

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGH CLARENCE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Stockton on Tees

LEA area: Stockton on Tees

Unique reference number: 111523

Headteacher: Mrs Jean Orridge

Lead inspector: Mrs Susan Walker

Dates of inspection: 28th February – 2nd March 2005

Inspection number: 273006

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	111
School address:	Port Clarence Road Middlesbrough
Post Code:	TS2 1SY
Telephone number:	01642 561237
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Cllr. Ann McCoy
Date of previous inspection:	February 2000

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a small primary school, with 111 boys and girls aged between three and eleven. This includes a newly-built nursery class for 26 children who attend for half days only. The school is on the outskirts of the town of Stockton in an isolated situation well away from the main Teesside conurbation. It serves a socially and economically disadvantaged area where there are very few amenities and few of the parents have benefited from higher education. Housing in the locality is mainly rented accommodation and some low-cost privately-owned dwellings. Three-quarters of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, a proportion that is well above the national average. About one-third of the pupils are designated by the school as having special educational needs. Most of these pupils have moderate or severe learning difficulties or social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. No pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage; a tiny proportion are of mixed race. None of the pupils is at an early stage of learning English. Pupils' mobility is high at 40 per cent and is a significant barrier to learning, which adversely affects the school's results in national tests. The attainments of most of the children when they join the nursery are very low, particularly as very few have had any pre-school experience. The school has won a number of awards: Basic Skills Quality Mark 2001; National Schools Curriculum Award 2002; Investors in People 2002; School Achievement Award 2003; Basic Skills Quality Mark 2005.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21045	Susan Walker	Lead inspector	The Foundation Stage English Art and design Design and technology History Geography Personal, social and health education and citizenship
13462	Roberta Mothersdale	Lay inspector	
28320	Robert Willey	Team inspector	Special educational needs Mathematics Science Information and communication technology Music Physical education Religious education

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	9
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	13
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	19
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	22
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	37

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very effective school where pupils achieve very well in relation to their very low attainments when they first join the school. Standards in Year 6 are below average in English, mathematics and science but pupils have good attitudes and achieve very well. This is because of the good teaching, the positive links with parents, the very good use of assessment and the very good nurture and care provided by the school, all of which create a very positive ethos for learning. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher, who has high aspirations and continually strives to raise standards. Staff and governors support her very well in this. Running costs are much higher than in most other schools so the school gives sound value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- As a result of good teaching and a very good ethos for learning, pupils achieve very well.
- The provision in the Foundation Stage gets children off to a good start with their education.
- The needs of all pupils are very well met, especially those who need extra help, but skills in speaking and listening are not always promoted effectively enough.
- The school is very well led and managed by an inspirational headteacher supported by a very strong and effective governing body.
- Although pupils acquire a good range of skills in information and communication technology (ICT), they do not use them often enough in other subjects.
- Punctuality is unsatisfactory.

The school has rigorously tackled all the issues from its last inspection and has improved very well as a result. Teaching is now better because new systems for assessing pupils and setting targets for learning have been introduced. The overall provision for ICT has changed from a weakness to a strength because of the much-improved facilities and staff training. Attendance rates have risen and now approach the national average. Subject management is better because co-ordinators are clearer about their roles. The presentation of pupils' work is now good.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	E*	E	E*	E
Mathematics	C	B	E	C
Science	B	C	E	C

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.

Similar schools are those with a similar number of pupils eligible for free school meals

Caution is needed in interpreting the data because the number of pupils in each year group is small.

Achievement is very good overall although there is considerable variation in standards from year to year because of the makeup of the different groups of pupils. Results in national tests in 2004 in Year 6 were low because of the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the group, whereas the current Year 6 group is on course to

reach standards that are approaching the national average in all three subjects. This represents very good achievement from a very low starting point. Results in English have been lower than in mathematics and science year on year, reflecting the linguistic limitations of many of the pupils. The table above shows that in national tests in 2004 results were low in all three subjects, and in English the grade E* means they were in the lowest five per cent in the country. When compared to similar schools, however, results were much more favourable, being average in mathematics and science, though still well below average in English.

Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage and achieve well over time, though very few usually achieve the expected goals in the areas of learning by the end of the reception year. By Year 2, pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics even though standards remain well below average. Throughout the school, pupils' limitations in speaking, reading and writing hamper their progress in other subjects. In ICT pupils achieve very well and reach the standards expected for their age by the time they leave the school. In religious education and music, pupils also achieve very well. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because they are supported well by adults with work suited to their capabilities.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good, contributing to their good attitudes and behaviour. The school has a caring and supportive ethos because of very good leadership. Attendance is satisfactory and improving though punctuality is unsatisfactory because too many pupils arrive late for school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good overall, and very good in Year 6. Staff are proficient at teaching the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics, though sometimes insufficient emphasis is given to promoting speaking and listening, and the use of ICT across the curriculum. Assessments are used very well to set suitable targets for all pupils. Teachers manage their pupils firmly but patiently, insisting on high standards of behaviour. Lessons are well planned and efficiently organised so that no time is lost. Pupils with special educational needs are catered for very well and they consequently make very good progress.

The school provides a good curriculum that makes pupils keen to learn. The well-planned provision in the Foundation Stage effectively settles children into school routines. There are many additional activities that enrich and extend the curriculum very well. The school has very good links with parents and the local community. The good quality accommodation and resources support learning well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good, and this contributes to the very good achievement of the pupils. The headteacher is ambitious, reflective and committed to continuing improvement. Governors play an important part in the life of the school, managing the finances proficiently and prudently and ensuring that statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very appreciative of all that the school does for them and their children. Pupils are happy at school and enjoy the things they have to do.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Provide better opportunities to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills.
- Make more opportunities for pupils to use ICT in other subjects.
- Improve punctuality.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Standards in the school vary from year to year depending on the makeup of each group of pupils but are generally below average. However pupils achieve very well, especially those with special educational needs. From a very low starting point they make very good progress as a result of the consistently good teaching.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in relation to their very low starting points.
- Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage.
- Pupils' progress in most subjects is hampered by their limitations in speaking, reading and writing.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because of the very good level of support they receive.
- Standards in ICT are now average and pupils achieve very well in this subject.
- Girls tend to do better than boys.

