

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST. ROBERT'S NEWMINSTER R. C. FIRST SCHOOL**

Morpeth

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122312

Headteacher: Mr. P. Fowler

Lead inspector: Mrs. M. R. Shepherd

Dates of inspection: 28 – 30 June 2004

Inspection number: 264275

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 category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	137
School address:	Oldgate, Morpeth, Northumberland.
Postcode:	NE61 1QF
Telephone number:	01670 512031
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Father John Cooper
Date of previous inspection:	12/10/1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Robert's Newminster R. C. First school is situated in the middle of Morpeth and serves Catholic families, both in the town and the surrounding villages. The majority of housing is owner-occupied and much of the employment of parents is professional. Over eight per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is below average. Standards on entry to the school are above average. There are 137 pupils in the school, which is smaller than the size of an average primary school. There are 66 boys and 71 girls. The school has a small group of children who enter the school in the spring or summer term when they become four years old. These children attend school in the mornings and stay for lunch in the summer term. The school calls this class Year 0. The Reception class teacher plans and organises the work for both Reception and Year 0. There is a designated classroom assistant who runs Year 0 in the morning. An additional classroom assistant works with the Reception children in the afternoon. An additional classroom assistant works across both year groups. There are separate classes for each of the other year groups. The headteacher works for three fifths of the week and a part-time teacher works for the other two fifths to allow him to work on his responsibilities as headteacher. There is a part-time music specialist who works in the school with every class once a fortnight. Thirteen per cent of pupils are on the special educational needs register, which is below average. Less than one per cent of pupils have full statements of special

educational needs, which is below average. Four per cent of pupils in the school have English as an additional language, which is higher than most schools. Nearly four per cent of pupils are travellers. One of these pupils spends a considerable time in the school and was present during the inspection. Mobility of pupils in and out of the school during the year is average overall. The governing body is undergoing a considerable change due to the new requirements. Only three governors will be going forward to continue their roles next year, one of whom is the chair of governors.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11328	Mrs. M. R. Shepherd	Lead inspector	English, information and communication technology, personal, social, health citizenship education, English as an additional language and traveller pupils.
9986	Mr. W. Twiss	Lay inspector	
8839	Mr. M. Egerton	Team inspector	Mathematics, foundation stage, geography, history.
22197	Mr. M. Mayhew	Team inspector	Science, art and design, design and technology, music, physical education, special educational needs.

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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>8</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>11</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES I AND 2</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>30</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good** school. Children enter the school with above average standards and leave with standards which are well above average. Children make a very good start to their education in Year 0<sup>1</sup> and Reception. Achievement slows considerably in Year 1 but increases in Year 2 and is good in Years 2, 3 and 4. Pupils are all included equally in the school's provision. Teaching is good overall. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Children achieve very well in Year 0 and Reception, and by Year 4, standards are well above average in English, mathematics and music and above average in science.
- Pupils with special educational needs, pupils with English as an additional language, traveller pupils and more-able pupils all achieve well.
- Attitudes, behaviour, spiritual, moral and social development are all very good.
- Rates of attendance are very low.
- Teaching is very good in Reception, unsatisfactory overall in Year 1 and good in Years 2 to 4. Classroom assistants play a valuable role in the school.
- Assessment, marking and target setting are inconsistent.
- The curriculum in Year 0 and Reception is very good quality. In Years 1 to 4, there are not enough links across the curriculum to extend numeracy or information and communication technology (ICT) development.
- The headteacher and governors succeed in running an inclusive school, but school improvement planning and monitoring systems are not effective enough.
- The school takes good care of its pupils and works well with parents and the community.

There has been a **satisfactory** level of improvement since the previous inspection. Reception standards and provision are better. Standards have risen faster than the national average over the past four years in Year 2. The quality of teaching is more varied, with some unsatisfactory teaching as well as some excellent teaching. The weakness identified in school improvement planning still remains.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
reading	A*	A*	A*	A*
writing	A*	A*	A*	A*
mathematics	A*	A*	A*	A*

Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average  
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals

The inspection judges achievement as **good** overall. It is good in both Years 3 and 4 and standards in Year 4 are well above average in English, mathematics and music and above average in science.

<sup>1</sup> This is the name of the year group that children attend for one or two terms before moving into the Reception class.

There are some unsatisfactory features in achievement in Year 1 but achievement is good in Year 2. By the end of Year 2, standards are well above average in writing, speaking and listening and music and above average in reading and mathematics. This apparent drop in standards is due to the lower level of attainment of this year group when they began their education.

Children achieve very well in Year 0 and Reception and, by the end of the Reception year, standards are well above expectations in every area of learning.<sup>2</sup>

The careful organisation of the classroom assistants ensures that pupils with special educational needs, pupils with English as an additional language and traveller pupils achieve well. More able pupils achieve well because teachers provide them with demanding work. Personal development is very good. Pupils are very interested in school life and behave very well. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good** overall. Attendance levels are very low, due to time taken off for holidays, medical absences, and the traveller pupils' attendance patterns.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education is **good**.

The quality of teaching is **good** overall. Teaching is very good in Year 0 and Reception, unsatisfactory in Year 1 and good in Year 2, 3 and 4. The quality of planning and the engagement of children in Reception are excellent. All teachers work in an effective partnership with the very good quality classroom assistants. They use homework well. In Year 1, the organisation of whole class sessions does not match pupils' needs consistently enough. Assessment is very good in Year 0 and Reception. Although assessment is satisfactory overall in Years 1 to 4, it is not good enough in subjects other than English and mathematics. Marking of pupils' work and individual target setting are inconsistent.

The curriculum is very good in Reception and satisfactory in Years 1 to 4. There are not enough links created across the curriculum to extend numeracy and ICT development. The curriculum is enriched well through whole school clubs and events.

Levels of pupils' care, welfare and health and safety are good. There are very good arrangements for children to settle into school in Year 0 and Reception.

The school creates good quality partnerships with parents, the community and other schools. Parents make very effective contributions to their children's learning.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **satisfactory** overall. The headteacher provides good leadership for pupils' personal development, but does not manage school improvement planning or monitoring systems well enough. The governance of the school is satisfactory. The chair of governors knows the pupils very well and provides valuable support for their learning. Many governors are only just taking up their roles and have not had experience of being a governor.

### **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

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<sup>2</sup> There are six areas of learning. These are recommended by the government as the curriculum for children in Years 0 and Reception.

Parents value the work of the school. They are pleased that their children like school. They appreciate the arrangements for their children to settle in. They believe that teaching is good and that their children make good progress. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are pleased that they are trusted to do things on their own and agree that they have to work hard. The great majority agree that they can go to an adult if they are worried about anything at school.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- levels of attendance;
- the consistency of teaching between classes;
- the implementation and systematic use of assessment, marking and target setting procedures across subjects through the school;
- school improvement planning and whole school monitoring systems;
- links across the curriculum to extend numeracy and ICT development.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement is **good** overall. In Year 0 and Reception, achievement is very good. There is some unsatisfactory achievement in Year 1 but progress increases in Year 2, and achievement in Years 2, 3 and 4 is good. By Year 4, standards are **well above** average overall.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make a very good start in Year 0 and Reception and standards are well above the expected level in all areas of learning by the end of Reception.
- Progress slows in Year 1 but accelerates again in Year 2 and national tests show standards as very high by the end of Year 2.
- Achievement is good in Years 3 and 4 and standards in English and mathematics are well above average and above average in science.
- Pupils with special educational needs, pupils with English as an additional language and traveller pupils all achieve well.
- Achievement in music is very good and standards are well above expectations by Year 4.

#### Commentary

##### Foundation Stage

1. Children enter the school with standards above the expected level overall. The very good teaching team provide a very well balanced and challenging curriculum for each child and they achieve very well. The careful planning ensures that children progress seamlessly between Year 0 and Reception. By the end of Reception, standards are well above the expected level in all areas of learning. Children have high levels of independence and are very sensitive to each other's needs. They have a love of reading and develop writing skills confidently for different purposes. The many opportunities for speaking and listening ensure that children develop confidence in speaking in different contexts. Children use correct mathematical terms and handle numbers confidently because they get regular opportunities to develop these skills.

