

# INSPECTION REPORT

## ASHINGTON WANSBECK FIRST SCHOOL

Ashington

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122239

Head teacher: Mrs D L Smith

Reporting inspector: Mr C Smith  
25211

Dates of inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> November 2002

Inspection number: 248334

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wansbeck Road Ashington Northumberland
Postcode:	NE63 8HZ
Telephone number:	01670 812324
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J M Clayton
Date of previous inspection:	January 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Wansbeck First School caters for children aged three to nine and is situated on the edge of the town of Ashington in Northumberland. There are 355 pupils in the main school; 192 boys and 163 girls. In addition, 68 children attend the nursery part time. Twenty-eight pupils are eligible for free school meals (8 per cent), which is below average. Fifty-eight pupils (13 per cent) have special educational needs, which is below average. Most of these pupils need help with learning, particularly in the areas of speech and language. Seven pupils have statements of specific need, which is average. All of the pupils are white and English speaking. Movement of families into and out of the area is increasing with about 10 percent of pupils entering or leaving the school within the year. Children enter the nursery with a wide range of attainment but it is generally lower than the levels expected for their age, particularly in aspects of language.

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

The school provides a good standard of education for its pupils. Standards are higher than the chart overleaf shows. They are above average in reading, writing and mathematics when pupils reach the age of seven and well above average by the age of nine, when pupils transfer to Middle School. Teaching is good throughout the school and this enables all pupils to achieve well. The head teacher, senior staff and governors together provide very good leadership and management and the school gives good value for money.

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

- Pupils achieve well to reach above average standards in English and mathematics, religious education and history.
- Good teaching in all parts of the school enables pupils of all abilities to learn effectively.
- Leadership and management are very effective in raising standards and providing a good ethos for learning.
- Pupils' personal development is well provided for and, as a result, they have very good attitudes to learning, behave very well and are fully involved in the life of the school.
- The very good home school partnership plays an important part in pupils' development.

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

- Much greater use could be made of information and communication technology (ICT) in the learning of other subjects.
- Although pupils have no prejudice, they know very little about cultural diversity in Britain.

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

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

The school was regarded as successful at the time of the last inspection, in January 1998. Through very good leadership and effective teaching, standards have continued to rise. The school received an award in 2001 to acknowledge its achievements over the last three years. Standards have generally been above average over recent years, as they are this year. The school's response to issues arising from the last inspection has been good. Subject leaders now play a central role in checking on and raising standards. Pupils' handwriting and presentation has significantly improved and teachers' marking of their work is now thorough, helpful and consistent. Much is done to promote research and library skills but there is scope to develop the use of ICT in this process. The head teacher, governors

and staff have effective systems to check on, and improve, teaching and learning. This ensures that the school is in a strong position to move forward.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
reading	B	B	C	C
writing	B	A	C	C
mathematics	C	B	B	B

<i>Key</i>	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Standards in the 2002 reading and writing tests for pupils aged seven matched the national average and were above this in mathematics. When compared with similar schools, standards were also average in reading and writing and above in mathematics. The group of pupils taking the tests had a higher than usual number of pupils with acute language difficulties and this depressed the school's performance in reading and writing. Results have improved more quickly than national trends in recent years and standards in reading and writing are frequently above or well above average levels. Standards in mathematics began to rise two years ago, following a major improvement drive. Very challenging targets are set for this year and the school is on target to meet them. Results over a three-year period show that boys and girls have performed equally well.

Standards in current work are above average in all three subjects by the end of Year 2. Pupils have achieved well to reach these standards. When children enter school their attainment is very wide ranging. A substantial minority of children have good attainment for their age, whilst a similar proportion enter the nursery with very weak knowledge and understanding of letters and words and struggle to communicate clearly. On balance, children's attainment on entry is approximately six months behind the average for Northumberland schools. Children respond well to the good teaching in the nursery and reception classes and by the end of the reception year, they have caught up to reach the levels expected in all areas of learning.

Pupils are tested at the end of Years 3 and 4, using nationally approved assessments. The current Year 4 pupils scored well in English and mathematics and at the end of Year 3 achieved above average standards. They are continuing to achieve well in these subjects and are on course to reach well above average standards by the end of the year. By the end of Year 4 when pupils transfer to Middle School, they attain standards in English and mathematics that are well above those expected at the age of nine.