Commentary

1. Standards in Year 6 are below average but this represents very good achievement when account is taken of the very low attainments of children when they first join the school. Results in national tests tend to fluctuate from year to year because the groups of pupils are small. Results in 2004 were particularly low because of the higher than usual proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The results in English have been well below the national average for the past four years and were in the lowest five per cent in the country in 2004. In mathematics, the trend of results has been much better, reaching above average in 2003 but falling to well below average in 2004. Similarly in science, standards were average in 2003 but fell to well below average in 2004. Few pupils reached the higher levels in 2004 tests and this adversely affected overall results. However, there is a trend of improvement in standards resulting from better teaching and more use of assessment. School data shows that in the current Year 6 group a much higher proportion of pupils is expected to reach the higher levels. Inspection findings endorse these predictions. Girls tend to outperform boys in English. The school is aware of this variation and works to raise the attainment of boys by monitoring their progress carefully and, where appropriate, providing tasks that are appealing and motivating to boys.
2. Year 2 results in national tests have been very low and were in the lowest five per cent in the country in reading, writing and mathematics in 2001, 2002 and 2003. Performance in mathematics was marginally better than in reading and writing. In national tests in 2004, results showed an improvement on previous years but were still well below the national average. In comparison with schools with a similar intake, results were much more favourable, being above average in reading and average in mathematics. In writing, however, results remained stubbornly well below average.

Very few pupils reach the higher level in the tests and this adversely affects overall results.

3. The school's rate of improvement has been above the national trend. This shows that it is improving at a faster rate than most other schools. The well above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and the high number of pupils who join the school between Years 2 and 6 tend to skew results in these very small year groups. However, as a result of the school's recent focus on English and the improved use of performance data to track the progress of the pupils, standards in Year 6 are better this year than in 2004. The performance of boys has improved and this has had an impact on overall standards. Nevertheless, the low standards in speaking and writing continue to give the school cause for concern. Staff strive to compensate for pupils' linguistic limitations because these low standards hinder progress in all subjects throughout their school life and are a major barrier to learning. Pupils do not always make the best possible progress in the development of their speaking, however, because teachers are not equally effective at providing challenging and varied opportunities for pupils to contribute. Discussions are often dominated by the teachers, for example, and questioning is sometimes too narrow to enable pupils to give extended responses.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average points scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	22.5 (25.0)	26.9 (26.8)
Mathematics	24.5 (27.5)	27.0 (26.8)
Science	27.0 (29.0)	28.6 (28.6)

*There were 13 pupils in the year group, 11 boys and 2 girls. Figures in brackets are for the previous year
Standards in Y2 are not reported because only 10 pupils took the tests.*

4. The majority of children starting the nursery do so with attainments that are very low, so very few reach the goals expected for their age in all the areas of learning. Most have a very limited vocabulary and underdeveloped speech for their age; few speak in complete sentences and a small minority is reluctant to speak at all. Furthermore, the social skills of a substantial number of the children are underdeveloped, as most are unused to socialising with other children, while others have yet to learn how to behave in an acceptable manner. The majority have little knowledge of the world around them. The well-planned curriculum in the Foundation Stage, the good teaching and the positive ethos for learning enable the children to settle into school routines and learn how to conform to the teachers' expectations, and they achieve well.
5. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because of the very good support they receive from class teachers and classroom assistants, which helps them to close the gap with their peers. Although the majority of these pupils attain standards that are well below average, they generally achieve very well against the targets set for them. This is shown in an analysis of national test results for pupils with special educational needs for the period 2002-04. Almost one-third of the pupils reached average standards in the tests and two-thirds achieved very well when their test results in Year 6 were compared with their attainments in Year 2.
6. There are several reasons why pupils achieve so well. The school provides a well-planned, rich and varied curriculum that motivates pupils to learn. The quality of teaching is consistently good in every year group. In Year 6 teaching is very good and

this helps to boost the school's performance in national tests. The system of grouping of pupils of similar levels of attainment works well in ensuring that tasks are well matched to pupils' needs and enables an increased number of pupils to work at the higher levels. Staff make very good use of assessments and performance data to track the progress of pupils and to highlight pupils needing additional help, particularly those pupils who join the school at different times. The headteacher ensures that the achievement of all groups of pupils is monitored stringently. The very positive school ethos and the good level of care provided and the productive links with parents all contribute very positively to pupils' achievement.

7. Standards in ICT have improved dramatically since the last inspection, when ICT was a key issue. The subject is now a strength, and standards are in line with national expectations, representing very good achievement. This is because the facilities are much better and teachers are more confident in using the equipment. However pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop and use their skills across the curriculum and this is an area for further development. Pupils reach standards that are typical for their age in music and they achieve very well in the subject as a result of the consistently good specialist teaching. In religious education too, pupils achieve very well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is satisfactory and it has improved significantly over the current school year. Punctuality is unsatisfactory. Behaviour and attitudes are good, as is the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are good and help them to achieve well.
- A significant number of pupils find difficulty in getting to school on time regularly, but this is getting better.
- Arrangements for sex and relationships education and drugs awareness meet statutory requirements but could be better.
- The very good, well-supervised activities provided at lunchtime have a major impact on behaviour.
- Assemblies make a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils, though there is scope to provide more multicultural education.

Commentary

8. The school has a very positive ethos where pupils are nurtured by the very good level of support and care, the very good leadership and strong links with parents. All these factors contribute to the very good achievement. Pupils show good attitudes to learning in most lessons and they behave well. This is because the teachers maintain high levels of interest and set suitable tasks that ensure that pupils of all levels of attainment are fully involved. Despite the fact that most join the nursery with very limited social skills, the majority of pupils make good progress in learning the expectations of the school and gradually develop good attitudes to learning over time.
9. Behaviour is good because pupils are fully aware of the very high standards expected by all staff. The caring ethos of the school results in pupils knowing right from wrong

and showing consideration for others. Both parents and pupils confirm that bullying does not occur. Bullying is not tolerated and any hint of anti-social behaviour, both in, and often out of the school, is dealt with swiftly and very efficiently. There have been no exclusions since 1998 because any examples of unacceptable behaviour are handled sensitively but firmly by the headteacher, in conjunction with parents when appropriate. The school works very hard to support pupils who are at risk of further sanctions. The very good relationships that exist in the school mean that pupils are keen to come.