##### Key Stage 1

#### Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	18.7 (19.3)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	17.3 (17.4)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	19.0 (20.0)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 24 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. The national tests show that standards in Year 2 are consistently very high over time in reading, writing and mathematics. Improvement over the past four years is above the national trend. The standards of the current Year 2 are lower because this year group's standards on entry were lower. There are more pupils with special educational needs, pupils with English as an additional language and traveller pupils in this year group. The

inspection judges standards in Year 2 in writing and speaking and listening as well above average and standards in reading and mathematics as above average. Although pupils enter Year 1 with standards that are well above the expected level, the unsatisfactory features in the teaching in this class reduce pupils' progress. This weakness is compensated in Year 2 by the consistently good teaching in English and mathematics and pupils make up the ground they have lost. There are high expectations of average and above average pupils in this class and these pupils rise to the challenge. There is a high emphasis on writing throughout the school and pupils write confidently in their own style by the end of Year 2. Standards in spelling are well above the expected level, as is the grammar, but handwriting is at a lower level because teaching is not systematically developing these skills. Pupils read with expression and enjoyment but are not as confident in using non-fiction strategies. In mathematics, pupils handle hundreds, tens and units confidently and have a good understanding of fractions. Standards in science are at the expected level. The use of too many worksheets reduces opportunities for pupils' learning. Standards in music are well above the expected level. This is due to the very good provision of a high quality part-time music specialist who teaches this subject throughout the school. This results in pupils achieving very well and building systematically on previous learning.

## **Key Stage 2**

3. Achievement is good in Years 3 and 4 in English, mathematics and science because teaching matches pupils' needs well. Standards are well above the expected level in all aspects of English and in mathematics. There is a high proportion of pupils working at a level expected for much older pupils in these subjects. As in Year 2, the teaching challenges both average and above average pupils to reach higher levels than usual. Pupils develop their ideas thoughtfully in whole class sessions. They read complex fiction and enjoy discussing their favourite authors. Their writing is varied and interesting across a range of different styles. In mathematics, the thorough coverage of the curriculum results in pupils working confidently across each aspect of mathematics. Standards in science are above the expected level. Teaching is good in Year 4 and pupils develop very good skills in scientific investigations. As in the infant classes, there are too many worksheets in use. The ineffective organisation of these worksheets reduces opportunities to track through pupils' progress over time. The same arrangements are in place for learning music as in the younger year groups. This ensures that achievement is very good and standards are well above the expected level by the end of Year 4.
4. The school plans carefully for pupils with special educational needs. In all year groups, classroom assistants give well-focused support both for individuals and for small groups. This is particularly good in Year 1. The headteacher works hard to support the whole families of pupils with English as an additional language. This results in these pupils feeling valued and gives them confidence in their learning. The support of a bilingual classroom assistant greatly benefits these pupils, because the transition between learning the new language is made in the context of communication in their mother tongue. The school works hard to support traveller pupils. Pupils attending during the inspection were making good progress and their individual needs were carefully supported. All these groups of pupils achieve well.
5. The school has maintained the high standards in Year 4 that were identified in the previous inspection. Information and communication technology standards were below

the expected level in Year 4 and the school has worked hard to improve provision. Standards are now at the expected level, which is good improvement.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, relationships with others and personal development are all **very good**. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**. Attendance levels are **very low**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils are keen to learn, know what is expected of them and behave responsibly at all times.
- The school's very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development makes a strong contribution to their personal development.
- The personal and social development of children in the Year 0 and Reception is very good.
- Attendance is very low, due to holidays taken during the term, medical absences and the impact of traveller pupils.

### **Commentary**

6. Pupils' very good attitudes to work make a very positive contribution to their learning. In conversations with pupils, they all enjoy coming to school and talk about favourite aspects of their work with enthusiasm. They settle down quickly and are keen to be involved in lessons. They listen attentively to their teachers' instructions and make a positive contribution to classroom discussions. Pupils take a pride in their work, willingly talk about what they are doing and they readily share their ideas with one another. Pupils with special educational needs show the same positive attitudes to school as their fellow pupils. All pupils develop very good social skills, are polite and welcoming and show care and consideration for others. They understand the impact of their actions on others and behave well. Pupils with English as an additional language and traveller pupils work confidently because teachers ensure that they understand the tasks. Pupils in Year 4 take their responsibilities very seriously. The playground 'Buddy' system, where they support younger pupils in their play, is one of the responsibilities they are proud to take part in. They talk at length as to why this is a good thing to do and they identify an extensive list of the good qualities of being a 'Buddy'. Pupils raise money during the year for a number of charities and develop very good decision making skills when they decide which charities will be supported.
7. As a result of pupils' very good behaviour and responsible attitude, the atmosphere in the majority of classrooms is pleasant, relaxed and friendly. This has a significant and positive effect on pupils' learning and rate of progress. All the pupils are fully aware of what is, and is not acceptable behaviour and have a clear understanding of the school rules. Outside of lessons, before and after school and at break and lunchtime, pupils socialise and interact very well together. There is a very real family atmosphere in and around the school.
8. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. Regular assemblies and attendance at the church to take part in a mass provide valuable experiences for all pupils. There are good quality times for thoughtful reflection and opportunities for them to understand about their own and others lives. Through the development of 'Circle Time',<sup>3</sup> and a programme of personal, social and health education, pupils are encouraged to explore their feelings and emotions and

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<sup>3</sup> Circle Time is when pupils sit in a circle and take turns to talk about personal or social issues.

their relationships with friends and family. Spiritual links are also developed well in subjects, such as science, literacy and music.

9. The provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. Pupils have a very clear understanding of right and wrong and the need for rules and codes of conduct. Relationships between staff and pupils and the pupils themselves are very good. Staff provide very good role models and value the opinions of the pupils, helping to raise their self-esteem. Teachers ensure that pupils learn to share, help one another and show consideration for others. Pupils work well together in pairs and small groups. Differences of opinion are discussed, leading to sensible outcomes. The school enhances pupils' social development by a range of educational visits, visitors to the school and extra-curricular activities. There is a good programme of work for pupils to learn about multi-cultural issues, such as other faiths and they gain a greater awareness of the beliefs and traditions of other major world religions. Staff provide appropriate books and stories which help pupils to understand the multicultural nature of the society in which we live. Pupils gain a good understanding of their own culture through studying the work of great artists and pupils develop a love of music and dance. All these aspects come together to effectively promote pupils' cultural development.
10. Children in Year 0 and Reception develop very good personal and social skills. Whether it is in play or work, they show great respect for each other and their teachers. They are kindly and thoughtful and will often hug or touch each other in a show of real affection. Their capacity for enjoyment is boundless and at the same time they appreciate that there is also work to be done. They emerge from the Reception class as mature and sensible little people.
11. The strengths identified in the previous inspection have been sustained and some aspects are even better. Some lapses in behaviour were identified in the previous inspection and these have been addressed very successfully.

## Attendance

12. The school's overall rates of attendance are very low when compared with those seen nationally. The school monitors and analyses the reasons for absences carefully. It identifies key reasons for the low levels of attendance, such as the traveller pupils, who remain on their register during the whole school year. Other factors include illness and the practice of families taking holidays during the school year, which is higher than usual. In the current year, attendance has improved by two percentage points but it still remains well below the national average. Attendance rates have fallen significantly since the previous inspection because the traveller pupils have joined the school since then.

### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	8.9	School data:	0.0
National data:	5.4	National data:	0.4

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. The quality of teaching and learning is **good** overall. The curriculum is **satisfactory**. Care and welfare are **good**. Links with parents, the community and other schools are **good**.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are **good** overall. They are **very good** in Year 0 and Reception, **unsatisfactory** in Year 1 and **good** in Years 2, 3 and 4. Assessment is **very good** in Year 0 and Reception and **satisfactory** in the other classes.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are excellent features in Year 0 and Reception. This teaching team works very well together. There are excellent features in the PSHCE teaching in Year 4.
- There are poor features in the teaching and learning in Year 1.
- Teachers work in close partnerships with the good quality classroom assistants, providing good support for individual pupils and small groups.
- Homework systems are well organised and promote learning well.
- Teachers do not use computers enough across different lessons.
- Assessment in Year 0 and Reception is well organised. In other classes, assessment in English and mathematics is good but is not securely in place in other subjects.

## Commentary

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 31 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (10%)	7 (22%)	15 (49%)	4 (13%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

13. The Reception teacher's planning is excellent. She ensures that each area of learning is taught systematically. She provides exciting tasks for children that capture their imagination and result in very good development of skills and understanding. The teacher has high expectations and children respond very well, doing their best to meet them. The very good teaching in these first classes in the school give children a high quality start to their schooling and ensures high standards in both academic and personal development. The Year 4 teacher offers her pupils high quality opportunities to share issues related to their personal experiences.
14. The poor features in Year 1 are in mathematics lessons, with unsatisfactory teaching in English. The balance in the whole class session in mathematics is uneven, with the mental mathematics session too short but the overall length of the session too long. This results in pupils losing their concentration. In both English and mathematics, too much learning is introduced at one time and pupils become confused. Whole class sessions at the end of lessons are not organised well enough and much of the class cannot hear or see the pupils who are presenting their work.
15. Teachers all work well with their classroom assistants, who are good quality. The assistants have a good understanding of the learning that has been planned and this results in well-targeted intervention for individuals and groups. The partnership has a particularly beneficial impact on pupils with special educational needs, because they get well-focused individual support. Support for statemented pupils is particularly good. Teachers use strategies, such as working in pairs, to support pupils with English as an additional language. Together with the additional adult support, this ensures that these pupils achieve well. Teachers use the same pairing strategy to support traveller pupils and this gives them confidence in tackling new work.
16. The organisation of homework is good. Pupils expect to take their reading and library books home every night and value their reading diaries. Year 4 pupils use their homework diaries well to remind themselves of key tasks through the week. A good amount of homework is set and the Year 4 teacher keeps careful records of how well pupils complete it. This partnership with parents supports the learning of basis skills in English and mathematics very effectively.
17. Teachers do not use computers consistently across different lessons. In specific ICT lessons, teachers organise pupils effectively to work in pairs with the hardware. However, although the ICT co-ordinator has purchased software to support learning in other subjects, teachers do not use them systematically to extend pupils' learning. The organisation of computers across the school has not been thought through, and often computers lie idle when they could be used by pupils from other classes.

18. The co-ordinator for assessment, who is also the Reception class teacher, has only recently taken up this extra responsibility. She has already determined that there is much to do to make assessment worthwhile. There is very good monitoring of children's progress in the Year 0 and Reception, and staff use this assessment very well to plan future work and activities to match children's needs. In the rest of the school, on balance, the quality of assessment is satisfactory. It is good in English and mathematics, because teachers use it consistently well to plan work that matches pupils' individual needs. The English co-ordinator has introduced good quality individual pupil records that identify future targets well. Regular assessment in science has only recently been implemented and there are not enough formal procedures for assessing pupils' attainment in the other subjects. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and does not always identify how to improve. Marking is very good in English, but other marking is reduced to ticks and occasional words of praise for good work. It does not consistently guide pupils on how to improve, nor set them clear targets against which their progress can be measured. The identification and assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs are good. Pupils' progress is regularly checked to see whether the thoughtfully formulated targets written in their individual education plans have been achieved.
19. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall. The proportion of very good teaching has increased considerably and there are now several features which are excellent. However, all teaching was judged to be satisfactory and there are now both unsatisfactory and poor features in the teaching.

## The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory** overall. The curriculum in Year 0 and Reception is **very good**, with some excellent features. A **good** variety of activities enhance the curriculum provision. Accommodation and resources for learning are **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is inclusive and provides all pupils with equal opportunities to learn.
- There is a very good curriculum for children in Year 0 and Reception.
- Additional activities, particularly the music provision and the sports club, enrich learning well and add to the value and interest of the curriculum.
- Links between different areas of the curriculum have not been planned carefully enough in order to allow skills in numeracy and ICT to be developed systematically.
- The open plan nature of the building reduces pupils' levels of concentration when the next door class is carrying out a lively activity.

## Commentary

20. The school values the importance of providing equal opportunities for all pupils. Teachers use termly and yearly planning well to ensure that there are opportunities for all pupils to be fully included in activities. Organisation of classroom assistants is carefully considered to support pupils with special educational needs. The targets in their individual education plans are well informed, clearly focused and regularly adjusted in the light of assessments. The school considers the needs of the pupils with English as an additional language carefully and appoints support staff carefully to give these pupils confidence to tackle their work. Traveller pupils' needs are respected and the school approaches their attendance positively. The school has made good progress in extending its provision for

personal, social and health education for all pupils. A careful audit has been made of all the areas of the curriculum where aspects of this subject occur and, as a result of this, a new scheme of work introduced to give greater coherence to the work and to planning. To support work in this area, the school has introduced regular teaching in citizenship and staff have received training in the use of 'Circle Time'. During 'Circle Time', pupils show great sensitivity when they share personal experiences with each other and with the teacher.

21. There is a very good quality curriculum for children in the Year 0 and Reception. Staff modify the curriculum in the light of the rigorous assessment procedures. An excellent feature of the Year 0 and Reception curriculum is planning. Termly plans clearly identify the work to be covered in the individual areas of learning and staff organise the weekly planning very carefully to ensure there is a balance between the different areas of learning and between teacher based activities and purposeful independent play.
22. The school enriches the curriculum well by visits outside the school and visitors who come into classrooms. A particular strength of the curriculum is the contribution made by the visiting music specialist. Her work with each of the year groups generates a great enthusiasm amongst the pupils for every aspect of music. They sing with great pleasure, they compose and they listen to and evaluate different pieces of music well. Her contribution makes a very positive impact on the pupils' attitude to their learning. The whole school sports club is another particularly good quality feature of the school's enrichment of the curriculum. The very high proportion of staff involved in this club ensures that pupils thoroughly enjoy their time in this activity. The school also organises a residential visit for pupils in Year 4 to Ford Castle, which extends personal development very well. Year 3 pupils enjoy a well planned day visit to the Jorvik Viking Centre, whilst pupils in Year 2 visit Carlisle Park. Staff provide stimulating experiences for pupils, such as someone from a local garden centre demonstrating how they plant and nurture petunias before they go on sale. Pupils extend their understanding of the world of work when they follow up such experiences by visiting the garden centre. The school organises a good range of workshops and these cover such curriculum areas as drama, singing and science. Pupils extend their learning well when they take part in role play opportunities, such as dressing up in Roman costumes and visiting the Roman site at Segedunum. All these experiences bring richness to the pupils' learning and help to bring it to life.
23. Although the school provides satisfactory coverage of all aspects of the curriculum, it has not sufficiently developed links between the different subjects. There is not enough use of ICT in other curriculum areas to enrich those subjects or to reinforce key ICT skills. There is some inefficient use of ICT, with computers lying idle when they could be in use. The school does not systematically identify opportunities to extend numeracy across the curriculum. There are good opportunities for developing literacy across the curriculum, but the overuse of worksheets reduces opportunities to develop these skills. Teachers do not organise worksheets effectively. They are all put together in one folder and many do not have the day's date. This ineffective organisation reduces pupils' understanding of how their work is progressing over time in different subjects.
24. Although accommodation and resources are satisfactory, the open plan nature of the school means that a good deal of noise is transmitted from one classroom to another. This can be very distracting at times and inhibits high levels of concentration. The school

has plans to reduce this problem through the construction of walls between classrooms. However, at the time of the inspection, they were not in place.

25. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is better. The Reception curriculum is also improved. However, the curriculum overall remains satisfactory.