Much attention is given to the important skills of reading, writing and number calculation. However, other subjects are important too. During the short inspection it was evident that pupils were achieving well in religious education and history and reaching above average standards in these subjects as they had at the time of the last inspection. By analysing pupils' assessment results, teachers discovered that more able pupils were not always achieving their full potential. Adjustments were made to teaching, such as setting pupils in groups according to ability for numeracy lessons. This has made a big difference and more able pupils are now making good progress. Pupils with special educational needs are very well taught and make very good progress. Standards in ICT are average but there is

scope to increase pupils' proficiency by using computers to reinforce and extend their learning in other subjects.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who take pride in their achievements.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are sensible, respectful and supportive of others. The school is vibrant yet peaceful.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships between all members of the school community are harmonious. Pupils act responsibly and with growing independence.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is above average; pupils enjoy school, arrive punctually and ready to learn.

Pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour and personal development reflect the very good ethos of the school in which much is expected, support is freely given and pupils are highly valued.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching in almost all lessons was good or better and some teaching was excellent. Many of the good features have continued since the last inspection and others have been strengthened, particularly the teaching of pupils with special educational needs, which is now very good. Well-trained and capable support staff work alongside these pupils and are instrumental in their successful learning. Lessons are very challenging, whether pupils are taught in sets according to ability or mixed ability groups. Lesson planning very effectively caters for pupils' different learning needs. The tasks provided are usually well matched to pupils' particular stages of learning. New learning is carefully explained and pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn. Targets are set and comments written on their completed work show them the way forward. Reading and number skills are taught very effectively and the teaching of writing is of high quality. Highly imaginative approaches are used to capture pupils' interests and extend their learning. For example, pupils are encouraged to act out historical scenes and take the role of detectives using clues from religious artefacts. Teachers develop their ideas through very astute questioning, which really makes pupils think. Lessons move along at a quick pace and pupils are swept along with no time for distraction. These are influential factors in their fruitful learning. Apart from the insufficient use of computers, learning resources such as books, models and pictures are used creatively to cultivate pupils' interests and expand their learning.

Children in the nursery and reception classes benefit from the range of rich and stimulating activities provided. Children's curiosity is aroused and teachers and support staff take every opportunity to draw them into conversation and extend their spoken language and listening skills. Through skilfully led group activities, children acquire vital communication skills, such as learning to recognise and blend letters to make words. On other occasions, they are encouraged to explore and find out for

themselves. A good balance is achieved, children's confidence grows and they are beginning make decisions and act independently.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is well planned and carefully organised to enable pupils of all abilities to build on what they have learnt previously. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities to develop their interests and their social and health needs are fully met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The curriculum is sensitively adapted to their specific learning needs and they receive skilled support for reading and writing.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils' moral, social and spiritual development is very well provided for. Very good opportunities are provided for them to learn about their own heritage and appreciate their own culture. However, although racial harmony is promoted, more needs to be done to prepare pupils for life in a culturally diverse society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Pupils' safety and well being are paramount. Their learning and personal development is carefully assessed and the outcomes are productively used to determine the next learning steps.

The school's partnership with parents is very strong. Parents are very well informed and centrally involved in their children's learning.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Very good. The head teacher and senior staff, with good support from subject leaders, form a very effective team. There is a clear and collective vision for the school and a strong commitment on the part of staff to achieve it.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are centrally involved in the work of the school. Planning for the future is shrewd and based on good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The procedures for checking how well teachers plan and carry out their work and how well pupils are learning are rigorous. Yet these tasks are carried out sensitively and supportively to bring the best out of the staff and pupils.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Governors and staff consult widely and gather considerable amount of evidence to check how successful the school is. The information gathered is used well to inform future planning and ensure that the best value for the resources available is achieved.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children like school, behave well, show maturity in relationships and try their best</li><li>• The school works very closely with parents and they appreciate being well informed.</li><li>• Teaching and leadership are very good and this enables children to make good progress.</li><li>• The homework provided and the range of extra-curricular activities are appreciated.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some parents have concerns about increasing junior class sizes.</li></ul>

Governors and staff acknowledge that class sizes have been increasing, largely as a result of the school's popularity. More teachers and support staff have been employed to keep the pupils teacher/adult ratio to manageable levels. The inspection team agrees with the parents' very positive views and could not find any detrimental effects of the larger class sizes in the afternoon sessions.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **Pupils achieve well to reach above average standards in English and mathematics, religious education and history.**

