ways to persuade pupils to solve problems for themselves. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the teacher gave out cards each bearing a different number. Pupils were asked to show their numbers to each other and group themselves accordingly. This activity generated much reasoning and discussion and led pupils to a secure understanding that numbers can be grouped in several different ways. The range and quality of teaching methods have been extended since the last inspection. In particular, pupils have many opportunities to explore, observe and investigate for themselves. Consequently, their enquiry skills have sharpened significantly.

20 Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do and how quickly they can work. In most lessons, and in most subjects, pupils are working at least a year ahead of what might be expected for their age. More able pupils thrive on this high level of challenge. For example in a science lesson, Year 4 pupils were studying the feeding relationships between plants and animals in a habitat, which is more associated with Year 6 work. Although the level of challenge is high, teachers pay careful attention, in their planning and teaching, to pupils' different learning needs. In particular, pupils with special educational needs are very well catered for. Teachers made great efforts to involve them in lessons by asking specific questions and encouraging them to share their ideas. The work provided is adapted accurately for them and they receive very good levels of support from learning assistants, for example, in ensuring that they can read the questions or understand the work. One particularly successful strategy is the way in which pupils with special educational needs are sometimes paired with more able ones. In this setting, there are benefits for both. For example, a pupil with special educational needs worked with a partner in composing a piece of music on computer. The teacher praised the partner for the support he had provided and suggested that the pupil with special educational needs might like to save his work and replay it during parents' evening.

21 There are many strong features in the way that the key skills of English and mathematics are taught. In mathematics, for example, teachers place a strong emphasis on pupils' understanding and make learning as visual as possible by providing illustrations and equipment for pupils to handle. Lessons often begin with a quick mental starter. Through this, pupils develop quick and accurate recall of basic number facts. Equally important is the way in which pupils are encouraged to apply their skills and develop effective strategies for solving mathematical problems. Pupils are consistently encouraged to discuss and share their ideas, particularly at the end of the lesson. These experiences are invaluable in helping pupils to become confident and articulate speakers. Reading skills are consistently well taught throughout the school. Infant pupils receive a very good grounding in blending letters to make words and in reading for understanding. This is extended very well in the junior classes where pupils are taught to read between, and sometimes beyond, the lines to gain an accurate

impression of the text. In many respects, writing skills are also taught successfully, however there is scope for increasing the opportunities pupils have to extend, refine and improve their writing. The discussion periods, during the literacy lessons, although very profitable, sometimes overrun, which reduces the time available for follow up work. Similarly, although pupils' work is marked conscientiously, teachers vary in the attention they give to details such as correcting spellings, punctuation and developing pupils' ability to write quickly and legibly. There is potential to improve pupils' writing by ironing out these inconsistencies.

22 The quality of teaching is a major factor in pupils' good achievement. There are very few weaknesses, however, physical education lessons occasionally lack challenge. The teaching of religious education is somewhat out of character with other subjects. Although, religious ideas are taught well and thoroughly discussed, not enough is expected of pupils' written work. Pupils are often asked to complete worksheets, which makes little demands on their learning and there are occasions when pupils are asked to copy verbatim from a book or a whiteboard. This does little to promote pupils' skills in writing. Homework is used satisfactorily throughout the school. There are examples of homework making an excellent contribution to pupils' learning, for example those who need additional support with their reading. Homework is also used to enable pupils to complete unfinished work or to begin the thinking process for a new topic. However, there are inconsistencies in the marking of homework, which parents are right to point out.

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

23 The school provides a very rich and stimulating curriculum, which is extremely well adapted to cater for pupils' different learning needs. National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been implemented very successfully throughout the school. Strategies for teaching literacy skills are very effective, with good opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their speaking and reading skills in other subjects, such as geography, history and science. There are many good opportunities for pupils to improve their writing in other subjects. However, there is often not enough time in English lessons for pupils to write at length and their spelling and handwriting skills are not always improved sufficiently. There are excellent strategies for teaching mathematics. Teachers provide substantial opportunities for pupils of all abilities to achieve very well in understanding mathematical operations and in using their skills to solve problems.

24 Very good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. Their individual education plans contain clear, manageable targets. They are regularly reviewed with pupils and their parents, which enhances pupils' progress and increases their confidence. The provision for more able, gifted and talented pupils is also very good. The level of challenge in subjects such as English, mathematics and science is high and their positive response is reflected in the very high standards achieved.

25 The provision for pupils' personal social and health education is very good. The arrangements for sex education, and teaching pupils about the danger of the misuse of drugs, are very well established. The school has excellent links with the community, which plays an important part in promoting environmental and citizenship issues. For example, the school has recently achieved high acclaim by winning a national newspaper competition for schools throughout the country, and twice-yearly visits to the Houses of Parliament are part of the prize. There are excellent links with other local special, primary and secondary schools. Beacon status has enriched many aspects of the curriculum, both for pupils in the school and in neighbouring schools. For example, major arts festivals are a feature where large numbers of primary pupils work together in music and dance, culminating in showcase performances at the local secondary school. Teachers offer a very good range of activities outside lesson time, which are well attended. Particularly noteworthy is the wide variety of music and sports clubs, which have a positive impact on pupils' attainment in these subjects.

26 The provision for pupils' personal development has improved since the last inspection and is now very good and a strength of the school. Very effective provision is made for pupils' spiritual development. Beyond the normal worship of the school, pupils are given a breadth of opportunities to develop spiritual awareness and response. This is evident not only in the major occasions such as their Summer Concert but also in their singing, drama, poetry and role play and in their appreciation of their surroundings. Moments of stillness are respected and enjoyed. For example, in one lesson, Year 3 pupils visualised flying to other places on an imaginary 'magic carpet'.

27 Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. Adults in the school give pupils clear direction about right and wrong and set appropriate examples. The school aims establish the expectations of the school community and even the youngest pupils are encouraged to measure their conduct against these principles. Teachers frequently use opportunities in subjects such as literacy and history to discuss interpretation and opinions and to encourage pupils to raise issues of concern to them, such as protecting endangered species of animals. Socially, pupils have good opportunities to take part in discussions, debates and drama activities. For example, Year 6 pupils became newspaper reporters during a project with the secondary school. In these sessions, literacy and numeracy 'ambassadors' are appointed to explain what the class will learn. The success of the

school's work is seen in the excellent relationships that exist and in the way pupils work together in pairs and groups. This is a feature of many lessons and has a very positive effect upon the learning of all pupils.