### **Care, guidance and support**

Procedures for ensuring the pupils' care, welfare and health and safety are **good**. The support, advice and guidance given to the pupils are **satisfactory**. The school has **satisfactory** procedures for involving the pupils in its work and development.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff know the pupils and their families well and provide good support for their personal needs.
- Child-protection procedures and those for looking after the welfare of the pupils are good.
- Induction procedures are very good and give the children a good start to their education.

### **Commentary**

26. Staff understand the needs of the children, their families and the community well. They are keen to care for and support the pupils through their schooling. Good help and guidance is given to pupils of all ages to help them achieve both personal and academic success. The teachers work effectively with their assistants to provide extra support for the pupils who find learning difficult. As the pupils approach their national tests in Year 2, the class teacher gives up her time to provide useful and well-attended extra sessions in mathematics to help the children achieve their best. The school celebrates the pupils' personal achievements effectively through assemblies and its rewards points systems. The pupils enjoy this and feel that it encourages them to try hard. The headteacher promotes the care and welfare of the pupils well and the parents appreciate this aspect of his leadership. In partnership with his staff, he makes special efforts to help those pupils who join the school for a short time or who are learning English as an additional language. Pupils confirm that they are happy with the caring nature of the school and they feel that they can confide in, and trust all adults.
27. The school has well-established child-protection procedures, which are well communicated and understood. All staff are well aware of the procedures that they must follow if there are concerns. The governors and headteacher approach health and safety matters seriously. They have nearly completed a review of risk assessments. There were no outstanding health and safety issues at the time of the inspection. Pupils also take their own safety seriously. The pupils in Year 4 who act as buddies describe how they help to make sure that their peers are safe at play time, for example. From time to time, the school invites professionals in to talk about important matters, such as dental care and dangers in society at large. The school nurse makes frequent visits and helps with routine health screening and advice. The lunchtime supervisory staff have been trained and briefed on looking after the pupils and make a worthwhile contribution to their support. The teachers are alert to individual safety concerns. They will, for example, remind pupils of the rules that are there to protect them. Qualified first aid staff are on hand to deal with any minor traumas that may occur and to offer comforting support.

28. The staff work hard with the parents to make sure that the children settle quickly into school routines. The parents of the very youngest children are offered good information before they join the school. Staff make visits to the home and these are effective in giving them a picture of each individual child and their needs. Parents and their children are invited into school to familiarise themselves with its routines. This is useful in reassuring children and parents alike. As they take their first steps into formal education, the children see familiar faces and get off to a really good start that prepares them effectively and encourages them to do well at the school.
29. The previous inspection recorded that the school provided good support and guidance. The same positive picture is apparent today.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school's links with the parents are **good**. Its links with the local community are **good**. The school's links with other schools are **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school provides good quality information for the parents.
- Parents are actively involved in the life of the school and make a powerful contribution to their children's learning.
- Partnerships with the community and other schools are good.

### **Commentary**

30. The school works effectively to provide good information for the parents. The school brochure is clear and informative. Each year, the teachers provide a succinct outline of what they will be teaching and this gives the parents a good idea of how they can help their children at home. Nearly all parents attend the consultation meetings that are held for them. They appreciate these as a useful way of discussing how their children are doing and of identifying any areas for improvement. Information is displayed in accessible places in and around the school. The parents like the approachability of the headteacher and his staff and will often informally discuss their children's progress before and after the school day. The annual written reports for the parents are informative. They give a very clear picture of exactly what the children have achieved and offer guidance on what they need to do next.
31. The parents are proud of the school and are keen to become involved in its life. They support their children very well and feel that homework is relevant and well organised. Homework and reading diaries enable the parents to understand how to help their children at home and to comment on how they are achieving. A loyal band of volunteer parents and grandparents helps out in school. They provide valuable support in reading, craft activities and accompany the children on trips, for example. A very active parent teacher association organises social events and raises significant amounts of money. It has, for example, helped the school to buy computers, playground benches and to carpet the classrooms. Parents like the special events that the school organises. They support its summer fayre and sports day well, and many parents, friends and grandparents join their children in the Mass that celebrate different Holydays. Overall, the parents make a very positive contribution to their children's learning.

32. The school has good partnerships with its community and other schools. It uses the resources of the community well. It gives the pupils good opportunities to visit places of historical interest and to see performances at the local theatre. The school hosts a successful football club for pupils, which is run effectively by a team of committed volunteers from the locality. Links with other schools are good and the staff use these to help the pupils transfer smoothly to the next stage of their education.
33. The school has sustained the good quality links identified in the previous inspection.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **satisfactory** overall. Governance is **satisfactory**. Leadership of the headteacher is **satisfactory**. Leadership of other key staff is **satisfactory** overall. Effectiveness of management is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher is successful in providing an inclusive school and creating a positive ethos for learning. He does not handle strategic planning for future developments well enough.
- Monitoring systems are not effective enough and do not ensure consistency in teaching and learning.
- Most co-ordinators are enthusiastic and know what to do to improve their areas of responsibility.
- The chair of governors plays an important role in the life of the school. The effectiveness of the governing body is currently reduced because of the high proportion of new governors taking up their roles.

### **Commentary**

34. Leadership of the headteacher is satisfactory. He knows every pupil well and his long service as a headteacher ensures that he has a good understanding of the school's community. His teaching commitment keeps him in touch with the impact of new initiatives. He ensures that pupils with special educational needs, pupils with English as an additional language and traveller pupils settle into the school well and receive support that matches their needs. This results in these pupils achieving well. However, he does not place enough emphasis on school improvement planning. Individual co-ordinators contribute action plans, but the headteacher does not synthesise these plans well enough. He does not produce a useful working document to ensure that key personnel understand the main priorities for the school, or to provide a clear enough basis for monitoring the progress of new initiatives. Governors' involvement in the planning process comes too late for them to make enough contributions to the final plan. There are no long-term improvements identified, which reduces the school community's understanding of developments envisaged after the current year. These weaknesses were identified in the previous inspection and have not been fully addressed.
35. Management of the school is satisfactory. The headteacher ensures that the school runs smoothly on a daily basis. He puts a high priority on creating a cohesive school team and works well to include everyone in whole school activities. He supports key ventures well, such as the very good quality weekly sports club, where nearly every member of staff works with the pupils. However, he does not organise the monitoring of teaching and

learning well enough. This results in a considerable difference in the quality of teaching through the school. It also reduces the effectiveness of the co-ordinators because they are unable to support their colleagues formally.

36. The deputy headteacher is a good quality English and ICT co-ordinator. She has a clear understanding of how she wants these subjects to improve and has introduced a good range of strategies to improve provision. The Year 0 and Reception teacher is a very effective co-ordinator, who organises her team very efficiently and has a clear vision of how she wants her areas of responsibility to improve even further. The special educational needs co-ordinator organises and co-ordinates her responsibilities well, despite only being a part-time teacher. She ensures that recommended procedures are carefully followed and that record keeping is systematic. The co-ordinator for PSHCE is good quality. She has introduced some valuable initiatives, such as the buddy system, and sets an excellent example in her own teaching. The leadership of the science co-ordinator is unsatisfactory. She does not have an understanding of how her subject is developing through the rest of the school.
37. Governance of the school is satisfactory overall. The leadership of the chair of governors is good. He has a very good understanding of the individual pupils in the school. He plays an important part in pupils' learning and spiritual development through his direct teaching during opportunities, such as the Masses held on Holydays. The previous governing body had a good level of commitment to the school and a good understanding of the strengths of the school. Their understanding of key developments was not as good. Governors monitor the work of the school regularly each term and present back their findings systematically to the rest of the governors. Only three governors are making the transition between the two new governing bodies and this reduces the effectiveness of its work overall, because the new members have to learn the responsibilities of their new roles.