1 Pupils achieve well throughout the school. When they enter the nursery a significant number of children are not communicative and experience some difficulties with language. Nursery and reception teachers, and support staff, work hard to provide stimulating activities designed to widen children's knowledge and understanding and to encourage them to listen, watch and talk. Good teaching in the nursery helps children to associate spoken words with printed letters and they respond well in the reception classes to encouragement to write for themselves. For example, one child wrote, I pid futbul. Children also achieve well in their mathematical understanding. Strenuous efforts are made to help them to understand mathematical terms such as 'more' and 'less than' and many reception age children are already able to count and add to 10. As a result of good planning and careful assessment of their learning, children make good progress in the nursery and the reception classes. By the end of the reception year, most children achieve the levels expected in their language, mathematical, creative, physical and personal development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world.

2 The drive to raise standards is evident in all of the school's work. Pupils' reading and writing and mathematics is regularly assessed. The results are carefully analysed to discover any aspects that caused difficulty. This information is shared with teachers and their plans are adapted to strengthen pupils' weaknesses in these areas. The progress of individual pupils is carefully tracked and it is easy for teachers to see whether they are fulfilling their potential. When any decline in progress is detected, pupils are given extra help, for example, in small literacy groups. Teachers use the assessment of pupils' learning purposefully to specify targets to move them on to the next level. Targets for writing are pasted into their English books as a constant reminder of where more attention is needed. For example one pupil's target reads, 'I am learning to start sentences with different words to make them interesting'. These measures have a significant effect in boosting pupils' attainment and improving standards.

3 Pupils with special educational needs benefit from high quality support. Well-written individual education programmes are provided with a strong emphasis on the key skills of reading, writing and number work. These programmes are skilfully introduced and have a pronounced effect on pupils' learning. It is not uncommon for pupils with learning difficulties, including those with special educational needs, to reach the levels expected by the age of seven. More able pupils respond well to the challenges provided in the higher groups. They frequently work at levels above those expected for pupils of their age. For example, in numeracy, more able pupils are confident in adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing, and use these skills to solve tricky mathematical problems.

4 Pupils achieve well in the infant classes and reach standards higher than expected in reading, writing and mathematics. A strong emphasis is placed on literacy and numeracy, where pupils are taught well in ability groups or sets. By the age of seven, most pupils read and write fluently. Their understanding of what they read is developed well through the teachers' searching questions. In one lesson for example, the teacher asked pupils to reflect on how the characters might feel and what would happen next. Pupils had to use more advanced strategies, such as reading between the lines, to work out the answers. Teachers also ask pupils to notice what happens when characters speak. Consequently, many pupils recognise and use speech marks in their writing and read expressively with good understanding. Until 2000, standards in mathematics had been trailing behind those in English. A

considerable amount of numeracy training was provided for staff and setting pupils by ability was introduced. This has made a significant difference and standards in mathematics have risen. Through effective teaching, pupils develop competence in quick and accurate calculation. The many good opportunities to apply these skills in other subjects enable them to tackle mathematical problems confidently.

5 The school uses a range of assessments to measure pupils' attainment at the age of nine. These assessments in reading, writing and mathematics, undertaken in 2002, show that the current Year 4 pupils achieved standards in all three subjects that were above the levels expected for their age. Teaching in Year 4 is particularly good and pupils are learning at a good rate. The school has set challenging but realistic targets that these pupils are working towards. Standards are well above average in English and mathematics this year.

6 At the time of the last full inspection, standards in a number of other subjects were also above the levels expected. During this short inspection it was only possible to examine one or two other subjects. Pupils continue to achieve well in religious education. They develop a good understanding of the similarities and differences between faiths and refine their own values and beliefs through exposure to others. For example, one pupil observed, 'lights are part of many celebrations, not just Christian' and another pupil added, 'Jesus is the light of the world'. In history, pupils act the part of characters from the past. This enables them to understand peoples' motives and explain reasons for change well. In both of these subjects, pupils reach good standards.

### **Good teaching in all parts of the school enables pupils of all abilities to learn effectively.**

7 The good teaching noted at the time of the last inspection has been maintained and improved further. Teaching is good in all parts of the school, with a fair proportion of very good and some excellent teaching.