28 Pupils' cultural development is very well provided for. Pupils are involved in many aspects of their own cultural heritage. For example, during a study of Yarm, Year 3 pupils considered the occupations that people had 100 years ago and compared them with employment now by looking at Census Returns of that period. Pupils correspond with pupils in Zambia and this is raising their awareness of life for children who may have few educational and social opportunities. Special events like the Summer Concert capture the spirit of the provision for cultural development as seen when pupils of all ages played a range of musical instruments and engaged in some high quality singing. Pupils study a range of faiths in religious education and have visited a Hindu Temple. The school is well aware of the need to prepare pupils for life in a culturally diverse society and is always seeking to provide new experiences to add to pupils' cultural development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

29 This is a very caring and supportive school where pupils' welfare and well-being are afforded a high status as they were at the time of the last inspection. Staff know pupils very well and are sensitive to their personal needs and difficulties. For example, a Year 4 teacher reflecting on the pupils with special educational needs commented, "They are very special and we are lucky to have them". The head and deputy head teacher, with good support from the staff, have created a safe Christian school where all pupils are safe, protected, valued and very well cared for. The building is clean, secure and routinely checked and there are well-qualified first-aiders on hand to deal with minor injuries. Lunchtime supervisors have received training to help them identify and report on any concerns. The pupils' day is interspersed with reprieve time in lessons for 'Brain Breaks' and 'Prime Time' for reflecting on their learning and eating healthy snacks.

30 There are very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. Pupils value the rewards they receive for good behaviour, for effort or for simply being kind. The school's high expectations of behaviour as set out in the school aims and in the behaviour policy are put into very effective practice in the everyday life of the school. There are effective procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour but Year 6 pupils confirmed that these are rarely needed. There are also very good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance and their success can be seen in the very good attendance figures. Registers are checked daily and parents contacted for any unexplained absences. The school does its best to encourage parents to avoid taking children on holiday in term time. One of the main reasons for the good attendance of pupils is that they are enthusiastic about school and want to attend.

31 Pupils' personal development is very carefully monitored and supported. The school is increasingly involving pupils in setting their own targets for personal as well as academic achievement. Teachers report annually on how pupils are developing personally as well as academically. The school ensures that pupils have rich opportunities to grow and develop into responsible citizens.

32 The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very good. Teachers fully understand the links between assessing pupils' learning and using the information to adjust the curriculum. On entry to the school, pupils' are assessed and their development is tracked through the Foundation Stage. Infant and junior pupils complete a wide range of assessments. Very good use is made of data to establish how well pupils are achieving from year to year. Any pupils who are underachieving are quickly spotted and supported. Parents are consulted and specific intervention programmes are developed. The head teacher carefully analyses the results of national tests to

identify areas for improvement. For example, as a result of the 2002 national tests, the school identified writing as a priority. This enabled the school to plan a focus on writing for the current school year. Evidence from the inspection indicates that there are signs of improvement.

33 The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is good. The school uses this information effectively in team meetings to plan future work and identify those pupils in need of additional support. From the assessments undertaken, pupils are set individual targets to aim for in literacy and numeracy. Targets are now being introduced in science. In other curricular areas, the assessment of pupils' learning is used adequately to plan the next lesson and write summary reports for parents on pupils' progress. Pupils are being introduced to assessing their own learning. In ICT, for example, this is proving successful in helping pupils recognise their strengths and weaknesses.

34 Good use is made of information to support pupils with special educational needs. The early identification of pupils' specific learning difficulties enables teachers to plan suitable tasks and provide classroom assistants with very useful guidance concerning their needs. Assessment information also helps support gifted and talented pupils, firstly through identification and then in helping plan specific activities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

35 Parents appreciate their children attending, what they rightly consider to be a very good school. Evidence from the inspection supports their positive views. The effective links with parents have continued since the last inspection. Parents do not have any major concerns, although a small number are not happy about the work that children do at home or about the range of extra curricular activities. In fact, there is a very good range of out of school activities. The level and purpose of the homework provided is satisfactory but there are inconsistencies in the way it is marked. The partnership between the school and parents adds much to the family ethos of the school and there are many additional benefits. For example, the School Partnership Association (SPA) has provided outdoor play equipment and two 'walking bus' schemes are organised and run by the parents to ensure children's safe passage to and from school.

36 Parents make a good contribution to their children's learning. A particular strength is the ongoing dialogue between the school and parents of children who have special educational needs. A small number of parents work voluntarily in school and provide vital support, for example, in ICT lessons. Most parents support their children with homework and meetings and workshops have been arranged for parents on such matters as literacy, drugs education and homework. A weeklong 'hands on' mathematics workshop was held for parents to let them experience what their children are learning. These events have generally been well attended and keep parents well informed about principles and changes in their children's education. The school sought parents' views through a telephone survey conducted by an external agency. This provided a vital insight into what parents think, although not all parents took part.

37 The school provides good quality information for parents. Parents of children new to the school are offered an individual 'family' meeting with the head teacher to discuss how their children are settling down in school. There are three opportunities each year for formal consultations with teachers and parents confirm that they feel able to approach the school with confidence and trust. Parents are given regular information about what their children are expected to learn in the forthcoming term, and a weekly newsletter informs them of activities and events in the school. The prospectus and annual report of the governing body are helpful documents, which inform parents about school routines and activities in which their children are involved. Reports to parents on their children's progress are of good quality and show that teachers know children well. Targets for future

development are set in them and discussed with parents. The reports also contain sensitive comments about personal and social development. All these initiatives give parents a good and valuable insight into the work of the school and enable them to play a more supportive role in the educational development of their children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

38 The leadership and management of the head teacher and key staff are outstanding. As a team they successfully convey aims and values that contribute to an excellent whole-school ethos for learning and achievement. The school atmosphere enables pupils' personal development and their relationships with others to flourish. On the most recent school improvement plan, targets to raise pupils' self-esteem has a strong focus alongside strategies to raise standards. The staff and governing body have been fully supportive of the head teacher's vision and innovations. The school has achieved 'Beacon Status' since the last inspection and is deservedly held in the highest respect, by both the education authority and the local community.

39 Since the last inspection the development of management structures and delegation of curriculum leadership to staff have significantly improved the quality of educational provision. Year leaders, who also take on the management of curriculum areas, are an important strategic link in the senior management team. Year team planning and subject working parties are testimony to the whole-school approach to review, change and development. There has been a consistency of approach in establishing effective assessment and tracking systems to monitor pupils' progress and to planning that has improved the teaching of relevant skills across the curriculum. The school has successfully addressed issues from the last inspection relating to the monitoring of teaching and standards. Outcomes from the appraisal of teaching and an evaluation of pupils' learning are fed into the whole-school self-evaluation process. This structure has enabled ongoing progress to be made in the majority of subjects where development plans itemise annual targets. For example, the development of writing skills has been prioritised because the school rightly places great emphasis upon literacy and is constantly seeking ways of promoting it throughout the curriculum.

40 The exception to these improvement procedures is in the teaching of religious education. The current leader has only very recently taken on the role. She is aware of what is being taught through the school by seeing the teachers' planning. She has not yet been able to form judgements on the quality of the learning by evaluating the comparative levels of work in the pupils' books. Consequently, deficiencies identified in this report have remained undetected.