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	309,550	Balance from previous year	-122
Total expenditure	303,642	Balance carried forward to the next	5,786
Expenditure per pupil	2,216		

38. The headteacher and governors consider their finances regularly and use the expertise of the local educational authority effectively. They are careful to work within limits of their budget and not to carry forward large surpluses. The teaching commitment of the headteacher allows funding to be released for classroom assistants, which supports individual pupils well. However, this commitment reduces the amount of time he has for his role as headteacher and is having a negative impact on establishing systems, such as the monitoring of teaching.
39. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall. The ICT co-ordinator has ensured that standards have risen in her subject and the weaknesses in the management of special educational needs have been resolved well. However, although some of the school improvement planning weaknesses have been addressed, some features remain that need improvement.

**PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND**

# SUBJECTS

## AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision is **very good** in the Foundation Stage.

40. Standards on entry to the school are above average. Children achieve very well and standards are well above the expected level by the end of Reception across all areas of learning. Children with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress.
41. Staff create a stimulating and safe environment where the children thoroughly enjoy their learning and thrive on the challenging activities they are given to do. Teaching is very good in all the areas of learning and at times exceptional. There is a very good quality teaching team working across the two year groups. The teacher and the Year 0 classroom assistant set high expectations for the children, enjoy superb relationships with them and plan a very rich curriculum, which fully meets the needs of the children. Both weekly and termly planning is very high quality and, through regular planning meetings, staff ensure that necessary adjustments are made to meet the ever-changing needs of children in each area of learning. Assessments are thorough. In addition to the Foundation profile,<sup>4</sup> the children have a comprehensive reading record, an ICT record, a writing record and a physical activity diary. Staff use these records very effectively, along with their observations, to provide activities that carefully match the children's learning needs. The high quality planning also identifies clear links between all the areas of learning. The management of provision for the Year 0 and Reception is very good and improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a strong emphasis on children's personal development.
- Relationships between adults and children are excellent.
- Children play and work extremely well together.

### Commentary

42. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and ensures that children reach standards well above the expected level by the end of Reception. The teacher and the classroom assistants promote children's personal development very well. Children very quickly adopt the well-established routines of the classroom and become independent in their daily activities, such as finding the equipment they need to complete a task. They learn to follow instructions and clearly know the difference between right and wrong. The teacher and support staff are excellent role models for the children, showing respect and care for them, and in turn, the children themselves show mutual respect and affection. Staff encourage the children to make friends with one another and to share and play together. Snack-time with the classroom assistant is a very good quality social event where children demonstrate good manners and respect for each other. At the end of a physical education lesson, a boy banged his head and was tearful. Immediately, one little girl suggested he should have first place in the dinner queue in order to cheer him up. Teachers frequently praise children for trying hard. This raises their

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<sup>4</sup> This is an assessment record that the government has introduced to track children's learning across their curriculum.

self-esteem and motivates them to do well. As a result, children behave very well, understand what is expected of them and gain a great deal from working in a calm and friendly environment.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

Provision for communication, language and literacy is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching of early reading and writing skills is very good.
- The development of speaking and listening skills has a high priority.
- The classrooms are rich in displays that very effectively promote language development.

### **Commentary**

43. In this area of learning, children achieve very well and the quality of teaching for all children is very good. All the children achieve the Early Learning Goals, and a significant number reach higher levels. Teaching and learning are very good because activities are very well planned and meet the needs of all the children. The classroom environments are rich in displays of words that help the children when they come to write. Children love sharing books with the teacher and their enjoyment in reading a story together often leads naturally into writing. The beautiful story of 'the whale's song' leads initially into a delightful collage of the whale travelling through the water. The children then add their own hand written labels about whales and they make a book of letters they have written to them. The youngest pupils, during snack-time, rehearse initial letter sounds and suggest words that begin with them. Through these enjoyable activities, children develop a love of reading and writing and can often be found curled up with a book. Through excellent use of conversation, whenever it is appropriate, the staff develop children's speaking and listening skills. The children love talking and use an extensive range of very mature language.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision for mathematical development is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff plan a very good range of practical activities that make learning very interesting.
- The children are very confident mathematicians.

### **Commentary**

44. Achievement in this area of learning is very good. The children reach the Early Learning Goals, with a significant proportion of children achieving beyond that standard. The very good teaching and learning in this area stem from the quality of the activities planned for the children. Not only do these activities capture the imagination and concentration of the children, but they also provide solid learning opportunities to help the children gain knowledge and understanding at a good pace. The lesson on shape had a brilliant beginning, with children sitting in a circle, making a repeating pattern round the circle, using the shape they had in their hands. As they swapped places to try and achieve the pattern, the excitement grew. The teacher was very skilfully teaching, not only how patterns repeat, but also the names and properties of shapes. When it came to putting the shapes away, the children had to put them in the basket, according to the property of the shape and the surfaces that it had. Throughout the lesson, children used the correct mathematical language to describe things and they were confident in number as well as in shape and measurement.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

Provision for children's knowledge and understanding of the world is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children have a good knowledge of the world around them.
- ICT skills are developing well.

### **Commentary**

45. Teaching and learning are very good in this particular area of learning and children achieve very well. Children achieve the Early Learning Goals and many of them achieve beyond that point. Topics are very carefully planned so that, wherever possible, children will be able to have many first hand experiences that will bring the learning to life. As a result of this attention to providing experiences, the topics are lively, vibrant and capture the imagination of the children. Very good use is made of Oldgate and the surrounding area, particularly the school grounds. In the hunt for mini-beasts in the areas near the classroom, the children have a very good understanding of being sensitive to small animals and this makes a really good link with their personal and social development. Skills in ICT are developing very well, with children using the computer with great confidence. Not only do they use the mouse and keyboard with confidence, but also many of them know how to access the Internet to find out information. They know and understand the keyboard on the programmable robot and estimate how far it will travel, once they have put in the instructions. The children have a good understanding of past and present and how things have changed.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision for physical development is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children are developing very good control over their movements.
- Children quickly acquire the skills needed for writing, painting and drawing and using small tools.

### **Commentary**

46. Teaching is very good and children quickly learn a range of appropriate skills. They achieve well, and by the end of Reception, standards are well above the expected level.

Children become confident in tackling physical tasks, particularly in their use of small tools. They use brushes well when painting, can join materials with glue, make models and cut out shapes with scissors. When writing, they control their pencils well to form the shapes of letters, and by the end of the Reception year, many use the skills they have acquired to write their names clearly. In a physical education lesson in the hall, they showed how well they are beginning to control their body, using the space very well and moving in a variety of ways to a piece of music. Although the outdoor play areas are small, they are well equipped with a variety of activities and because there are two areas, they can be used for different purposes and allow the children an element of choice.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Provision for creative development is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Links between creative work and other areas of learning are very effective.
- Children are very confident in using different materials.

### **Commentary**

47. Standards are well above the expected level by the end of Reception, due to the very good quality teaching and learning. There are strong links between the creative work the children do and other aspects of their work. Whenever the children are working with materials, the staff seize this as an opportunity to develop their language skills and engage them in conversation about what they are doing. Two girls wanted to make a costume out of a piece of material and a lengthy discussion ensued with the teacher about how this would be done. It was wonderful to listen to as the teacher extended their responses, introduced new words and made sure the girls listened to each other. As an activity, which required considerable collaboration between the two, it also made a positive contribution to their personal and social development. Whenever the children worked creatively, it was interesting to see how confidently they would use a new material. A group of boys, using a kind of 'super playdough', not only used it with great enjoyment but also talked about how different it was and they were fascinated by the fact that it hardened as time passed. Children gain much enjoyment from their creative activities and the acquisition of new skills.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

The lesson on plan, do and review, began with a very clear explanation that, during the session, the children were going to plan their own activity and the teacher explained the range of resources available to them. There is an air of tremendous excitement as this is something they love to do. One of the resources available is a large roll of plain material. Two girls and a boy decide they want to use this to make costumes. The boy wants to make a rat costume. The girls want to make something to dress up in. The two girls unroll the material and one girl eagerly lies on the material saying to her partner, "draw round me". It is at this point that the teacher skilfully intervenes and uses brilliant questioning to get the girls to the point where they realise that their approach would only produce a front to the costume and do they really want one with arms and legs, hand and feet and a head? Lots of laughter breaks out when they realise what drawing round each other would produce. Through more discussion with each other, they arrive at the conclusion that they need to fold over the cloth and only draw round the bit of themselves where they need the costume to fit. This is an excellent example of teacher interaction in an activity, where the result is that the children think through their plan themselves and arrive at the correct answer. At no point does the teacher tell them how to do it.

## ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well overall and, by Year 4, standards are well above average.
- The school provides careful support for pupils with special educational needs, pupils with English as an additional language and traveller pupils, and they all achieve well.
- Teaching of independent writing, spelling and grammar is good. Teaching of handwriting is inconsistent.
- Teaching is good overall but varies from very good to unsatisfactory.
- The co-ordinator has a great enthusiasm for her responsibilities but the lack of systematic monitoring systems reduces the effectiveness of her role.
- Assessment systems are good.
- Parents support pupils' reading and spelling development well.

### Commentary

48. The national tests in Year 2 in reading and writing show that standards are very high over time. The current Year 2 has a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs, pupils with English as an additional language and traveller pupils than usual. This is having a negative impact on standards in this year group. The inspection judges standards as well above average in writing and speaking and listening and above average in reading. Pupils sustain their love of English in the junior classes and, by the end of Year 4, standards are well above average in all aspects of English.
49. Standards are well above average in speaking and listening because teachers in Years 2 to 4 give pupils regular opportunities to talk in whole class sessions. In these classes, pupils are keen to listen to each other because they know that other pupils will be giving individual and personal responses to questions. These teachers give pupils great encouragement to find just the right words to express their responses to the stimulating literature that they provide. They organise pupils regularly into pairs to ensure that everyone has the chance to talk and listen. In Year 2, pupils skilfully adapt their speech to match the audience and listen with great concentration. By Year 4, pupils develop their ideas thoughtfully. However, in Year 1, the unsatisfactory organisation of whole class sessions does not give pupils enough opportunities to speak and pupils are not expected to listen to each other. This reduces their levels of achievement.
50. The high standards in writing in Year 2 are due to the very thorough coverage of writing and the high expectations of more-able pupils' achievement in this year group. More than double the proportion of pupils is reaching the higher Level 3<sup>5</sup> than the national average. Although the Year 1 teaching ensures that pupils write regularly, the unsatisfactory nature of the whole class teaching reduces pupils' achievement in this year group. In Year 2, pupils expect to write particularly long pieces of work and produce very interesting and imaginative stories. More-able pupils are particularly skilful in this writing and create well-crafted narratives at a high level. By Year 4, pupils handle a wide range of different types of writing confidently and use precise vocabulary to create some dramatic effects. Standards in grammar and spelling are above or well above the expected level through the school. Regular spelling homework and testing supports the development of this skill

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<sup>5</sup> Level 3 is the level expected for pupils by the end of Year 4.

well. However, standards in handwriting are lower. This is because teachers do not ensure a steady development of skills as pupils move through the school. The co-ordinator has identified this weakness and plans to introduce a new handwriting scheme.

51. Pupils enjoy reading throughout the school and expect to give personal responses to the content of their texts. In Year 2, pupils readily identify favourite stories and remember them in considerable detail. They tackle new words confidently, in both fiction and non-fiction, and more-able pupils read with great expression. Pupils do not handle non-fiction skills as confidently, and are unsure of some key terms or how devices, such as indexes, work. By Year 4, pupils tackle complicated texts and talk about key features, such as characters and plot with insight. Teachers work very successfully with parents to ensure that pupils have the chance to read individually with an adult. Pupils value their home-school diaries, which keep a good record of the books they have read. Parents play a valuable role in coming into school each week to support teachers in hearing pupils read during lessons. Parents provide very valuable support in helping pupils throughout the school to choose a library book every week. This extends pupils' experiences of selecting different texts well.
52. The school works hard to ensure that all pupils receive individual support when it is needed. This results in good levels of achievement. Throughout the school, classroom assistants work very effectively with pupils with special educational needs, which ensures that they understand how to carry out the tasks set. The support for statemented pupils is particularly good. The school has worked hard to provide bilingual adult support for pupils with English as an additional language. Their shared cultural background creates many opportunities for enriching these pupils' learning, such as the choice of a crocodile for independent writing when the rest of the class were choosing animals, such as dogs or cats. Teachers support traveller pupils well and check that they understand what to do in lessons.
53. The quality of teaching is good overall and ensures that standards are well above the expected level by Year 4. In Years 2 to 4, teachers provide interesting tasks for pupils and a good variety of resources to carry them out. This encourages pupils to work hard because they rise to the challenges that teachers present to them. Teachers present new learning systematically and build carefully on previous knowledge or skills. However, lessons in Year 1 include too much new learning and pupils become confused and lose concentration. Whole class sessions at the end of lessons are very good quality in Year 2. Pupils' learning is extended into additional tasks and teaching ensures that their achievements are celebrated by the rest of the class. In contrast, the teaching in Year 1 does not ensure that pupils' efforts are valued because pupils are not expected to respond to other pupils' contributions. Teacher's marking of pupils' work is good quality and gives average and more-able pupils very clear guidance of how to improve.
54. The leadership of the co-ordinator is good. She places a high value on her subject and keeps up to date with new initiatives. She takes advantage of the local education authority support and introduces new systems sensitively that improve the work of the school. She ensures that assessment systems work well. The new assessment folders are comprehensive, break down the different skills in English well and ensure that teachers identify individual targets for pupils effectively. This combines well with the detailed marking of pupils' work and pupils have a good understanding of how to improve. This is particularly good for more-able pupils and leads to high standards of work. The whole school systems for monitoring teaching and learning are inadequate and

do not use the talents of the co-ordinator effectively enough. The school has sustained the high standards identified in the previous inspection.

## **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

55. Teachers ensure that pupils have opportunities to produce some good quality writing in other subjects. However, the school has not analysed the balance of the different types of writing that they use across the curriculum. In some subjects, teachers use too many worksheets, which reduces opportunities for pupils to write in sentences or to use their own words. In ICT, pupils use word processing effectively to produce attractive final drafts of work. However, they do not learn how to write straight onto computers, which reduces their understanding and skills in the full drafting process.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above average in Year 4 and have been maintained since the previous inspection.
- Teaching is good in Years 2, 3 and 4 but poor in Year 1.
- Planning of the curriculum in mathematics is very effective and promotes very good achievement in all aspects of the subject.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics and their attitudes towards this subject are very good.
- Teachers do not plan enough opportunities to use numeracy across the curriculum.

### **Commentary**

56. Pupils achieve well in Years 2 to 4, but achievement is unsatisfactory in Year 1, due to poor teaching. Standards at the end of Year 4 are well above those normally expected for pupils at that age. Standards at the end of Year 2 in the national tests in 2003 were very high. However, the current Year 2's standards on entry to the school were lower than usual. The inspection judges standards to be above average in Year 2. More-able pupils and those of average ability are constantly challenged in lessons and many achieve standards that are well above average for their age. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language are very well supported by the classroom assistants and make very good progress. In Year 4, standards are well above average. The school has been successful in maintaining the high standards of the previous inspection.
57. The school uses a commercial scheme for the teaching of mathematics, but the strength of the curriculum is the way in which teachers use quite traditional teaching techniques before moving onto the workbooks. In a good lesson in Year 4, the teacher taught the whole class how to change the time on the analogue clock into digital time. Good use was made of ICT and the whiteboard in order to have a large image of a clock that all the pupils could see. When the teacher was sure that the pupils had understood how to do the task, only then did they do the exercises. These were of different levels of difficulty in order to meet the needs of the different ability groups, and for the more-able pupils there was an additional activity for when they had finished the exercise. This carefully planned approach, with good quality teaching to the whole class, meant that all the pupils, including those with special educational needs, were secure in carrying out the given tasks. Analysis of pupils' work showed that regular practice of a new skill continues until

the pupils are secure in their knowledge and understanding. Pupils handle fractions confidently and enjoy problem solving. In the case of the younger pupils, the activities they are given following the whole class session are of a much more practical nature. In Year 2, the lesson on fractions was followed by a very practical activity where the pupils found a half or a quarter of a number of objects and in this way quickly came to understand that two quarters are the same as one half. Pupils in Year 2 handle numbers at a higher level than expected for their age.