8 Relationships between teachers and pupils are very positive and pupils are very well managed. Teachers value what pupils say, treat them with respect and are always ready to help, support and reassure them. Pupils are expected to work hard and give of their best. Praise is given but it has to be earned. These principles are practised consistently and as a result, pupils listen carefully, work with good concentration and take pride in their work. Teachers guide pupils very well to accept that making mistakes is part of learning. In one classroom a clearly written message reads, 'The quickest way to fail is not to try.' Consequently, pupils have mature attitudes to learning and are not afraid to admit when they are wrong. In a mathematics lesson, for example, one pupil stopped midway through explaining how he had tried to solve a time problem and commented that he had misread the question. The class accepted this and his admission was praised by the teacher.

9 A highly significant feature of the teaching is the way in which lessons are planned to include interesting and stimulating activities. This is done in the belief that learning will be more successful if it is exciting and this begins in the nursery and reception classes. When teaching the Christmas story for example one reception teacher pretended to be a king, placed the crown upon her head and invited children to ask any questions they liked. After a hesitant start, the children's questions flowed and they were able to grasp the message in the story. This approach extended their concentration and developed their spoken language well. In history lessons, pupils are asked to sit in the 'hot seat' and explain for example, how they feel about a long sea voyage. In a religious education lesson, pupils observed lit candles to prompt them to think about Diwali and Christmas. These approaches are not only successful in raising pupils' curiosity and improving their understanding, they significantly improve their speaking and listening skills. Much of the learning is through first-hand experiences. For example, in a science lesson, pupils identified electrical conductors and insulators by placing different

materials in a circuit to discover whether the bulb would light. Through an array of exciting learning experiences, pupils' love of learning is fostered well.

10 The important skills of learning to read, write and handle numbers receive much attention. In particular, the skills pupils acquire in school are regularly reinforced and extended through very good homework. Some of the best teaching seen during the inspection was in English lessons. Teachers are very skilful in improving pupils' writing. This is particularly noteworthy because writing was identified as an area to improve last year. Much has been done to help pupils, not only to be able to write fluently but to enjoy the experience. Pupils are extremely well prepared before they are asked to write anything. For example, they listen to exemplary passages read by the teacher and pick out the most powerful words. Then they are asked to concentrate on planning specific parts of their writing, such as creating an intriguing story opening. The success of this approach is evident in pupils' adventurous writing, for example one pupil, describing a garden wrote, 'A sea of daisies carpeted the grass.' Teaching of numeracy is also effective. Pupils have to think quickly and accurately by playing games against the clock. They are encouraged to look for patterns and relationships in numbers. As a result, many pupils are beginning to realise that they can check a calculation by reversing the operation, such as 30 divided by six is five, because 5 times 6 is 30. In most literacy and numeracy lessons, pupils use small white boards to write their estimations and calculations. This provides teachers with good opportunities to see whether their answers are correct and assess how well they are learning.

11 In almost all lessons the level of challenge is high. Teachers mark pupils' work carefully to identify their starting points for the next lesson. Pupils' different learning needs are taken into account even when teachers ask questions in whole class settings. In some subjects, particularly literacy and numeracy, pupils are taught in ability groups or sets. This makes for efficient teaching and the most effective use of time. More able pupils prosper within this arrangement. There is scope for them to work at higher levels and combine several skills in achieving one task. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, more able pupils were given acetate sheets and asked to present to the class how they had worked through a problem. This was very demanding, not only on their mathematical ability, but also on their capacity to present their findings clearly, which they did well. In almost all lessons, pupils are asked to reflect on the quality of their own work and that of others. This is handled sensitively, for example, teachers ask pupils if there is anything they wish for when discussing another pupils' work. This is a respectful way of suggesting that it could be improved. Pupils who find learning difficult, including those with special educational needs, benefit from some excellent teaching and high-quality support. Strenuous efforts are made to ensure that they understand any new vocabulary and that the reading material is within their grasp. Very skilful questioning encourages them to think hard and offer ideas. Their suggestions are always valued and built on. As a result, they gain self-confidence, are keen to learn and make very good progress.

12 Good use is made of a wide range of learning resources, including books, pictures, models and educational visits. These are all successfully blended to promote understanding and interest. The exception is the insufficient use of computers in learning in different subjects.