41 The planning for future improvement is based on a rigorous whole-school self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. The head teacher analyses annual national tests and the tracking of progress in the context of the school. This enables him to set appropriately challenging targets in a school improvement plan. The present school improvement plan is clearly structured to identify success criteria to improve writing across the school. It has been successful in aiding the focus and monitoring of writing in most subjects. However, more could be done to incorporate the outcomes of consultations with staff and parents explicitly in the selection of priorities. The overall quality of the work of the governing body is good. Many of its members monitor work in the classrooms and therefore have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They offer considerable support to the head teacher and they are knowledgeable and supportive of the purpose and scope of school improvement. However, closer monitoring and critical reflection of the outcomes of performance, similar to suggestions made regarding health and safety and building projects, would further support the school in implementing quality changes.

42 The head teacher places a very high priority on developing the skills of all staff, including those who support teachers. Arrangements for the appraisal and performance management of teachers are excellent. These are effectively linked to their professional development with many examples of staff improving their knowledge and skills in the classroom. Links between performance management and the school improvement plan are also very well developed, further increasing the potential for focussed improvement through the monitoring of classroom practices. The improvement in the provision of ICT is an example of how targeted development and training has improved standards.

43 Spending is linked very well to self-evaluation and prioritised improvement. Principles of best value form the basis of informed decision making, identifying financial priorities, planning for the future and monitoring the work of the school. However, financial efficiency would further improve if actual costs were calculated for the many developments. Governors oversee the spending on resources to support pupils' learning critically and wisely. They apply the principles of best value in the purchases of services and resources. Administration of the day-to-day work of the school is very efficiently carried out using modern technology. The school makes excellent use of specific grants to improve provision. The head teachers' innovative use of 'Beacon Status' funding has dramatically increased the involvement of the school in the community and the professional skills of some staff. The "Sparking the Gap" project is regarded highly in improving continuity of learning from primary to secondary phases and involves many schools in the community. Beacon funding is also raising standards by involving gifted and talented pupils in mathematics, writing and arts projects.

44 The school's accommodation is satisfactory. There are many very good facilities such the computer suite and two halls but space in many classrooms is at a premium and pupils have to pass through one classroom to get to another, in some cases. Subject leaders have built up a good level of resources, which teachers find invaluable in preparing their lessons. The school provides very good value for money when the educational provision and pupils' levels of achievement are set against an average level of funding and the circumstances in which the school operates.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

45 The head teacher staff and governors should now:

(1) Improve pupils' written work in religious education by:

- Encouraging them to reflect upon and express their own values and beliefs in the light of what they learn about different faiths; and
- Teachers taking greater account of pupils' different levels of understanding when setting written tasks.

Paragraphs 8, 22, 40 and 91

46 When drawing up their action plan governors will have to take account of one minor issue by:

Eliminating the inconsistencies in the marking of pupils' work, such as spelling mistakes, and providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length, sometimes within a given period of time.

Paragraphs 21, 23 and 62

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	82
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	31

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	31	36	10	0	0	0
Percentage	6	38	44	12	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	34	468
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	10
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	50

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	11

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	55
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.2
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 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	39	33	72

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	38	35	38
	Girls	33	32	33
	Total	71	67	71
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	99% (96%)	93% (96%)	99% (96%)
	National	84% (84%)	86% (86%)	90% (91%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	38	38	38
	Girls	33	33	33
	Total	71	71	71
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	99% (96%)	99% (96%)	99% (96%)
	National	85% (85%)	89% (89%)	89% (89%)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	45	34	79

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	44	43	44
	Girls	33	34	34
	Total	77	77	78
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	97% (93%)	97% (92%)	99% (98%)
	National	75% (75%)	73% (71%)	86% (87%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	45	44	45
	Girls	33	34	33
	Total	78	78	78
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	99% (84%)	99% (89%)	99% (90%)
	National	73% (72%)	74% (74%)	82% (82%)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
364	0	0
0	0	0
10	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
4	0	0
4	0	0
4	0	0
7	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
7	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	20
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Average class size	26

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	134

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	34
Total number of education support staff	2

Financial information

Financial year	2002-2003
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	£
Total income	1,069,238
Total expenditure	1,089,531
Expenditure per pupil	2,153
Balance brought forward from previous year	30,097
Balance carried forward to next year	9,804

Total aggregate hours worked per week	50
Number of pupils per FTE adult	12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	502
Number of questionnaires returned	161

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	66	32	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	56	31	1	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	44	3	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	48	14	2	2
The teaching is good.	69	39	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	44	4	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	26	3	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	30	0	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	54	39	5	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	77	21	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	60	38	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	43	18	2	4

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

47 Sixty-nine children attend the nursery, either in the morning or afternoon, and 64 children attend full time in the three reception classes. When children start in the nursery, their knowledge, skills and understanding are above those normally seen for their age.

48 Children achieve very well in the nursery because of the very good teaching of a wide range of stimulating activities. The emphasis on practical and challenging experiences makes the work particularly relevant and exciting. On balance, children achieve well over the Foundation Stage in the six areas of learning. Most children reach levels above those normally seen in their knowledge and understanding of the world, their physical development and in their creative development. They reach levels well above those normally seen in: their personal, social and emotional development; in their communication, language and literacy; and in their mathematical development. Children with special educational needs receive much individual help, enabling them to make very good progress towards their individual targets. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are very good. Teachers, nursery nurses and classroom assistants share a very strong commitment to raising standards. This is seen in the thorough organisation, the high levels of assessment and the detailed planning that shapes children's learning. High quality resources enhance most areas of learning, particularly the outdoor provision, which has been enlarged and improved. Activities are very imaginatively linked together, so the children's work is clearly connected. For example, many of the activities in the nursery were based on travel, under the theme of 'Go, Go, Go', whilst in reception, 'Jack and the Beanstalk' was the stimulus for much of the work.

Personal, social and emotional development

49 Most children enter the nursery with little experience of learning alongside others. They make very good progress because they are encouraged to take some responsibility for their learning, such as choosing their own activity. They have numerous opportunities to work, share and co-operate together, which helps them to acquire social skills and some understanding of others.

50 By the time the children leave the nursery, their self-esteem is high. This helps them to tackle new learning with confidence in the reception classes. Children's awareness of good and inappropriate behaviour develops strongly. They frequently work independently, on their own or in groups, with sustained concentration. Parents value the contribution of the nursery in establishing these good habits from the start of their children's education. In reception, routines play an important part in helping children to predict what they should do, consequently they move seamlessly from one activity to another. They gather their own equipment and return it when the activity has been completed. For example, when children planted their beans, they waited patiently to use the watering can and then went for the brush and pan to clear away the soil that had been spilt. Equipment is shared well and children frequently say 'please', 'thank you' and 'you're welcome.'

Communication, language and literacy

51 Most children enter the nursery with good skills in speaking. The learning of language is a priority throughout the Foundation Stage. By the end of reception, most children are good listeners and confident speakers. Many children have learnt to read the common words in simple books and are beginning to write their own words. Often new skills are extended through other work they are

undertaking, such as talking, reading and writing about transport, so learning is highly relevant and great fun. Pupils with special educational needs make very good gains in these areas.