- Attendance has improved dramatically during the current school year and is now approaching the national average, whereas attendance in the previous school year (2003-04) was lower than in other schools. Improvements have been made through the introduction of a number of new systems, for example, there is a clear focus on rewarding good attendance with certificates and prize vouchers. A breakfast club has been established to encourage pupils to get to school in good time and there is close liaison with the education welfare service. Parents have also played a key role in supporting the school's efforts to promote attendance and punctuality.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.9	School data	0.0
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

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

- A combination of external factors adversely affects the school's attendance record. New families, who are not yet familiar with the school's expectations for punctuality and attendance, are constantly coming into the area. They often take time to adjust to the culture of good attendance and punctuality expected by the school. Attendance rates have improved partly because a significant number of pupils who were not previously regular attenders are now making the effort to come to school, even when they know they are late. However, this means that punctuality is now an issue. The school has recognised this as its next target for improvement and is working on ways to improve punctuality and sustain the improvements in attendance.
- A key success that has helped to improve behaviour has been the enhanced lunchtime supervision, which has had a positive impact on pupils' personal development and on the ethos of the school. A member of the support staff has a central role in managing the lunchtime 'buddy' scheme and introducing a range of traditional games into the playground to extend lunchtime activities and give additional responsibility to pupils. Teachers and support staff consistently apply the school's code of conduct and scheme for rewards and sanctions. A group of pupils who have been identified as needing more sustained support meet regularly with a member of the support staff to discuss their behaviour and any surrounding issues. As a result, moral and social values of the pupils get better as they grow older. Older pupils in the school have a good understanding of what is right and wrong and are key members of the school community, taking on roles such as lunchtime 'buddies', befriending other children.
- The school provides good opportunities for the personal development of pupils. The exception to this is the limited provision for sex and relationships education and drugs education, which meets statutory requirements but is not dealt with as thoroughly as other aspects of the curriculum. Pupils enjoy the well-planned assemblies. They listen

well and absorb and reflect on themes such as thoughtfulness to others with great respect and sincerity. Hymn singing plays a significant role in raising their spiritual response as, without exception, pupils sing tunefully and with enthusiasm and individuals especially relish a solo role in front of the school. Through religious education they are taught the key principles of other major world faiths, and displays around the school reflect the influence of famous artists in mirroring aspects of the world around them. Because of the lack of any local church or spiritual centre in the community, the school welcomes visits from a priest and ministers from outside the area to support pupils' spiritual development. Visits to a local 'Peace Centre' open up alternative ways for pupils to experience spiritual growth. However, pupils would benefit from more opportunities to learn about other cultures and faiths to counterbalance the predominantly white culture of the local community and prepare them for life in a multicultural society.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education which helps pupils to achieve very well, especially those with special educational needs. Teaching and learning are good in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 to 5 and very good in Year 6. The curriculum is good, with due emphasis on the important subjects of English and mathematics, balanced by plenty of additional activities that help to enrich the National Curriculum. The school takes very good care of the pupils. Links with parents and the local community are very good.

Teaching and learning

The teaching is good overall and contributes significantly to the achievement of the pupils. The teaching in Year 6 is very good and helps to explain why progress accelerates in this year group. Teaching and learning are good in all subjects where sufficient lessons were seen for judgements to be made. Assessment of pupils' work is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are experienced, and skilled in teaching basic skills.
- Teachers employ effective methods and strategies that match the limited concentration spans of many pupils and ensure that individual needs are catered for.
- ICT is used well to help pupils to focus on teachers' explanations within ICT lessons, but it is not used to best advantage across the curriculum
- Assessment is thorough and constructive and used very well to aid planning.
- The headteacher influences the quality of teaching by monitoring teaching and learning and making very good use of data to track pupils' progress.
- Teachers do not always incorporate speaking and listening effectively into lessons.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 30 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	7 (23%)	18 (60%)	4 (13%)	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.

14. The quality of teaching has strengthened since the last inspection because the proportion of very good teaching has increased. Teaching and learning are generally good throughout the school and there is a sprinkling of very good teaching in all classes. In Year 6 the teaching is consistently very good because of the very high expectations of response from pupils, the level of challenge in questioning and the very good emphasis placed on promoting vocabulary, all of which enable pupils to achieve very well in lessons. Throughout the school, pupils learn well because of the calm working atmosphere that prevails, the warm and encouraging relationships and the high expectations of teachers. Classroom assistants are deployed well and generally make a good contribution to the quality of teaching, particularly in working with pupils with special educational needs. Parents are unanimous in their view that the teaching in the school is good.
15. A key strength of the teaching is the consistent way in which all staff apply school systems and procedures. A good example of this is the way in which the presentation of pupils' work has improved significantly in all classes since the last inspection, when it was a weakness. There are several common threads in teaching throughout the school. Introductions to lessons are usually confident and clear, reflecting the teachers' good subject knowledge and their understanding of the needs of each individual pupil. This is particularly the case in the core subjects of English and mathematics, in which most teachers have considerable experience and expertise. Teaching in these lessons often features the effective use of computer-linked interactive whiteboards, which engage and sustain the attention of the pupils.
16. The teachers are skilled at teaching literacy and numeracy to best effect and this helps to explain why pupils achieve so well. Lessons are productive because teachers are very well planned and organised, with very clear expectations of what they want the pupils to learn. Consequently pupils are well motivated and keen to please their teachers. Time is used efficiently in the vast majority of lessons, which are well paced to take account of the limited concentration spans of many of the pupils. On the one occasion when teaching was unsatisfactory, the pace of the lesson became too slow and pupils lost interest in their learning, with the result that their behaviour and concentration deteriorated and they learned little. Throughout the school there is not enough emphasis on the use of ICT across the curriculum. Although pupils are provided with good experiences to increase their knowledge and skills in using computers in lessons taken in the computer suite, computers are used much less regularly, consistently or effectively back in the classrooms to allow pupils opportunities to hone their skills further in other subjects.
17. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because the provision for them is very good. Classroom assistants work very closely with class teachers and are directly involved in monitoring pupils' progress against targets on their individual educational plans. They are well briefed about their roles within lessons and report on outcomes and pupils' achievement daily, usually in discussion with class teachers. In addition, each keeps a diary to note the level of success of the pupils during the day.
18. The influence of the headteacher has impacted very well on the quality of teaching. There are clear systems for marking, assessment and planning, all of which are helping to promote the achievement of pupils. The rigorous monitoring of teaching and performance management is also contributing well to the quality of teaching. Performance data is used scrupulously to analyse what needs to be done to help each pupil achieve his or her best. The school monitors closely each pupil's progress through the levels of the National Curriculum to ensure that additional help is provided

where it is needed. The arrangements for grouping pupils according to ability are working well in raising standards because teaching is targeted very precisely to the needs of each individual pupil within each ability group. Classroom assistants benefit greatly from the training they receive, which enables them, for example, to work with pupils on computers. Additionally, they attend useful courses on such matters as behavioural management and disorders such as Asperger's Syndrome and also visit other schools to observe work with pupils. All these opportunities enhance their expertise and the contribution they make to teaching.