**Leadership and management are very effective in raising standards and providing a good ethos for learning.**

13 Leadership and management are very good. Rigour, teamwork and a commitment to providing the very best for the children in school are the key principles on which success has been achieved.

14 The head teacher, staff and governors are strongly placed to make the right decisions. Each year they examine results in detail and identify which subjects and which pupils, need more attention.

Results are analysed in the light of national and local averages to ensure that there is no complacency. It is not simply a question of trying to achieve higher results than the year before. During the year, subject leaders are active in observing lessons, sampling pupils' work, talking to staff and pupils and assessing the adequacy of resources. Their findings form the basis of a clear picture for future development. Parents and pupils are invited to express their views about what really matters or what could be improved. In addition, the school links well with local education authority advisers and educational experts in Newcastle University and in Northumberland generally. By consulting in this way, senior staff and governors are in a position to see the school from all perspectives and to know where the issues lie. This is the foundation for strategic planning.

15 Governors provide very good support and play a central part in decision-making and checking on standards. They are very committed to the school and their loyalty is born out of the knowledge that they are valued and effective. Many hours are spent in school, consulting with teachers, observing lessons, writing reports and discussing the outcomes in their meetings. Each governor has a link with a subject leader. This ensures that they are fully appraised of developments. They have well-established systems to check the work of the school. The well-constructed school improvement plan guides the way forward. Through a selection of statistics, reports and personal observations, produced by the head teacher, governors ensure that the priorities are pursued.

16 At the time of the last inspection, subject leaders were not found to exert a strong influence on standards of teaching and learning. A good response has been made to this, and other issues. Subject leaders are ambitious in seeking further training themselves and eager to share the information with other members of staff. They analyse results, sample pupils' work and implement new methods and approaches. Their knowledge of what is happening throughout the school is good and they have been responsible for many of the improvements. In mathematics, for example, standards have been driven up following a period of intense staff training. Pupils' writing has significantly improved in the wake of new and successful approaches, which enable pupils to know how to structure their work and select imaginative words and phrases. The work of the special educational needs co-ordinator has been of immense value in improving the provision.

17 Financial planning and management are good. Governors are rightly cautious about committing expenditure, without some reassurance that their financial decisions are likely to achieve the desired results. To this end, they are clear about the actions to be taken and the outcomes they expect. They check progress at regular intervals and the priorities are the focus of regular debates. The decision to increase the number of support staff has proved highly successful. Through successful appointments and good training, classroom assistants are making a difference, particularly to the learning of pupils with special educational needs.

18 The head teacher, governors and staff do not wait for change to come to them but go out and seek improvement. Teachers visit other schools, attend many training courses and work together closely to share the best of the ideas uncovered. A good example of this is the highly effective teaching methods used in lessons, such as history and religious education, where pupils' thinking skills are being developed to a high degree. There are many other forward-thinking projects. One in particular that deserves mention is the programme to accelerate pupils' reading and writing skills. This is becoming increasingly effective in enhancing the skills of pupils who initially found reading and writing difficult.

**Pupils' personal development is very well provided for and, as a result, they have very good attitudes to learning, behave very well and are fully involved in the life of the school.**

19 The school provides a good curriculum. Pupils have abundant opportunities to acquire important literacy and numeracy skills and gain rich experiences in a wide range of subjects and extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is very well planned to ensure that, as pupils move through the school, they are able to build successfully on earlier learning. Pupils with different learning needs are well catered for. Arrangements are made for pupils to work with those of a similar ability and sometimes in mixed ability groupings. As a result, more able pupils have access to demanding levels of learning and pupils who struggle to understand benefit from very good support. The curriculum is carefully adapted to meet their different learning needs. The philosophy of the school is one of inclusion and integration, where all pupils have access to all activities. In a science lesson, for example, the very pupils who found the learning most difficult were asked to report back to the class after making and testing electrical circuits. It was a revelation to observe how well they handled this task, with the trust of a supportive teacher.

20 There are some important and significant factors in the way that the school approaches the curriculum. Attention is given to what pupils learn but even more importance is attached to how they learn. This has major benefits for their personal development. Very careful note is taken of what pupils are able to do. Although they are expected to persevere with considerable levels of challenge, they are never allowed to fail. Everything possible is done to preserve and promote their self-esteem. Their spiritual awareness is nurtured very well. They are encouraged to express their beliefs and show respect and tolerance and those of others. This is particularly noticeable in religious education lessons but crops up in all lessons when pupils are asked to comment on other pupils' work or ideas. Pupils' opinions matter and their different talents and skills are fostered. Consequently pupils flourish in an ethos where respect for others is freely given and all pupils have the right to be respected.