52 By the end of the reception, children's speaking and listening skills are very good for their age. Every opportunity is taken to develop their literacy skills. For example, nursery children studied an excellent display of road signs and number plates. One child joked, "Number plates? Is it dinner time?" Another child patiently explained that, "Those are the things on the front and back of a car!" Whilst groups went with the teacher to study number plates in the car park, others acted out the roles of drivers, lollipop wardens, pedestrians and garage mechanics. The latter were responsible for testing the roadworthiness of each vehicle and signing their MOT certificates. Rules of the road were strictly observed. In the reception, children benefit from regular, formal sessions where they learn how to sound out letters and to spot how sounds can be blended to form words. They practice letter formation in pencil, crayon, chalk, paint and sand. By the end of the Foundation Stage, most write simple phrases independently, with spellings that are based on their knowledge of letter sounds. Computers are used well to develop the early skills of writing and reading. Most children read books at levels well in advance of their age. Very close links between the staff and parents ensure that most children receive regular coaching at school and at home. They gain a love of books and enjoy talking about them. One child was keen to check, for example, if an inspector knew what the house signs 'For Sale' and 'Sold' really meant.

Mathematical development

53 By the end of the Foundation Stage, most children are working well above the levels expected for their age. Teachers careful planning ensures that tasks are well matched to children's different learning needs. In the nursery, children learn to recognise and write numbers, to count forwards and to look for patterns. They gain an awareness of how numbers have an important role in everyday life. For example, they explain that the 30, 40 and 50 road signs, "Tell drivers how fast they have to go".

54 In reception, there are lots more opportunities to measure and to develop new understanding about weights, capacities and lengths. When a teacher demonstrated measuring a table, using the length of her hand, she found that it was, "... three and a bit hands long". "That could be three and a half", suggested a child. The activities are very practical providing very good opportunities for children to observe and handle objects, which greatly helps their learning. As a result, children recognise numbers, count confidently, some beyond one hundred, and read half and quarter past on the clock. Very good resources enhance the quality of the learning experiences in mathematics.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

55 Many children enter the school with a wide perception of the world for their age. They gain a good understanding, both of their immediate surroundings as well as of the wider world. This is particularly the case in the nursery. An 'Airport' has been created that includes a check-in desk, passport control and even the fuselage of an airliner to house both passengers and crew! To assist the international passengers, there are signs in a range of languages. As in all airports, there is much interaction, forms to sign and general excitement. Children become totally involved and rapidly increase their understanding of the wider world. Equally good teaching, learning and application were seen in the computer suite, where children were set a range of challenges to work out routes and movements of traffic. In the reception, work on topics such as magnetism raises children's level of interest. However, children are sometimes told too much and are not always encouraged to think for themselves and draw their own conclusions. When working in the computer suite, reception children

were operating programs at significantly higher levels than nursery children. This illustrates how their understanding is built up through increasingly challenging activities.

Physical Development

56 Teaching is good and children achieve well in this area. There are very good levels of supervision, whether the children are engaged in driving vehicles around the road circuit, mastering the precise movements needed for handwriting, sewing and painting or developing hand/eye co-ordination with ball skills. Lessons build effectively on the skills the children have learnt earlier. Safety rules are observed and good habits are well established. For example, nursery children move and change direction with very good spatial awareness. Children in reception handle tools such as saws and files with confidence, automatically seeking safety goggles, "In case the wood makes sawdust."

Creative development

57 Children achieve well in this area because of the wide and interesting range of creative activities provided, especially in the nursery. They enjoy using their imagination by pretending to be air stewards and hostesses, checking the passengers' passports, or by being pilots, donning their earphones and checking the controls. Art and design activities are equally exciting, such as hand printing, bubble painting or working in clay. Opportunities to sing and play instruments are eagerly anticipated, with the reception children even following a simple score to accompany a story on a range of percussion instruments. Teaching is good and resources are used creatively, which stimulates children's curiosity and eagerness to learn. One reception pupil summed it up when he held up a felt leaf he had sewn and stuffed for a beanstalk collage. "I sometimes do my own sewing at home. I think I'm the champion sewer." This was real pride in achievement and not arrogance. It is a measure of the success of the Foundation Stage that so many of the children leave it with such positive attitudes and ready to begin their infant education.

ENGLISH

58 Standards are well above the national average by the age of seven and very high by the age of 11. Standards are higher now than at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils' achieve well in the infant classes, where they build effectively on what they have learnt earlier. Pupils in junior classes achieve very well. Standards in Year 6 are typical of those found in the early years of secondary schools. The main strengths in English are the teaching of speaking, listening and reading, the encouragement of differing writing styles and the high quality of the curriculum and the way the subject is led and managed. The careful analysis of annual test results enables teachers to identify general areas for improvement and to set challenging but realistic targets for individual pupils to aim for. These factors all contribute to the very high standards achieved. The overall improvement since the previous inspection is good.

59 Standards in speaking and listening are well above average at age seven and are very high at age 11. Teachers' effective use of questioning stimulates discussion and pupils are challenged to respond. Pupils are attentive listeners. They respect one another's opinions and contribute well in developing ideas. In a very good Year 2 lesson, for example, role-play was used effectively to help pupils to understand the author's style and use of language in the story of 'Degas and the Little Dancer.' During the lesson, pupils improved their understanding of 'motive' and developed their questioning skills by asking 'why' rather than 'how.' In Year 4, pupils re-visit the story of 'Westlandia' and speak clearly when describing the central character. 'Wes' is a "lateral thinker. "He's a "genius, imaginative and creative." "His mind is tingling." The school's conscious promotion of thinking skills creates very good opportunities for discussion.

60 In Years 5 and 6, pupils study contemporary poets in depth. For example, a lively discussion in Year 5 focused on rhyme and rhythm and, in Year 6, pupils examined a poem by Elizabeth Jennings, 'The Bat's Plea.' In this lesson pupils quickly selected words, traditionally associated with bats, 'nocturnal' and 'blind.' One pupil suggested that myth links bats to 'halloween' and another suggested they represented "dark forces." Pupils then reflected on the bat's perception of people and moved onto consider how other animals may view human beings. In these instances the quality of discussion enabled pupils to develop a clear understanding of the poet's intentions. The curriculum provides many further opportunities to develop speaking and listening, through performance, in assemblies, drama productions and workshops. Standards are very high because of the emphasis given to discussion in lessons.

61 Standards in reading are well above average by age seven and are very high at age 11. Infant pupils are carefully taught reading strategies, making good use of commercial schemes. Confident readers quickly move onto more difficult stories, such as; 'Convict' and 'Judy saves the World.' Pupils are encouraged to read aloud in class. In Year 1 all enjoy reading 'The Owl and the Pussycat' and pupils quickly move on to spotting rhyming words, such as 'owl-fowl' and 'honey-money'. By age seven, most pupils read accurately, some with considerable expression. They possess effective strategies for word identification and pronunciation. Pupils describe plot and character well, making valid comparisons with other reading. In Years 3 and 4, standards in reading are well above average. This is because there is a regular class focus on reading each day and pupils have clear targets for improvement. By age 11, pupils are confident readers, exploring a wide range of fiction. In Year 5, one pupil was reading 'To Kill a Mockingbird' and in Year 6 a pupil made perceptive comparisons between 'Harry Potter' and 'The Hobbit.' Pupils read accurately and fluently, with expression. They interpret plot and character, analysing motive and literary style. Standards are very high, because of the range of opportunities provided, with pupils choosing books more typically selected by teenagers.