19. The school has comprehensive and effective systems for assessing the achievements of the pupils. Teachers make very good use of their thorough procedures to track progress and to plan tasks to the needs of the pupils. This is a real strength of the teaching in all classes. Pupils have their own personal targets to work towards which give them a good understanding of what they need to do to improve, particularly in English and mathematics. The quality of marking is variable between subjects. It is especially good in English because it is evaluative and helpful to pupils; it is more cursory in other subjects and does not always make clear what pupils need to do to improve their work.
20. All staff are mindful of the need to extend the speaking and listening of the pupils. This is because the limited linguistic skills of many pupils often impede their ability to write fluently. Most lessons include appropriate opportunities for discussion and talk but the quality and impact of these sessions is too variable. In the best lessons in Year 6, questioning is open-ended and challenging, providing plenty of opportunities for pupils to give extended responses. Supplementary questions help to tease out further explanations and clarify the pupils' ideas. In less successful lessons questions are often too limiting, often requiring little more than one-word answers, and teachers sometimes tend to dominate the discussions. Opportunities to develop pupils' vocabulary are missed when planning fails to identify key words to be reinforced. In some lessons, pupils who remain passive are not encouraged by the teacher to contribute and so they make little headway in improving their speech.
21. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is consistently good because the teachers are experienced with very young children and familiar with their needs. In both classes there is a good emphasis on the development of independence and the promotion of speaking and children steadily gain confidence in the calm and well-ordered surroundings. Activities are well planned for each area of learning. Procedures for assessment are very good and help to determine at an early stage which children need additional help.

The curriculum

The school provides a good curriculum that is relevant to the needs of the pupils. It provides very good opportunities to widen the experiences of pupils through extra-curricular activities, visits and a variety of visitors to the school. The good accommodation and resources support learning well. Facilities are very good in the newly-built accommodation for the Foundation Stage.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is balanced and interesting so that pupils want to learn.
- Curricular plans are thorough and support teachers well in preparing lessons.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- There are not enough opportunities for speaking and listening.
- Provision for ICT is good overall but there are too few opportunities for pupils to use computer skills in other subjects.
- Provision for personal development is good overall
- The improved accommodation promotes learning very well.

Commentary

22. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is thoughtfully planned to provide a good range of activities that are appropriate to the needs of the pupils. There is good provision for children in the Foundation Stage, which gets them off to a secure start in their education. The provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection, when it was a key issue, and it is now a strength. All pupils enjoy several sessions per week in the well-equipped computer suite, where they learn new skills and where teachers use technology to illustrate lessons in literacy and numeracy. Opportunities for pupils to hone their ICT skills back in the classrooms, using computers to aid their learning in other subjects, are much less frequent and this is an area to be developed further so that pupils learn to use their skills in real contexts. The timetable is thoughtfully arranged so that subjects are taught by the subject co-ordinators and pupils benefit from their enthusiasm and expertise. The music curriculum is interesting and varied because of the specialist teaching.
23. The National Curriculum is implemented fully and strategies for literacy and numeracy are well established. There is, rightly, a strong focus on the core subjects of English and mathematics, balanced by a practical approach to all the other subjects. The arrangement of grouping pupils according to ability for lessons in mathematics and English is working well and has contributed to the increasing number of pupils now reaching the higher levels. A weakness in the planning is the inconsistency in provision for speaking and listening, which varies considerably from class to class. A number of lessons lack opportunities for pupils to participate orally, through discussion, role-play or in pairs or groups. This aspect of the curriculum has been a recent focus for development and staff are aware that more work is still needed to strengthen the teaching further.
24. Pupils' personal development is good overall, promoted, for example, through 'circle time', when pupils sit in a ring to share their thoughts and ideas. There are many good opportunities for pupils to develop independence and the curriculum is well geared to fostering the self-esteem and confidence of pupils, which are often very low when they start school. The programme for personal and social education is well embedded in the curriculum. The arrangements for sex and relationship education and drugs awareness are satisfactory but are the weakest aspect of the provision and as such do little to equip pupils for the next stage of their education or to help them deal with issues they may encounter outside of school. Furthermore, the arrangement for girls, but not boys, to attend a talk on puberty compromises the school's commitment to equality of opportunity, an aspect of the school's provision that is otherwise very good.

25. For a small school, a very good range of additional activities is provided that offer pupils the chance to develop interests and skills outside the school day. These include music, sport, dance and computers. The good range of visits and visitors to the school enhances the curriculum and extends pupils' learning in a variety of ways. Members of the community share their expertise with pupils; for example, the nurse who runs the baby clinic gave a talk to pupils about her work. Pupils also participate very keenly in school performances and enjoy seeing repeat performances of themselves on the school video during wet lunchtimes almost as much as the actual performance.
26. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils have clear targets set for them that provide a clear focus for learning. Both class teachers and the classroom assistants know the targets and plan for them accordingly and review them regularly. Classroom assistants have a wide range of skills and expertise as a result of frequent training opportunities. Their time is well deployed throughout the school and they have a good impact on pupils' learning.
27. Since the last inspection, the accommodation has been greatly improved, with a new building for children in the Foundation Stage that is bright and stimulating. A new ICT suite has improved resources dramatically and has had a very significant impact on the improvement in pupils' competence in this subject. The school is generously staffed, which results in small classes that contribute to the very good achievement of the pupils because each pupil receives plenty of individual attention. The environment of the school is clean and welcoming, offering a secure and uplifting background for pupils' learning. Pupils take great pride in the building and are keen to show improvements they have influenced, for example in the decoration of the girls' and boys' toilets.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes very good care of the pupils. A very good level of support and advice is given to pupils based on teachers' very good knowledge of them. The school makes good efforts to find out what pupils think about a variety of issues.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The care of pupils is central to the ethos of the school and staff have a very detailed knowledge of each pupil's background.
- The school works hard to provide a good range of healthy food for pupils at lunch and break time.
- Staff are conscientious in seeking pupils' opinions on their academic work and the work of the school.

Commentary

28. The school takes very good care of its pupils and provides a safe, happy environment that is conducive to learning. Close attention is paid to health and safety issues, sometimes using the expertise of the governors in this field. Healthy living and safety are generally very well promoted; for example, pupils are encouraged to eat healthy food through the school's involvement in the Healthy Schools programme and the provision of nourishing and healthy food for lunches and breaktimes. First-aid provision is very good due to the considerable expertise amongst the staff. Arrangements for

looking after pupils who are unwell are good. Child protection procedures are good and there is very good liaison with outside agencies.