58. The overall quality of teaching in mathematics is good and ensures that, by the end of Year 4, standards are well above the expected level. Lessons are well planned with very clear teaching objectives. Teachers all work well with their classroom assistants to ensure that pupils with special educational needs, pupils with English as an additional language and traveller pupils all learn well. In Years 2 to 4, teachers begin with a brisk, mental session where teachers use good questioning skills to include all the pupils in the activity. In Year 1, the mental starter session is too short. Other weaknesses in Year 1 include the whole class sessions being too long, resulting in pupils losing their concentration. Too much new learning is introduced and pupils become confused. When they move into group work, they do not all understand what they have to do and they work on the wrong aspect of the task. This reduces the quality of their learning.
59. Pupils enjoy their work in mathematics and have very positive attitudes to the subject. During the good quality mental sessions, it was noticeable how confident the pupils were in answering questions and making suggestions as to how they might work out the answer. In the Year 2 opening activity, the pupils worked well together, sorting out the number cards in the correct order, from the smallest to the largest. Getting the right answer was always greeted with a sense of joy and the use of praise and encouragement by the teacher continually raised the pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
60. One of the negative aspects of the scheme of work is that much of the pupils' work is done on photocopied sheets and not in the pupils' mathematics book. The resulting sheets are not particularly well ordered and it is difficult for pupils to look back through their work and gain any sense of achievement or improvement. The marking of the sheets, although done on a regular basis, rarely indicates where the pupils can improve their work.
61. Leadership in the subject is satisfactory, but the co-ordinator does not monitor the pupils' work in order to ensure that there is consistency throughout the age groups in teaching and learning. Assessment is thorough and constructive and the school uses a range of tests to monitor pupils' progress. However, there is no marking policy and target setting is inconsistent. This results in pupils being unsure of what they need to do to improve.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

62. Opportunities for mathematics to be used in other areas of the curriculum are sparse. Data handling and measuring skills are used infrequently in science and ICT is rarely used as a means of pupils storing and handling numerical information. The school needs to seek ways of enabling pupils to use their substantial skills in other areas of learning.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils, by Year 4, develop a good understanding of how to carry out scientific investigations.
- Teaching is good in Year 4.
- Too much use is made of photocopied sheets.
- The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory.

## Commentary

63. Standards at the end of Year 2 are at the expected level overall. They are above average at the end of Year 4, which is the same as at the previous inspection. Overall, achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, and good in Years 3 and 4, where teaching is good. Pupils with special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language, learn and achieve as well as their classmates.
64. Pupils enjoy their lessons, especially when they use equipment to carry out investigations. At such times, most pupils relish finding out the part played by science in their world. They develop a good understanding of some aspects of science through such learning. For example, by the end of a Year 2 lesson about constructing simple electrical circuits, most pupils could explain clearly what has to be done to make a bulb light. More-able pupils wrote explanations independently of how they assembled their circuits, and some could describe verbally how to include a working switch. Many pupils, by the end of Year 4, have a shrewd sense of investigation. They pose interesting ‘what if?’ questions, as in their investigation into the solubility properties of different solids, such as sugar, plaster of paris and salt. In group discussion, pupils suggested what might happen if their solutions were heated, and considered whether a solid, such as flour, was truly dissolving if particles could still be seen on the inside of the glass beaker. As a result, pupils learn that organised investigation is essential to understanding scientific concepts.
65. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall, and most pupils make satisfactory progress in their knowledge of scientific facts. Some aspects of lessons are good, such as the range and use of resources and, in Year 2, the calm and supportive relationship between the teacher and the pupils, which encourages a productive working atmosphere. Teaching assistants in both classes give good support to teachers and pupils. Pupils achieve well in Year 4 because the teaching is good. Expectations of pupils to listen, think and discuss are high and, as a result, pupils learn at a good pace. Most of these pupils complete their written work independently, so that they apply and add to previously acquired knowledge, as in a detailed investigation into the insulation properties of a range of materials. Work in this class is marked regularly, and often gives pupils guidance in how to improve their work. This is not the case in the other classes, where marking is often cursory and makes little impact on pupils’ learning. Indeed, sometimes work in Year 1 is marked as ‘excellent’ when it clearly is not. This is unsatisfactory because it does not encourage pupils to achieve higher standards.
66. There is too much use of commercial worksheets, especially in the younger-age classes. These limit pupils’ facility to extend their learning, and often include tasks that are not challenging enough, particularly for the more-able pupils. For example, several worksheets in Years 1 and 2 require pupils only to colour in drawings and do not take their learning forward sufficiently. Additionally, worksheets in Years 1 and 2 are usually the same for all pupils, regardless of their levels of attainment. Where teachers prepared the worksheets themselves, as many are in Year 4, they are usually effective because their content and requirements match more closely the pupils’ needs.

67. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The co-ordinator has little knowledge about standards or the quality of learning across the school. She does not have access to other lessons and has not sampled pupils' work. Apart from statutory teacher assessment undertaken at the end of Year 2, assessment at other times in other classes is inconsistently used, despite the intention to do so, as expressed in the current whole-school science action plan. Indeed, the action plan itself is not based on information that will help to improve the quality of provision.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have risen since the previous inspection and are now at the expected level. Achievement is satisfactory overall.
- The organisation of the use of computers across the whole school is inefficient.
- Teachers work in effective partnerships with classroom assistants to support pupils with special educational needs, pupils with English as an additional language and traveller pupils.
- Pupils do not understand what they need to do to improve, but the co-ordinator is introducing good quality assessment booklets to fill this gap.
- The co-ordinator introduces new whole school systems well, but there are not enough opportunities for her to monitor teaching and learning.
- Opportunities are missed to use ICT across the curriculum.

### Commentary

68. The co-ordinator works well with the local educational authority in order to improve provision in this subject. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although it is not consistent across the school. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and, at the end of Year 2, pupils have the expected level of knowledge across the full ICT curriculum. Year 1 pupils enjoy programming computerised robots and handle the controls confidently. Year 2 pupils understand how ICT enhances everyday life and enjoy using word processing facilities to produce different effects. They understand the advantages of using computers to present data in forms, such as bar charts, and produce imaginative compositions, using graphics packages. Achievement slows in Year 3, where pupils do not work regularly enough on computers. However, in Year 4, progress accelerates because of the good quality teaching and, by the end of Year 4, pupils are at the expected level for their age. Year 4 pupils enjoy producing whole class projects, such as a class newspaper, and use this format confidently. They appreciate that data can be presented in different ways, and take a pride in producing well-presented final versions of their independent writing. Throughout the school, pupils do not draft their first pieces of written work on computers, only copying up hand written pieces of work. This reduces pupils' skills of using the full range of word-processing facilities.
69. In Year 4, the teacher organises pupils effectively to use computers across other lessons. However, there is no whole school system to ensure that all the available computers are used efficiently throughout the school day. In the weekly computer lesson, teachers split the class efficiently. This ensures that pupils get a chance each week to follow up the whole class session and complete the task. However, computers are regularly left idle through the school day and opportunities are missed for teachers to share these resources and to ensure that pupils extend their skills even further. Year 4 pupils play a valuable role in updating the school website, which extends their understanding of the Internet well.
70. The school works hard to include all pupils in ICT lessons. Classroom assistants have a good understanding of the learning expected in each lesson and support pupils well when they move onto using the equipment. They focus on pupils with special educational needs well and these pupils enjoy the practical nature of this work. The work of classroom

assistants is particularly good in Year 1, where pupils benefit from their knowledgeable support. Traveller pupils enjoy the regular work in pairs, which extends their confidence. Teachers use the visual nature of much of the ICT work well to support pupils with English as an additional language. Classroom assistants support pupils effectively in using digital cameras to record different events and end products of their work, such as their musical instruments in design and technology. Teachers use demonstrations well to explain new learning to the class at the beginning of lessons. However, the quality of whole class sessions at the end of lessons is inconsistent, with too little focus to this discussion in Year 1.