62 By the age of seven, standards in writing are above average and by 11 standards are well above average. A strong feature of writing is the way that pupils are encouraged to write for many different purposes, often through studies in other subjects. For example, they describe their visit to a river location, making good use of simile and personification. They write letters to 'Katie Morag' seeking information about her island. Pupils have good opportunities to write and these are effectively linked to their oral work and to reading. Pupils steadily acquire skills in handwriting, punctuation and spelling. Handwriting is taught and pupils develop a clear cursive style. However, some pupils do not write in a straight line, consequently letter size is variable and some work is untidy. A significant number of infant and junior pupils write slowly and cannot combine speed with clarity. In Years 3 and 4, pupils develop their joined up writing style and steadily improve it. The quality and range of work widens. In Year 3, pupils are carefully taught to use differing research skills when compiling a booklet on plants. In Year 4, pupils write reviews of well-known stories, such as the 'Iron Man' and develop skills in diary writing. In Years 5 and 6, most handwriting is of good quality, though presentation skills are variable. Spelling is not always secure and occasionally glaring errors are not corrected; for example, 'gramer' and 'tequnique.' However, the overall quality and range of writing is very good. Pupils express themselves with a rich vocabulary to produce poetry, letters, autobiography, stories, play scripts and book reviews. The teaching of writing is good overall and pupils are encouraged to use language imaginatively. For example, one pupil wrote, 'Blue is the flowing of the sea which eats up all the sand.' Pupils make good use of discussion to promote their use of language and are inspired by good quality fiction to write in differing styles. Examples of effective writing, seen during the inspection, were short stories modelling the style of different authors, such as Tolkien.

63 Teaching is consistently good throughout the school and there are examples of very good teaching. Teachers expect pupils to achieve well and manage their learning successfully, using questioning skilfully to make them think. The good teaching encourages pupils to adopt positive attitudes towards learning, and to behave very well. Personal development is very good; pupils are reflective and mature; relationships are excellent. An area for development is to ensure sufficient time is provided for pupils to practise and improve their written work during the literacy hour. The curriculum is of very good quality; it is enriched through drama, poetry and the use of ICT. It effectively underpins the achievement of all pupils. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and these pupils achieve extremely well. Their work is thoroughly planned and they are well supported by classroom assistants. For example, in Year 5, a pupil is carefully supported when writing. More able pupils are challenged to extend their learning, for example, by producing mini-novels and using imaginative language, such as, 'The monster roared, he was heavy and so huge that his shadow was bigger than the village.' The school rightly places great emphasis upon literacy and is constantly seeking ways of promoting it throughout the curriculum. ICT is used very well to improve pupils' reading and most pupils are very familiar with word processing. Areas for improvement, such as writing, have been identified and action has already been taken, such as involving visiting authors to work with the pupils. Pupils' different learning needs are very well provided for because their learning is regularly assessed and additional support is given to any pupils whose progress falters.

MATHEMATICS

64 Standards in mathematics by the time that pupils reach the age of seven and 11 are very high. This represents a significant rise in standards since the previous inspection. The improvements reflect the high quality of teaching and the very good leadership and management of the subject. Teachers' high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are entirely fulfilled. Pupils work hard with sustained concentration. Pupils gain particularly from teachers' strong knowledge of the subject and all pupils gain confidence in learning the subject. The subject leader's very clear vision of how mathematics should develop is evident in the way that pupils' learning is checked and class teachers are supported. There are excellent strategies for teaching numeracy skills, from which all pupils benefit. Support assistants work very closely with pupils with special educational needs, measuring their learning against the targets set for them by the class teacher. This ensures that these pupils make very good progress.

65 Pupils in Year 2 have a very good understanding of number, shape and time. For example most Year 2 pupils tell the time correctly and convert analogue to digital time. Pupils make very good progress as they move through the school. In Year 4, for example, pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of decimal notation when they apply their knowledge to measure each other for new clothes. Most of these pupils understand the relationship between decimals and fractions and they calculate mentally $14/10$ as 1.4, and use phrases such as 'improper fractions'. By the time pupils reach Year 6, they have a good grasp of mathematical relationships and are able to devise formula, for example, to calculate the perimeter and area of a rectangle, using ICT. Pupils depth of understanding emerges in class discussions, when they make comments such as, "The area of a circle is about three times the radius squared."

66 Teaching and learning are very good and there is some excellent teaching in Year 6. The school has very successfully implemented the National Numeracy Strategy and teachers are using it to great effect. Teachers' planning is very thorough and the aims of the lesson are shared with pupils at the outset. Teachers are very aware of pupils' different learning needs and activities are matched according to their levels of understanding. This enables pupils of all abilities to understand what they are learning. Teachers take account of pupils' success or difficulties in previous lessons, which

ensures that they develop their understanding of mathematical ideas methodically. Increasingly complex and demanding challenges are provided and pupils are encouraged to apply their skills to solve mathematical problems. The very best teaching is typified by the teacher's rapid questioning and the pupils' quick rate of learning. In the excellent lesson, for example, the pace of learning was almost breathless as pupils responded to quick-fire questions such as, "What is the pattern of the top line", "Add the bottom corners", "Take the highest number from the lowest". Pupils responded very enthusiastically and participated fully. Teachers strongly encourage pupils to use their knowledge and skills in exploring real investigations. This becomes embedded in pupils' thinking, so that by the time they are 11, they use previous knowledge as a matter of course to carry through tasks.

SCIENCE

67 High standards in science have been maintained and improved upon since the last inspection. Standards are presently well above the national average at the age of seven and very high at eleven. Since the last inspection the key scientific skills of planning, performing and reporting experimental work has been significantly improved. Consequently all pupils extend their thinking and understanding by turning ideas into tests, and by collecting evidence to conduct experiments and report the results of their investigations. This has impacted on the increasing number of pupils who have attained the higher levels in national assessments. Very good assessment procedures give teachers the opportunity to plan different activities to suit the varied levels of ability in their classes. Very good leadership of the subject ensures that teachers receive insightful guidance, particularly on how to conduct successful experiments and how to ensure that previous achievements are used as stepping-stones for new learning. Both of these factors are influential reasons for the very good quality of teaching throughout the school.