29. Teachers and support staff know the pupils and their families very well, are sensitive to their needs and are thus able to provide very good support and guidance. The very good relationships that exist between pupils and staff encourage pupils to raise any concerns they may have, knowing that they will be dealt with sympathetically. The very good assessment procedures ensure that teachers track the progress and personal development of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, very well, and this contributes significantly to the very good achievement because no pupil is allowed to slip through the net.
30. Induction arrangements when children first start nursery are very good and ensure that children settle happily into school life. These include some home visits and opportunities for new children and their parents to visit the school on a number of occasions. Similarly, pupils are well prepared for transfer to the secondary school, with the exception of some aspects of their personal development.
31. The school has recently started to seek pupils' views and involve them more in aspects of decision making, though the school recognises that there is room for further development. To this end, elected pupils are beginning to understand their role of house captains, representing the opinions of their classmates. Pupils clearly take the responsibilities very seriously and are currently exploring the development of a quiet area in the playground.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very good links with parents, the local community and other schools. The school is well respected in the local community and has the confidence of parents.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents trust and value the school and respect the help it gives them to support their children's learning.
- The parents are very well informed about the school and their child's progress.
- The school makes the very best of the links it has to a community with few facilities.
- The drawbacks of the school's physical isolation have been partly overcome by very good links with other schools.

Commentary

32. Parents are very satisfied with the school. The vast majority have very positive views of the school and appreciate the open access they have to talk to members of staff, especially the headteacher, when they have concerns or worries. The parents' meeting before the inspection was overwhelmingly positive and parents said they were confident that any concerns they raised with the school were dealt with quickly and effectively. As a result, the very good links begun in the nursery set the tone for the very good relationships seen with parents throughout the school.

33. Information to parents is varied and regular. Parents receive a wealth of information about school events and their child's progress through such methods as termly consultation evenings, a large parents' notice board, informal conversations, letters and annual written reports. As a result, they feel happy that the school values their opinion and seeks to inform and involve them, for example by discussing targets for their children to improve areas of their work.
34. Links with the community remain a great strength of the school. The school is at the heart of the local area as a meeting point and focus for events. There are very few amenities in the locality but the school makes maximum use of the facilities that do exist, such as the 'Peace Centre', the health practice and shops. Likewise, the community is very supportive of the school; for example, the owner of a nearby shop enabled a pen-pal link to Australia when he visited friends there.
35. Very imaginative use is made of links to other schools, most significantly through the opportunities that staff have to observe practice in other schools. As a result of this, staff have brought many new ideas to the school and also opened up opportunities for pupils. For example, a link with a school in Darlington has enabled pupils to experience life in a school in a totally different community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is very well supported in this by staff. Governors are very involved in the life of the school and afford very good support and challenge for the headteacher.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is fully committed to continuing improvement and holds an excellent vision for the future of the school that is shared by all.
- High priority is given to the professional development of all staff and the creation of highly effective teams.
- The school evaluates its performance very well.
- The governing body has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and works in a very constructive manner to promote school improvement.
- The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good.
- Finances are very well managed and resources are deployed for the benefit of all pupils.

Commentary

36. The headteacher provides very good leadership. Her constant and reassuring presence around the school helps to create a very good ethos. She is caring and perceptive and demonstrates a very strong commitment to raising standards in all areas of the school's work. Her clear vision and sense of purpose are driving the school forward and she has been a key element in the marked improvements since the last inspection. Her collegiate approach to managing the curriculum enables all staff to be involved in planning, decision making and setting the agenda for subject development. She values all staff and pupils, ensuring they are fully included in all aspects of school life. Pupils feel secure in the knowledge that the headteacher is aware of what they achieve and values their efforts.

37. The school is very well managed. Professional development is given high priority and offered to all adults in the school, as the headteacher recognises that her colleagues are her most valuable resource. Since the last inspection, effective teams have been created to develop the curriculum and to monitor subjects. The work of the teams is very well orchestrated by the headteacher. As a result, all teachers develop their management skills, and feel valued and part of the team. Newly-qualified teachers are very well supported from all quarters of the school. This carefully managed development of staff has resulted in a strong unity of purpose centred on maximising learning opportunities for all pupils.
38. The school evaluates its work very well. Very good systems are in place to identify areas for improvement, to decide on the action to be taken and then to monitor and evaluate its success. The effectiveness of these systems is demonstrated by the fact that the school was already aware of all the key issues identified by the inspection team. The school's improvement plan is a highly effective working document resulting from wide-ranging discussion and consultation. The headteacher's clear grasp of long-term targets has resulted in the very good improvement in the school's effectiveness since the last inspection.
39. The very successful partnership that exists between governors and the school underpins the progress made since the previous inspection. Governors work enthusiastically and constructively to support the headteacher, staff and, primarily, the pupils. They are frequently in school, giving freely of their time and talents. They possess a wide range of experience and expertise and their commitment to the school motivates them to ensure that they are well informed about educational issues and practice. They attend courses and work directly with local education authority advisors in order to improve the effectiveness of the contribution they make. They play a full part in establishing school improvement plans and planning budgets and act as sympathetic, critical friends to the school. They have a good grasp of best value principles based on extensive experience in commercial and local government spheres.
40. The headteacher is the co-ordinator for pupils with special educational needs. She has established very good systems to ensure the needs of all pupils are identified early and that all pupils are well supported and monitored. She works very hard to maximise parental support in this area, enjoys very good relationships with numerous outside agencies and monitors the internal support for pupils. She is very appreciative of the efforts and involvement of class teachers and classroom assistants with whom she meets regularly, to set individual education plans, monitor their progress and help pupils to achieve their well-constructed targets. Pupils achieve very well as a result of very good support and co-ordination.
41. The school's budget is very well and prudently used to maximise the benefits to pupils. Generous staffing ensures small classes and specialist help in areas such as music. In addition, generally good resources support learning. Finance is well used in relation to the school's development plan and curriculum projects. Governors play a strong part in budget setting and monitor its progress throughout the year. An efficient school secretary ensures that the headteacher is kept well informed of the budgetary position and generates regular budgetary statements for governors. Additional welcome support is provided by the local education authority's bursar. A recent audit identified only three minor issues for the school to address. These have all been resolved. The proportion of the budget that is carried forward to the next year is appropriately

allocated to retain current staffing levels and to continue with existing project development. Only about £10,000 is not ear-marked for specific purposes.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	437 480
Total expenditure	428 820
Expenditure per pupil	4 084

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	38 726
Balance carried forward to the next	47 386

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

42. Children get off to a good start with their education because the provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Nursery children attend half days only and children of reception age are taught in a mixed class with Year 1 pupils. The vast majority of children start nursery with very low attainments, particularly in speaking, that adversely affect their learning throughout their years in the school. By the end of the reception year the attainments of the children are still well below average and very few are likely to reach the expected goals for their age in the areas of learning. Nevertheless, children do make good progress from the very low baseline because of the good teaching, regular routines and the calm, well-ordered learning environment.
43. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed, with a good level of teamwork between teachers and support staff. The provision has improved well since the last inspection as a result of the new building and new equipment that now provide a vibrant and well-organised learning environment. There are effective systems in place for planning the curriculum and assessing the progress of the children, with a clear emphasis on the development of language and social skills. The careful planning ensures that the learning in the reception class builds on that in the nursery.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Classrooms are well organised to promote confidence and independence.
- Teachers have high expectations of behaviour.
- Despite their limited skills when they first start school, most children achieve well.
- Children settle well into the nursery because of very good induction arrangements.