21 Pupils' moral and social development is also very well provided for. In all lessons teachers ask pupils to work with their literacy or numeracy partners to share ideas and reach agreement. Pupils see learning as a collaborative experience and because this process started when children first entered school, their social skills are impressive. They even regulate the level of discussion so as not to disturb others. Some pupils are elected as members of the school's council. They truly represent the views of other children and their organisation represents a democracy in miniature. Important topics are discussed in many lessons, such as conflict, sadness, cruelty and joy. In one lesson, for example, pupils were asked to discuss and express what they thought about the light from a candle. One pupil suggested, "It means peace and harmony, not fighting". Another pupil astutely remarked that when the candlelight went out and it was dark, "It made people feel negative". As a result of these experiences, pupils develop good social skills and learn to make balanced moral judgements. Teachers seldom have to raise their voice to check pupils' behaviour. This is because pupils know what is expected and help to regulate each other's behaviour.

22 Pupils respond very well to teachers' high expectations and to try follow the teachers' good example. In almost all lessons, they work with good concentration and application, listen carefully to the teacher and to their classmates and persevere in the face of a stiff challenge. They frequently show their appreciation for others' achievements through spontaneous applause. The school is orderly and calm. There are no signs of any oppressive behaviour and pupils talk freely of their trust in teachers. As one pupil observed, "The school is like a big group of friends".

### **The very good home school partnership plays an important part in children's development**

23 The school's partnership with parents is very good. Parents think highly of the school. The returned inspection questionnaires show that almost all parents appreciate every aspect of the school's work. The only concern parents have is that as the popularity of the school continues to grow class sizes increase. Governors are aware of this and have taken positive steps to provide a solution. More

teachers have been employed to break up the large year groups into manageable sets and classes for literacy and numeracy lessons each morning. In addition, more classroom assistants have been employed to support teachers and give pupils more adult attention. The inspection team fully endorses this approach and has no reservations about the way pupils are grouped and taught throughout the school.

24 Parents' opinions matter to the school and their involvement in their children's learning is seen as essential. Each year, questionnaires are sent out to canvass parents' views. This consultation process is very important because the school relies on parents to work in partnership in extending children's learning. The quality of information provided for parents is impressive. The school prospectus and the annual governors' report to parents are helpful and informative publications. They provide new families with clear insights into what the school provides and is aiming to achieve. Parents receive regular newsletters to keep them in touch with school events and the beginning of each half term is marked by a letter from each teacher to explain what children in each class are expected to cover and learn in the following weeks. This places parents in a strong position to help their children. At the end of the school year, written reports are provided on children's progress. These are illuminating and personal to each child. They celebrate what has been achieved and point the way forward for continued improvement by setting targets for children to work towards. When changes are pending and new methods are in the process of being implemented, parents are invited to workshops and information evenings. These are very well attended.

25 As a result of the high quality information provided, parents are well prepared to support their children and almost all parents are willing to play an active part. The use of homework to support children's learning is outstanding. Essential literacy and numeracy skills learnt in school are reinforced and extended through homework assignments. These tasks are fully explained in the accompanying notes, spelling out exactly what is being attempted. Pupils' work is marked meticulously and diaries containing messages from home to school or from school to home enable parents and teachers to communicate with one another. For example, one parent wrote, 'any word he stumbled over - he managed to break down and pronounce'. Problems that could arise are therefore dealt with swiftly and children's progress is clearly understood.