68 At an early stage an agreed whole-school lesson structure for science sets the climate for very positive learning. For example, Year 1 pupils make careful observations and illustrations of plant parts, and label them correctly. Infant pupils' progress is enhanced because teachers expect them to write accounts of their experiments and to learn and use key scientific words accurately. Infant pupils become skilled in carrying out experiments. For example, they conduct experiments to show how heating and freezing can change materials and use words such as solids and liquids to explain the phenomena. Very good literacy strategies are used to enable pupils to label their experiment in a question format, for example "How can we change the speed of melting ice?" This allows six and seven year old pupils to begin to predict outcomes and to draw conclusions. Their understanding of the concepts of fair testing is very advanced. For example, one pupil stated that the test was unfair because someone had handled the container with melting ice, having previously merely observed it.

69 Good achievement is maintained in all junior classes because teachers use their very good subject knowledge to build upon pupils' earlier learning. In Year 3, for example, teachers develop pupils' understanding of experimenting very effectively by encouraging them to investigate the characteristics of celery. This allows pupils to share their first ever experiences of capillary actions. By the end of this lesson the majority used the word 'transpiration' to explain how water travels through the stem of a plant. This adds to their already very good understanding of the roles of roots and leaves in plant growth. Visits to an environmental centre left a profound impression on Year 4 pupils' understanding of food chains and the roles of 'predators' and 'prey.' After witnessing dragon fly larvae consuming a tadpole, they excitedly developed their thinking from one of horror to a consideration that it is part of nature's food chains. The more able pupils used logic to develop more complex feeding relationships in environmental food webs. Year 5 pupils have a very good understanding of how plants and flowers reproduce. The challenging questions asked by teachers were successful in allowing pupils to use this knowledge to collate the environmental conditions for the germinating of seeds. By Year 6 pupils have made very good progress to include further detail and

explanation of phenomena in their experiments. For example, they use previously acquired scientific knowledge to make more sophisticated predictions and to draw appropriate conclusions. Teachers are beginning to use exemplars of a range of experiments to improve pupils' numerical understanding of measured results. Further deepening of understanding would be achieved if pupils used their mathematical and computer skills to retest and analyse the results of their experiments.

70 Teachers are making very good progress in developing pupils' writing skills in science. For example, Year 4 pupils' knowledge of habitats is improved by requiring them to write in the style of estate agents and newspaper reporters. Pupils with special education needs learn effectively because teachers are adept at planning activities suited to their needs. For example, in a Year 5 lesson on the germination of seeds, the least able pupils dealt with one constant parameter in their experiment whilst other pupils investigated more. Pupils become well versed in the skills required to turn these preliminary findings into acceptable scientific formats and are further encouraged to explore and investigate for themselves. Occasionally, teachers over-run class discussions leaving insufficient time for pupils to engage in independent and group-work related tasks. However, some gifted scientists in all years respond very well because the high level of challenge in the lessons appeals to their intellect and interests. For example, a teacher listened enthusiastically to pupils explaining that seeds easily germinate without light and how you can increase the number of variables in any experiment.

ART AND DESIGN

71 Pupils achieve well to reach above average standards at the ages of seven and 11. The improvements since the time of the previous inspection are attributable to the good teaching of a carefully planned programme of work, which gives pupils a thorough understanding of the elements of art, such as colour, line and shape.

72 Infant pupils benefit from a rich selection of two and three-dimensional experiences. For example, Year 2 pupils produce good quality paper sculptures where a piece of card is bent, cut and shaped with nothing taken away or added. This experience develops pupils' insight into three-dimensional form. Infant and junior pupils improve their skills and perceptions of shape and colour effectively by recording their observations in sketchbooks. For example, one group used a viewfinder to sketch patterns found in different parts of the classroom. Good achievement of pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, is evident in the way they contribute knowledgeably to class discussions. For example, Year 5 pupils commenting on shading techniques, suggested that "The highlights show it as more three-dimensional" and "more gradual shading when you use your finger makes the cylinder rounded." By the age of 11, pupils use their wide experience of art and design to good effect by selecting the best technique to capture the image. For example, in a lesson on three-dimensional composition, pupils decided on a viewpoint to draw a figure and made their own decision about scale, line and tone to record their ideas.

73 Teaching is good overall. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and provide an interesting and challenging range of tasks that pupils enjoy. There is a persistent thread of developing pupils' own work drawing on their previously formed ideas. This, together with good opportunities to study the 'language' of art, such as colour, shape and pattern and the work of famous artists, gives pupils valuable insights into how images are represented. Teachers challenge and inspire pupils with stimulating activities and good use of the available resources. For example, pupils use graphics programs on computers to explore pattern, colour and form. Art and design is well led and managed. The subject leader works successfully with teachers to develop their understanding of the subject and improve their teaching. This is reflected in the good quality displays around the school and the confidence with which teachers approach the subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

74 Standards continue to be above the levels expected at the ages of seven and 11, as they were at the time of the last inspection. Pupils achieve well throughout the school because teachers' lesson planning accurately pinpoints the key skills that pupils must learn. Pupils' successful learning is largely attributable to the effective leadership and management of the subject leader in influencing the teaching and providing a good range of resources.

75 By Year 2, pupils use their good knowledge of materials to decide which is best for a specific purpose. For example, they explore different types of door hinge for their model houses to find out which material is strong and sturdy, and how to create a structure to support a roof. By Year 6, pupils have learnt that the initial design may well require modification to ensure that it meets its purpose. For example, 11 year-old pupils make comments such as, "You think you have the design but you have to modify it as you make it, by evaluating it and talking about what you could do better." Pupils' enjoyment of the subject is conveyed in their view that "The subject is great because you get hands on and are given a challenge." Year 6 pupils incorporate sophisticated movement into their work, for example, by using cams to make parts of their rainforest toys rise and fall. Pupils' skills in taking into account the properties of different materials when creating a specification for a design are very good. This was evident in way they researched Egyptian sandals and other types of footwear before producing their own. More able pupils are challenged to create a plan of action, decide on materials and evaluate with confidence and accuracy. Less able pupils, including those with special educational needs, often benefit from working alongside the more talented ones. As a result, when teams of mixed ability pupils built shelters, everyone was equally involved and all of the pupils made good progress. The good standard of pupils' finished work is celebrated in the excellent displays around the school.

76 Teaching is good and lessons proceed at a brisk pace, ensuring that pupils remain interested and attentive. The aims of the lessons are shared with pupils and their learning builds smoothly on the skills they have gained through previous projects. Pupils' numeracy and literacy skills are extended well through opportunities for pupils to measure, cut and join materials and then write about their designs and evaluations. Resources are very well prepared, such as, the fruit and vegetables in a Year 1 class, giving the pupils opportunities to discuss how they would create an attractive presentation. One pupil suggested a 'fruit kebab' as a design and the teacher encouraging other pupils to become involved, praised this. Pupils often explore design using computer simulations, such as arranging furniture in a bedroom.

GEOGRAPHY

77 Standards are above the levels expected at the ages of seven and 11, which is a good improvement since the previous inspection. This is because of the very good leadership and management of the subject and its positive effects on the good quality of teaching. Visits to local places of interest and the use of the local environment, such as Yarm for a traffic survey make a very good contribution to pupils' learning and understanding of local geography. Pupils achieve well throughout the school although time for the subject is limited because of the increasing demands of English and mathematics. However, good opportunities are taken to support pupils' learning of literacy through descriptive writing and numeracy through using keys, scales and map co-ordinates.