Commentary

44. Despite their limited skills and experience when children start nursery, most make good progress and achieve well, though very few are likely to reach the goals in this area of learning by the end of the reception year. Both classrooms are carefully organised to promote independence. For example, resources are easily accessible to children and children are encouraged to develop the confidence to make choices about the activities they pursue. Opportunities for social development are woven into all tasks so that children learn to take turns, share and grow in confidence. A number of children are very immature for their age and need much encouragement to participate in activities and to play with others. Most have underdeveloped social skills and some lack confidence in interacting with other children and adults. Some of the more boisterous children have little understanding of acceptable behaviour but respond well to the gentle guidance they receive from staff to teach them to follow the rules of the school. Teachers are mindful of the short concentration spans of most of the children and plan to take account of this.

45. In both classes children develop their personal and social skills well because the teaching is good. Teachers create a calm atmosphere, establish routines and set clear boundaries for behaviour, to which they patiently help children to conform. There is an appropriate emphasis on the development and reinforcement of good manners, so for example, children are expected to say 'please' and 'thank you' when receiving their drinks or apples. Children learn to listen to the teacher, though quite a few need frequent reminders to refrain from calling out. By contrast, a number make very little contribution because they have not yet developed the confidence or linguistic skills to join in. The best teaching draws these children into the discussion and sensitively prompts them to contribute, though sometimes this does not happen and reticent children are allowed to sit passively throughout class discussions. The school's systems for inducting new children are very good, helping children to settle quickly and forging early links with their parents. Children in the reception class benefit from the presence of the older Year 1 pupils, who provide a lead for the younger children to follow.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is well planned so that children get off to a brisk start with their reading and writing.
- Speaking and listening are promoted well, though more emphasis could be given to promoting key vocabulary.
- Role-play is used well to promote speaking and listening.
- There are very good arrangements to involve parents.

Commentary

46. Very few children are likely to reach the expected goals for their age by the end of the reception class, even though they achieve well in relation to their very low starting point. Children make good progress because the teaching is good. Throughout the Foundation Stage, staff are mindful of the importance of promoting language at every opportunity and curricular planning ensures that children experience plenty of opportunities to develop their writing skills each day, for example, as they learn to form letter shapes and recognise the initial sounds of words. Classroom displays are rich in language, with an appropriate emphasis on broadening the narrow vocabularies of many of the children. The 'SPLATT', 'Chatter Matter' and 'Listen Here' bags, which provide attractive activities for children to share at home with their parents, are an innovative and valuable means of involving parents with their child's education and contribute well to the provision for language development.
47. Emphasis is placed on speaking and listening right from the start and this contributes to the good progress made by the children. A high proportion of the children have very poor speech with a very narrow vocabulary, some have inaudible articulation and few speak in complete sentences so they find great difficulty in expressing themselves. Several children respond to questions in monosyllables, sometimes lapsing into colloquial terms such as saying 'nowt' instead of 'nothing'. Teachers are good at

engaging children in discussions that help to build confidence. For example, children in the nursery talked informally about their experiences on public transport. However, occasionally opportunities to promote language fully are lost because teachers tend to dominate discussions and planning does not always identify the key words that are to be promoted in each lesson. Consequently, opportunities are missed for staff in each class to reinforce the same words through repetition and by encouraging children to use them in context when they are playing or doing activities.

48. Role-play is used well to promote imaginative play. Role-play areas provide plenty of scope for imaginative play in settings linked to class topics, such as a bus as part of the topic on transport. The practice whereby staff model the roles and vocabulary prior to children playing in these areas helps to give children the confidence to use the settings productively for their play.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Tasks are purposeful and well matched to fit the needs of the children.
- ICT is used very well to promote mathematical understanding.
- There are plenty of attractive resources that promote learning well.
- There is a good emphasis on mathematical language.

Commentary

49. Children achieve well and make good progress because of the good teaching though very few are likely to meet the expected goals for their age. Teachers have a good knowledge of the capabilities of the children and the progress they have made because of the effective systems for assessment that are in place. Consequently they match tasks well to the needs of each child. This works especially well in the reception class, where there are two age groups covering two separate curricula. Worthwhile practical activities are provided in both classes for children to count, understand the values of numbers, and to become familiar with the properties of shapes. The teaching is enhanced well by the use of ICT. Direct teaching with the interactive whiteboard is particularly effective because the visual stimulus holds the attention of the children and suits their short concentration spans so they learn well. Children have good opportunities to develop their recognition of number and gain confidence in counting by using well-chosen computer programs to 'click and drag' pictures, for example to place four sausages in a pan.
50. The school has plenty of attractive and colourful resources that are used well to promote learning. For example, in a very good lesson on shape, children in the reception class worked on a range of apt tasks using play dough, wooden blocks, shape games, dry sand and plastic two- and three-dimensional shapes. Mathematical vocabulary is promoted well at every opportunity. In the same lesson on shape children of reception age learned to use the correct terms to describe shapes such as spheres, triangles and rectangles and to recognise them by distinctive properties such as the number of sides. Class displays are helpful in reinforcing mathematical language. In

the nursery, for example, a display of Russian dolls of increasing in size illustrates words such as 'smaller' and 'bigger'.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

51. No teaching was seen in this area so it was not possible to make an overall judgement of provision. However classroom displays and curriculum planning show that children are introduced to a good range of topics and activities that help to compensate for their lack of experiences outside of school and their very limited knowledge of the world around them. Well-planned activities in topics such as transport, toys and 'people who help us' effectively lay down foundations for learning in later years in subjects such as geography, history and science. There is a good emphasis on first-hand experience. Children learned about the work of the fire service through a visit from fire-fighters and learned about living things when they planted broad beans and watched them grow. Children in the reception class began to understand the purpose of maps when they created a model of a village illustrating 'Harry's Home'.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because of the well-planned activities.
- The outdoor provision promotes learning well.