26 Parents regard the nursery as very successful in introducing their children to school. Parents comment that the nursery staff take time to understand their children's needs, provide a regular flow of information and make parents very welcome. This is seen as the beginning of a prosperous relationship. Parents also all speak of the strong pastoral care for their children and appreciate the team of dedicated and hard-working teachers. Approximately 20 parents provide regular help with their children in school and many parents help with swimming. With such a beneficial partnership with parents, it is not surprising that the school has a good reputation.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **Much greater use could be made of information and communication technology (ICT) in the learning of other subjects.**

27 Computers are rarely used well enough to reinforce and extend pupils' learning in different subjects. A computer suite has been recently installed in a former classroom. A timetable of visits for each class has already been drawn up and lessons in the suite are now taking place. It is evident from observing pupils working in the suite that classroom computers have been used for specific purposes in the past. For example, pupils are familiar with loading programmes, editing text and saving and retrieving their work. Pupils' ICT skills are developing quickly now that the computer suite has been provided. In the one lesson seen in the computer suite, the teaching was very good and pupils'

response to sharing one computer between two for their work was excellent. In this lesson, pupils made very good progress in programming by giving instructions to the computer to construct a two-dimensional shape. It was clear that they had experienced elementary programming before the suite was provided.

28 Although pupils' ICT skills are at least at the levels expected, during the inspection classroom computers were used only once in the 27 lessons seen. An examination of pupils' work in the different subjects, including English and mathematics, tells the same story. ICT is not used sufficiently across the curriculum. The school is aware of this and it is a priority for development in the near future.

### **Although pupils have no prejudice, they know very little about cultural diversity in Britain.**

29 Pupils' understanding of cultural diversity is very limited. This is partly because they have very few opportunities to mix with people from different ethnic backgrounds. They attend an all-white school and live in a largely all-white community. The school does try to broaden pupils' cultural experience. For example, visits are arranged to museums, and galleries, theatres and historical sites. In subjects like history and geography, pupils study their own locality and through music and art and design, they develop an awareness of their own heritage. In fact, pupils have a very good appreciation of their own culture. Some provision has been made to bring pupils into contact with other cultures. For example, they celebrate the Chinese New Year. In religious education, pupils study faiths such as Judaism and Hinduism, and this is done well. During the week of inspection, for example, pupils sang about the Jewish festival of light (Hanukah) and in the nursery, the children sang, 'I'm a little Diva' to celebrate the candlelight burned at the Hindu celebration of Diwali.

30 Although pupils have good knowledge of some other faiths, they do not associate these communities with the United Kingdom. Although there are examples of synagogues and Hindu temples in Newcastle, these are not visited as part of the topic and pupils assume that these places only exist overseas. Talking to pupils is illuminating. They show no signs of prejudice but have little understanding of other ways of life. They have rather stereotypical views, for example, they associate all Chinese people with cooking and washing and believe that Africans all live in little huts. They know nothing about Asians and are unfamiliar with terms such as racial harmony. More could be done to help them to increase their knowledge and understanding, for example, by linking work in geography with the diversity in British cities and possibly corresponding with schools in very different areas.

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

31 **The head teacher, governors and staff should continue to build on the many strengths by:**

(1) providing regular opportunities for pupils to use classroom computers to:

- reinforce and extend their literacy and numeracy skills,
  - increase their research and problem solving skills,
  - extend their knowledge and understanding of other subjects.
- (Paragraphs 12, 27 and 28)

(2) developing pupils' understanding of cultural diversity by:

- planning visits to different cultural centres,

- updating the geography curriculum to include comparative studies of other cultures in Britain and the wider world,
- developing links with schools with pupils from different ethnic minority backgrounds.  
(Paragraphs 29 and 30)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	27
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	14

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	7	17	1	0	0	0
Percentage	7	26	63	4	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 three percentage points.*

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	34	355
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	28

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	3	53

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

### *Attendance*

<b>Authorised absence</b>	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	5.4

<b>Unauthorised absence</b>	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)***

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	38	35	73

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	29	31	34
	Girls	35	35	35
	Total	64	66	69
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88% (89%)	90% (96%)	95% (94%)
	National	84% (84%)	86% (86%)	90% (91%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	31	34	32
	Girls	35	35	34
	Total	66	69	66
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90% (96%)	95% (97%)	90% (97%)
	National	85% (85%)	89% (89%)	89% (89%)

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



Number of pupils per FTE adult	11.3
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4.91
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	9.04

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
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	423
Number of questionnaires returned	140

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	72	26	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	75	24	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	61	39	0	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	49	45	3	0	4
The teaching is good.	82	17	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	68	31	1	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	79	21	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	23	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	66	34	1	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	74	22	1	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	73	26	1	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	66	25	2	0	6

*Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer and may not total 100.*

### **Other issues raised by parents**

Some parents are concerned about increasing class sizes