78 Learning in geography for infant pupils is brought to life studying the fictional island of Struay. For example, pupils compare their locality and environment with the adventures of Katie Morag whose island life provides a stark contrast to their own. Year 1 pupils draw simple maps of the school grounds and mark out the buildings accurately. This prepares them well to use more complex

maps when they are older. Pupils' understanding of the wider world is imaginatively enhanced by the travels of the school bear, Coco. The very good display of a world map and photographs of Coco's travels around the globe widen pupils' knowledge and increases their enjoyment of the subject. By the age of 11, they draw well on their secure knowledge and skills to help them to understand how other cultures differ from their own. They have mature understanding of the impact of deforestation on the rainforests around the world and the long-term global impact, which was very well illustrated in an excellent Year 5 assembly. Year 6 pupils write confidently about tectonic plates and their movements and understand how rivers cause erosion and change the landscape. Junior pupils apply the skills they have learned well. For example, Year 3 pupils used compass directions to plan a route.

79 The good teaching, particularly of different environments, is well supported by the use of the Internet for research about different places and features, such as rainforests. Consequently 11 year-old pupils are very interested in learning about different regions. Lessons are well planned to meet pupils' different learning needs. For example, more able pupils often research their own information, whilst less able pupils benefit from very good levels of adult support. Geography makes a very good contribution to pupils' cultural development when they learn about the music, food and lifestyles in different countries, such as India.

HISTORY

80 Standards in history are above the levels expected at the ages of seven and 11. The well-planned work ensures that key skills are consistently learnt, practised and improved. The good improvement since the last inspection is related to very effective leadership and management of the subject. The subject leader observes lessons regularly, is very well informed about standards across the school and uses this information well to move the subject on. Pupils make consistently good progress. Primarily this is because the teaching is good. However, another factor is the combination of learning history alongside geography. For example, infant pupils study the seaside as it is now and as it was in the past. This improves their understanding of place and time. Junior pupils have a good understanding of different historical periods, such as Roman Britain. They use different source materials competently to learn more about the period. For example, Year 3 pupils used the local census of 100 years ago to find out about the jobs available in Yarm in 1899 and how they compare with jobs available now. At the age of 11, the pupils are able to describe the use of artefacts, for example a Shabti figure from Egypt, and the importance of it in the tombs. Pupils' progress is good rather than very good because of limited time available for the subject particularly for the older pupils. The pupils say that 'Year 6 is crowded' and they find there are 'fewer opportunities to be creative.'

81 Teaching and learning are good and the carefully planned lessons enable pupils to acquire the skills they need. For example, in a very good lesson in Year 1, the use of a visitor to describe her memories of the seaside stimulated pupils' interests and they asked searching questions such as, 'Did your nana and you go fishing?' Teachers make very good use of visits to places of historical interest, such as the Hancock Museum, to put learning into a real context for pupils. A good example of the imaginative use of resources is the specially made Victorian costumes for pupils to wear and take on the role of characters from the past. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported. For example, a support assistant worked with an individual to complete a specifically designed task about the seaside. Teachers make every effort to extend the more able pupils through more complex tasks such as searching the Internet for information about a particular topic. Teachers build on pupils' previous learning very well by extending their capacity to identify fact from opinion and use different sources of evidence. Pupils work is well presented and from talking to them it is clear that they enjoy learning about the past and have very positive attitudes towards the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

82 Dynamic leadership has resulted in significant improvements in ICT since the time of the last inspection. Pupils now achieve well to reach standards that are above the levels expected by the age of seven and well above the levels expected by the age of 11. The fully equipped computer suite and extensive range of software have been influential in the school's improvement. However, the major factor is opportunity for class teachers to work alongside the subject leader and gain important skills and confidence in teaching ICT. At the same time pupils have benefited from the subject leader's high quality teaching.

83 The ICT curriculum is particularly well planned. The knowledge and skills that pupils need is built up systematically from year to year. Such is the rate of progress that pupils are working at least a level higher than might be expected, in all year groups. For example, Year 1 pupils are already able to enter information into a simple database, produce graphs and interpret the outcomes. By the age of 11, most pupils are competent in tasks more often associated with pupils in the early years of secondary school. For example, Year 6 pupils produce multimedia presentations, combining text, graphics and sound on themes such as, 'A Journey into the Unknown.' These presentations are sophisticated in that pupils program in hyperlinks to enable the user to move to any part of the sequence. Upper junior pupils are equally comfortable in searching the Internet, constructing and using spreadsheets and using computer programs to control events, such as operating the sequence of traffic lights. The only area of ICT yet to be fully implemented is the use of sensors to detect changes, for example, in temperature or sound. Pupils' ICT skills are very well taught in the computer suite and there are good opportunities for them to apply these skills in working through programs involving simulations, modelling, interrogating data or presenting different forms of information. In addition, pupils' learning of ICT is enhanced considerably using classroom computers, for example, in word processing their written work and solving problems in mathematics and science.

84 Teaching is good in most lessons and often very good when the subject leader takes the class. The facilities in the computer suite are used to very good effect. In particular, pupils can see an enlarged image of their computer screen on the giant teaching board. When new procedures are taught, such as opening menus and selecting operations, they are able to watch the effects on the big screen. At the same time, teachers draw their attention to significant features and question them thoroughly to assess their level of understanding. For example in one lesson, after explaining the sequence of operations, the teacher said, "Talk me through it Bethany." There followed a clear explanation of how to open and operate the program and select the icons to simulate the composing of a piece of music. These measures invariably result in pupils knowing exactly what they are expected to do when they work independently. The subject leader teaches at a quick pace but not at the expense of pupils' understanding. This is a deliberate strategy to keep pupils interested and give them access to their own machines as soon as possible. Occasionally, however, other class teachers hold pupils back watching and listening for too long, which restricts the time available for them to practise and improve their keyboard techniques. The programs are well chosen for their rich educational content. Many of the programs contain variable levels of difficulty. In some cases, pupils move themselves up to the next level. Other programmes offer pupils scope to respond creatively and use more complex operations, such as adding sound effects or another layer of data. This makes considerable demands on their thinking but they rise to the challenge and derive great satisfaction from achieving their goals. Within this highly charged learning atmosphere, teachers are very sensitive to individual pupils' learning needs. Pupils with special educational needs, for example, are always supported, usually by an adult and occasionally by another pupil. This offers very good opportunities for them to discuss their ideas and learn through taking little steps towards achieving their targets. At the end of the lesson, teachers encourage and help them to explain what they have learnt to the whole class. This raises their confidence and boosts their self-esteem.