71. The school has a simple assessment system in place for this subject, but pupils have little understanding of their rate of progress and how they can increase it. The co-ordinator is introducing some good quality and attractive individual self-evaluation booklets to solve this problem, but they are not in use. She has also organised a good system for pupils to save their individual pieces of work onto discs. This is working well in Years 2 and 4 but Year 3 does not use them. The lack of formal opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor teaching or learning reduces the effectiveness of her role in improving provision across the school.
72. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator has worked hard to remedy all the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection and there has been a good level of improvement since then. However, the lack of opportunities to monitor teaching and learning reduces her impact in ensuring consistency across the school.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

73. This is inconsistent. The co-ordinator systematically buys additional software to extend the use of computers in other subjects. In Years 2 and 4, the teachers regularly identify opportunities to use computers and other hardware in lessons. However, other teachers do not plan carefully enough for pupils to work on computers across different subjects. The school has not identified opportunities across the full curriculum where different ICT techniques could be used. The Year 4 teacher uses the computerised projector effectively to introduce pupils to new learning at the beginning of lessons. However, other teachers do not use it systematically in this way. The restricted nature of the space in classrooms, combined with the size of the trolley for the projector, causes difficulties in organising the use of this piece of equipment.

### **HUMANITIES**

74. One lesson was seen in history, but there were no observations in geography. It is, therefore, not possible to make any firm judgements about provision, standards or the quality of teaching and learning in geography. The lesson observed in history was in Year 2.
75. The quality of teaching in **history** was good. The lesson was well planned and good use was made of the video and pictures in order to contrast the seaside as it is now and how it was at the beginning of the century. Good questioning skills brought a positive response from the pupils as they explained different sections of the video and talked about how to put up a deckchair. Pupils developed skills of identifying how things had changed. The pupils enjoyed the lesson. They were clearly excited by the activities and even at the most exciting moments, behaviour was very good and they concentrated very well throughout the session. Learning was good, with the lesson objectives clearly being

met, and the standards for this Year 2 group were above those normally seen for pupils of a similar age. Pupils are reaching a good understanding of past and present, and this lesson built on previous experiences in Year 1, where pupils had looked at old toys and compared them with the toys of today. In Years 3 and 4, planning showed that pupils then begin to look at different periods in history, such as the Vikings and Saxons and the Romans and Greeks. In these studies, they investigate where the Vikings came from and why, and, using maps of the locality, they identify places with names that originate from the Saxons. Pupils cover a comprehensive range of historical topics.

76. **Geography** planning shows that the youngest pupils use the local environment effectively to begin to look at routes and maps. They look at how different pupils come to school and they study the locality, looking at the kinds of buildings and shops in the vicinity of the school. Older pupils in Year 3 develop appropriate skills of carrying out a river study, using the nearby river as an example and, by the time the pupils are in their final year, they are studying life in an Indian village. In this study, they develop skills effectively, such as identifying similarities and differences between their own environment and way of life and that of people in a distant land. Work in both history and geography is well supported by a range of visits to places, such as the Year 1 visit where pupils visit the toy museum. In Year 3, pupils studying the Vikings gain a good insight into how they lived, by visiting the Jorvik Centre and, as part of their work on Romans, the pupils in Year 4 visit Segedunum, a Roman Fort.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

77. Art and design, design and technology and physical education were sampled, and no secure overall judgements can be made on provision or standards. Music lessons were seen in three classes, from which it is judged that standards in this subject at the end of Years 2 and 4 exceed expectations.
78. Work on display and discussions with pupils show that they use a suitable range of media and materials in **art and design**. Recent entries by pupils from across the school to the local 'Northumbria In Bloom' competition produced rewarding results. Paintings of flowers in various settings are of good quality, and the school makes good use of visiting artists to give useful advice. Pastel drawings of famous structures, such as the Angel of the North, convey feelings of awe. The quality of teaching and learning was good in the one lesson seen, in Year 3. The pupils were successfully motivated to assemble their own interpretations of structures based on what they had seen and discussed over a period. Of particular note was the way pupils efficiently worked in pairs or independently to construct their 'sculptures' with originality of thought.
79. In **design and technology**, discussions with pupils and an analysis of the work available show that pupils experience a suitably wide range of materials. They explain clearly how they have made and evaluated a variety of models, such as seating, or designs for a wallet. Interesting, ongoing work in Year 4 develops in pupils a good knowledge of the principles of pivots and levers when they construct moving mechanisms.

## **MUSIC**

Provision in music is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is consistently very good.
- Pupils enjoy singing and performing, and standards in these aspects are well above the expected level by Year 4.

## Commentary

80. Pupils achieve very well because lessons are of a consistently high standard. A specialist music teacher visits the school on a regular basis and teaches each class, from Reception onwards. This is effective because the work is continuous and progressive across the school. Additionally, the pupils' own class teachers are always present at the lessons, which means that they can knowledgeably practise with their pupils at times between the designated lessons, and so improve the quality of pupils' performance. By the end of Year 4, pupils reach much higher levels than expected for their age, in both singing and performing.
81. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are demanding throughout the school. The teacher builds on the very good achievement that children made in the Reception class. Many pupils in Year 4 lesson learn simple rhythms, such as playing a rhythmic drum pattern for a very moving dance about African slaves, performed by their classmates. The quality of performance in the dance and the instrument playing, and the very good progress made towards it, are tributes to the quality of the teaching. The teacher successfully transmits her obvious enthusiasm to the pupils through strategies that are engaging, exciting and include pupils of all levels of capability. Because of these qualities, pupils in Year 2 quickly learnt to play xylophones and glockenspiels, melodically and accurately, to accompany the song, 'Once a man fell in a well.'
82. Pupils sing tunefully, with good volume, diction and phrasing, as demonstrated in an assembly and in lessons. The piano playing skills of the visiting teacher support very well the quality of singing and dance, and pupils respond with great enthusiasm. Musical experiences are enriched as pupils take part in school performances, such as at the end-of-term concert given by the Year 4 pupils. Using songs that are composed of an accumulation of pupils' ideas is an added incentive that positively affects the quality of performance. All those pupils spoken to said how much they enjoy such occasions, and practising for them. The quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher values the contributions made by the part-time teacher and ensures that every pupil has the opportunity to develop their musical talents.
83. In the one **physical education** lesson seen, the quality of teaching and learning was good. Pupils in Year 2 achieve well by developing their skills of throwing and catching as they invented simple ball or bean bag games. They use their independence well to adapt rules to suit their game and to improve their skills. The school provides a high quality, weekly, after-school club for all pupils who wish to attend. This provision very successfully promotes a great sense of fun in games and creates an enriching family style occasion. There is a high level of commitment by most of the teachers, who all lead their activities very enthusiastically. The very good range of activities available ensures that each pupil succeeds in developing their games skills.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

84. Provision in this aspect was sampled, but there was not enough evidence to make overall judgements. The interview with the co-ordinator shows that she has implemented good quality systems. These systems are improving the work of the school in this aspect. There is now a good quality scheme of work in place and staff development has been carried out to develop teachers' expertise. Regular opportunities are provided for pupils to discuss their personal responses to their lives. The teaching of the co-ordinator sets a high quality example for the rest of the staff. The lesson that was inspected was excellent and allowed pupils to share sensitive issues with each other. The co-ordinator has

introduced a very effective 'Buddy' scheme to extend pupils' understanding of how to support younger pupils effectively. Pupils thoroughly enjoy this responsibility and they show great care in the way they handle pupils in the playground. The process of applying and being interviewed for this role extends their understanding of the world of work well.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	7
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).*