Commentary

52. Children achieve well because of the good teaching that provides scope for development in a range of suitable tasks and challenges. Children steadily develop dexterity and co-ordination by squeezing and rolling dough and by handling small objects such as pieces of jigsaws. Their manipulative skills for handling pencils and paintbrushes are developing slowly and they have good opportunities to cut materials and to join them in different ways, for example to make a simple puppet with moving parts. Children in the reception class benefit from a physical education lesson in the hall each week, where they learn to use their bodies in a larger and more controlled setting.
53. There are good opportunities for outdoor play in the spacious and safe outdoor play area. It is well equipped with plenty of wheeled vehicles for children to develop their balance and co-ordination. Role-play is appropriately included as an activity, for example, as children act out the tasks of police officers. The best teaching takes place when there is guidance by staff to give the play a clear focus, as when the teacher encouraged a boy in the role of policemen to stop a 'speeding driver' and note down particulars. In this way, teachers promote key vocabulary, encourage participation and help to widen the children's limited understanding of the world. By contrast, when play lacks guidance children do not always make the most productive use of their time.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

54. It was not possible to make a judgement about teaching in this area of learning because no direct teaching was seen. However, the school's data indicates that it is likely that only a minority of children will meet the goals expected for their age at the end of the reception year. Teachers' plans and samples of work indicate that good provision is made to introduce children to all strands of the curriculum and to widen their experiences with a range of materials and techniques. Children in the reception class created bold, colourful portraits of themselves with paints and made very well observed pastel drawings of teddy bears. The best examples show a developing sense of proportion and detail, with facial features placed quite accurately.
55. Most of the children start in the nursery with no experience of handling paint. Their work shows an increasing confidence in applying colour, although the quality of work by the majority is immature and most children need plenty of adult help. Children widen their understanding of the uses of technology when they use a simple computer program to create effective rainbow pictures. There are good opportunities for children to experiment with the sounds made by instruments, as when children in the nursery accompanied their singing with a good range of percussion instruments. Although they are learning the correct way to play instruments, very few have a sense of rhythm.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well over time.
- Reading is promoted well.
- Teaching is consistently good but does not always do enough to improve speaking skills.
- There is very good provision for the individual needs of the pupils.
- The subject is very well led and the progress of pupils is carefully monitored.

Commentary

56. For the past three years prior to 2004, results at the end of Year 6 were well below the national average; in 2004 they were in the lowest five per cent in the country. When compared to schools with a similar intake, results have been generally higher - well above average in 2003 and below average in 2004. Standards vary each year due to the small groups of pupils and the very high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Current standards are below average but higher than at the time of the last inspection. The Year 6 group is well on course to perform better than in previous years in forthcoming tests because more pupils are predicted to reach the higher level.

57. Pupils achieve very well in relation to their very low attainments when they first start school. One of the reasons why results in national tests have been so low in the past is that very few pupils have reached the higher levels. However, several pupils in the current Year 6 group are expected to reach Level 5 and this, together with an increased proportion of pupils expected to reach the appropriate level for their age, is likely to impact favourably on overall results.
58. By Year 2, standards in reading and writing remain well below average as pupils have a lot of ground to make up to catch up with children of the same age in other schools. Results in 2004 were better than in previous years, especially in reading, though still well below average. As a result of a whole school focus, results in reading rose to well above the average for similar schools, though they remained stubbornly well below average in writing, because many pupils struggle to write with fluency or accuracy without considerable support.
59. Standards in speaking and listening are generally well below average, especially amongst the younger pupils. Limitations in speaking impede pupils' progress in writing because most pupils lack the wider vocabulary and experiences that will help with their writing in all subjects. There has been a recent focus in improving opportunities for speaking but there is work still to be done because teachers are not all equally good at weaving opportunities for speech into their lessons and promoting a wider vocabulary in all subjects. Class discussions are often too dominated by teachers, with limited opportunities for pupils to contribute, and questioning is often too narrow, with little scope for pupils to give extended responses.
60. Reading is given a high priority, so that pupils in Years 3 to 6 build on the skills learned in Years 1 and 2. Pupils regularly read aloud to adults in school, recognising that some pupils come from backgrounds where there is little reading for pleasure. Most pupils read with relative accuracy and have increasingly secure strategies to help them decipher unknown words, but very few read with expression or intonation. The school has introduced innovative systems to encourage more parents to support their children with reading, for example by providing bags of materials to share at home. These are proving to be highly successful in encouraging more parental involvement. The provision for reading is widened by the fortnightly visit of the library van, which offers additional books to supplement the school's stock and tempt more pupils to read. Despite the school's efforts to promote a love of books there remains a core of pupils who are reluctant to read for pleasure.
61. Teaching and learning are good in all classes. There is a very good emphasis on developing basic skills of spelling and grammar and teachers are confident in using interactive whiteboards to highlight text to hold the attention of the pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the extra help they receive. Classroom assistants work closely with the teachers and fully understand what is expected of them and they make an important contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well and as a result pupils settle to work readily in a calm working atmosphere. All classrooms feature attractive displays of aides-memoires to prompt pupils and help them to write fluently and correctly, though there is limited use of dictionaries to give a greater level of accuracy and independence. Pupils' work is neatly presented throughout the school, representing an improvement since the last inspection.
62. A strength of the teaching is the very careful match between tasks and the learning needs of the pupils. Lessons are carefully planned to suit the short concentration

spans of many of the pupils and tasks are modified to provide support for pupils who struggle with reading and writing. The grouping of pupils by ability for literacy lessons is beneficial because pupils are taught in small groups with plenty of individual attention and work is pitched at just the right level so they make the best possible progress. Teachers use assessment well to check progress and to plan suitable tasks and this is another factor leading to very good achievement. Assessments are also used well to set appropriate targets for pupils to achieve and this helps pupils to know what they must do to improve. Teachers' marking is generally helpful in indicating to pupils how to improve.