MUSIC

85 Pupils achieve well in music and standards are above average throughout the school. Many of the strong features noted at the time of the last inspection are evident in the school's current work. The good standards are attributable to the inspired example set by the subject leader, who is a gifted musician and committed to developing pupils' musical talent beyond his own class. The subject leader, along with the head teacher, also a capable musician, makes it possible for 20 per cent of pupils to participate in instrumental and choral music through the school choir, wind band, recorder and brass groups and orchestra. These pupils achieve excellent standards of performance, bringing great pleasure to their teachers and parents and deserved recognition for the school. Pupils with special educational needs are often asked to work with talented ones. The extra support enables them to understand the tasks and make good progress. The very strong link between ICT and composing musical pieces makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning.

86 The subject leader no longer teaches music to all junior classes. However, the management of the subjects is assured through the introduction of new materials, such as sample lessons and musical extracts on CD, to support class teachers. As a result, the teaching of music is good. Lessons are packed with varied, stimulating and purposeful activities. Pupils are swept along, eager to sing, play and listen. Most lessons begin with a voice warm up and these sessions are cleverly combined with opportunities to improve pupils' listening skills. For example, teachers play echo and copycat games in which pupils listen and repeat musical phrases or rhythmical patterns. These activities significantly improve their understanding of the dynamics, pitch and tempo. The teaching of singing is particularly effective. Pupils are encouraged to adopt a good singing posture, breathe correctly and sing with expression. The level of challenge is high. Pupils are expected to hold their own part, when singing a two or three-part song. At its very best, singing is excellent. The choir sang 'Ten Green Bottles' in two parts beautifully but they also added gestures and facial expression to make it a memorable performance. Teachers have good subject knowledge and constantly ask pupils how they can improve their work. This ensures that pupils interpret symbols and use technical terms correctly and constantly search for a means to raise the quality of their performance. Teaching is outstanding in Year 2, where the subject leader's talents are very evident. Specific skills, such as how to play instruments correctly in response to reading the notes, are taught to a high standard. However, what really marks the teaching out as 'special' is the way pupils are induced to evaluate the effects of varying the lightness or heaviness of the way that notes are played or words are sung. This enables them to understand the subtleties of the mood of the music and incorporate these features into their playing and composing.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

87 Standards are at the levels expected at seven and above those expected nationally by the age of 11. Progress between the ages of seven and eleven is enhanced by motivated teachers particularly knowledgeable in the teaching of correct skills and techniques in a range of activities. Pupils gain in their understanding of the tactics in games because they invent their own and also partake in traditional activities. Photographic evidence shows pupils planning complicated dance and gymnastic activities, using themes for their work. The main swimming programmes are completed by Year 4. The most recent records show standards to be well above those expected at this age. The weaker swimmers receive additional tuition as required in Years 5 and 6. The school is very aware of those pupils who perform at advanced levels outside of school. One boy who represents Durham County at cricket was both praised and his skills used for demonstration purposes in a lesson. During the inspection, however, infant pupils and pupils in a Year 6 lesson were not challenged at a level commensurate with their abilities. On both occasions the progress in learning could have been improved by varying the tasks given.

88 Teachers have a good understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum for physical education. The schemes of work from which lessons are derived ensure skills are progressively developed as pupils get older. However, further consideration is needed of the games' work that is done indoors during inclement weather. This was the case during the inspection where the quality of teaching and learning suffered slightly as a result. Teachers' knowledge and understanding in a range of activities has improved since the last inspection. The subject is very well led and managed. Very thorough reviews are undertaken to determine teaching and learning needs. As a consequence teachers have successfully improved their work by attending relevant courses. Learning in physical education is improved by linking it with other subjects. A successful lesson, looking at outdoor and adventurous skills, benefited greatly from pupils' understanding of geographical directions. For example, pupils' exciting dance performances were strongly influenced by their studies of the rain forest in South America. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is a considerable strength. Pupils with visual impairment, autism, and behavioural needs were fully involved in cricket. Their needs were fully appreciated by both the teacher and pupils. Similarly a disabled pupil was totally integrated into a basketball-type lesson with designated pupils and staff providing meaningful support.

89 Extra-curricular provision is improving standards and raising pupils' motivation. The subject leader is wisely developing links with community outlets. Parents, local coaches and primary and secondary school links are providing valuable expertise in a range of activities. Recently awarded funding is also providing expert coaching for football. The impact is such that hockey, netball and athletic teams have been successful in local competitions. Recognition of this work is reflected in the national 'Activemark Gold' award achieved by the school. This was fully endorsed by the sports development officer who gave high praise for the school's sporting and health-related activities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

90 Standards at the ages of seven and 11 are at the levels expected in schools within Stockton-on-Tees. Pupils gain a good awareness of Christianity and a sound knowledge of the other major religions. By the age of seven, they have a good understanding of Hinduism. A strong contributory factor here is the very well informed contribution made by a Hindu family. In one lesson, the smell of incense, the background Indian music and a lovely selection of objects from a Hindu shrine all helped to create a rich learning experience. Visits to Christian, Hindu and Sikh places of worship have enriched pupils' learning. For example, the best work, seen in Year 5, was based on a visit to a Sikh Gurdwara. As one pupil wrote, 'It looked like a small factory and a prison mixed together. It had to have bars around so the vandals and racists couldn't smash the windows. The inside was totally different from the outside. It was luxurious. We took off our shoes as a mark of respect'. Such memories leave a lasting impression, although such sensitive responses are not often seen in pupils' written work. Year 6 pupils only have recollections of visits to Christian places of worship, though one experience did prove to be especially memorable for those able to make the visit. Seeing the vast cemeteries of Normandy gave many of them a stark awareness of the true realities of life and death. It also helped them to form opinions. One girl summed up her feelings when she said, "War is pointless." By the age of 11, pupils speak with maturity and awareness of their inner feelings and of the faiths that they have studied. Leadership in the subject has been affected by staff absences. The current leader has only very recently taken on the role. She is aware of what is being taught through the school by seeing the teachers' planning. She has not yet been able to form judgements on the quality of the learning by evaluating the comparative levels of work in the pupils' books. Consequently, some deficiencies in the teaching and learning of religious education have gone undetected.

91 Discussions with pupils, the sampling of their books and lesson observations all indicate that there are some weaknesses in the way the subject is taught through the school. This is especially the case in Years 2, 4 and 6. In these classes, the quality of pupils' written work should be higher. The high quality of class discussions is not reflected in the subsequent written work. There is little variation in the written challenges set for pupils of different abilities. Those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because of the help they receive, though work is not always completed. More able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Consequently, little of the work in their books is of high quality. Pupils rarely undertake research from books or from computer programs. There are also few opportunities for them to express their own ideas, responses and feelings in writing. As a result, although they learn about the different faiths, they do not learn enough from them or learn to measure their own beliefs in the light of those of others. This is an issue to improve. However, their experiences in the subject do help to develop the 'caring and sharing' ethos that is such a strong feature of the school. It also has an influence on the pupils' attitudes, values and beliefs that shape their views on life in the wider world, especially on moral issues. Close links between religious education and the pupils' personal, social and emotional education also help to give their learning added relevance.