63. Leadership and management are very good and so provision in the subject has improved since the last inspection, particularly for reading. The presentation of pupils' work has improved and there are better systems for assessment. The subject is managed by a team of teachers who keep a good overview of strengths and weakness in the subject because there are good systems in place for monitoring. The systematic tracking of pupils' progress, observation of teaching and learning by the headteacher and the scrutiny of work samples all contribute to this and, importantly, action is taken when it is needed.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

64. The school provides a satisfactory range of opportunities for pupils to practise their reading and writing skills in other subjects such as science, geography and history, as when pupils wrote letters of thanks to their guide following a visit to Portrack Meadows in their geography lessons. Teachers frequently use questioning to promote speaking, by encouraging pupils to discuss their ideas and, in the best lessons, to extend their answers. Overall, however, the limitations of literacy skills impede progress in other subjects because many pupils still find difficulty in articulating their thoughts clearly in speech or in writing. Staff try hard to motivate pupils who find difficulty with writing by devising imaginative ways for the recording of work in other subjects.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupil achieve very well given the very low levels of attainment with which they enter the school.
- Good quality teaching in small groups is raising levels of attainment.
- Pupils are set individual targets but the quality of marking does not help pupils to achieve them.
- Highly effective subject leadership and management are contributing well to raising standards.

Commentary

65. As at the time of the last inspection, current standards are below average. They were well below average in 2004, partly because very few pupils reached the higher level. When compared with results of schools with a similar intake, results in High Clarence in 2004 were above average. Pupils in the current Year 6 are predicted by the school to perform better in 2005 because more pupils are expected to reach Level 5, which will affect the overall results. At the end of 2004, the results of pupils in Year 2 were

average compared with those of pupils in similar schools. The improvement in the performance of boys contributed significantly to this result. Given the extremely low levels of mathematical knowledge with which pupils enter the school, the high levels of pupil mobility and well above average number of pupils with special educational needs, these results indicate very good levels of achievement.

66. Good quality teaching in small sets is raising levels of attainment throughout the school and especially in Year 6. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good. They produce thorough lesson plans and give pupils a clear understanding of the purpose of lessons. They give precise instructions, so pupils clearly understand what is expected of them. Teachers' expectations are high and they use praise well to encourage pupils to meet them. They know their pupils well and this allows them to target questions effectively so that pupils can achieve success at their own levels. Pupils attaining at the lower levels are given caring support to enable them to learn well. Higher-attaining pupils are challenged appropriately and subject-specific vocabulary is rehearsed until it has become familiar in some lessons. In others, there is insufficient focus on the planned key words in the lesson for pupils to know and understand them. Pupils are very well motivated and work hard, maintaining concentration well; their books reflect the pride they take in their work.
67. The provision for mathematics has improved well since the last inspection because all teachers are now involved in the leadership and management of the subject. This collegiate approach is proving highly effective in improving the quality of provision, especially as the grouping arrangements mix together pupils from different year groups in relation to mathematical ability. Both teachers' planning for lessons and pupils' work are monitored by the headteacher and curriculum leaders to identify areas for improvement. Recent classroom observations have highlighted a need for further attention to be given to improving the quality of questioning in lessons. Pupils are tested termly to determine which group they should attend and this data and that from national tests is analysed to identify strengths and weaknesses in the subject and inform future planning across the school. Individual targets are set for pupils, but although books are marked regularly and affirming comments sometimes added, few comments tell pupils how their work could be improved.

Mathematics across the curriculum

68. Pupils make sound use of their skills in mathematics to help them in other subjects. For example, they measure accurately in science and design and technology, handle data in science and geography and create and read timelines in history. Links with literacy and ICT are strengthening, partly because one lesson in mathematics each week is taught in the ICT suite to maximise the use of resources for ICT and to make learning relevant and cohesive. Some teachers make good use of opportunities to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills by asking them to explain their strategies when answering questions, though this is a technique that could be usefully developed further across the school.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is helping the majority of pupils in Year 6 to reach average standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 and a few to attain the higher levels.
- Pupils achieve very well in relation to their very limited knowledge on entering the school.
- Teachers set individual targets for pupils to aim for but marking does not often tell pupils how to improve their work to achieve them.
- Higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.

Commentary

69. As at the time of the last inspection, the attainment of pupils in Year 6 is below the national average, but higher than last year when results dropped to well below average compared with schools nationally. In comparison with similar schools, however, the results were well above average, although fewer pupils than in other schools achieved the higher levels. When pupils' very low levels of attainment on entry to the school are taken into account, these results indicate high levels of achievement.
70. Teachers' knowledge of the subject and good resources ensure that the quality of teaching is good and this is helping to raise standards. Planning for lessons takes account of pupils' prior learning. New vocabulary is clearly identified but in some lessons there is insufficient focus on the planned key words for pupils to learn and understand them. Lessons are taught at a good pace that maintains pupils' interest. Teachers enjoy good relationships with their pupils and these enable them to ask appropriate questions that develop individual learning. Pupils listen well and try hard even when uncertain of new vocabulary. They take pride in their work, presenting it neatly. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 6 are taught separately during one of their lessons each week. This enables them to be presented with good challenges that extend their learning. Other year groups do not enjoy this situation and consequently, in mixed ability classes, higher-attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.
71. There has been good improvement in the provision for science since the last inspection because all teachers are now involved in the effective leadership and management of the subject. Consequently they have a clear idea of strengths and weaknesses in the subject and what needs to be done to bring about improvement. The headteacher and curriculum leaders monitor the subject by checking lesson planning and pupils' books. The headteacher also monitors lessons. Pupils' work is marked regularly, often having affirming comments added. Few comments are added, however, that relate to the targets that have been set for each pupil.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are now significantly higher than at the time of the last inspection, and all criticisms made then have been addressed.
- The acquisition of a computer suite has enabled all aspects of the subject to be taught.
- The suite is used to support learning in other subjects but teachers are not utilising classroom computers effectively in the same way.
- A very competent co-ordinator is driving the subject forward.

Commentary

72. Attainment in Year 2 is still well below average, as the majority of pupils come from homes without computers and therefore have no skills on entering the school. By Year 6, however, as a result of the good teaching pupils now receive throughout the school, standards are in line with those in other schools. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and very well in Years 3 to 6.
73. The last inspection identified weaknesses in the provision for the subject. Since then a computer suite has been installed and, with the exception of sensing equipment, resources improved so that all aspects of the National Curriculum can be taught. Arrangements that give pupils access to sensing equipment are made with a local high school. Teachers' levels of confidence and their own skills have been improved greatly through training given by the subject leader.
74. Teaching is generally good, although one unsatisfactory lesson was seen during the inspection. Most lessons move at a brisk pace that maintains pupils' interest. The staff enjoy good relationships with their pupils and use questions well to include everyone in lessons. They focus well on new vocabulary and pupils in Years 3 and 4 refer happily to 'text boxes', 'clip art' and 'insert'. The best lessons challenge pupils, as in Year 6, where pupils were seen creating presentations that incorporated insertions from the Internet, photographs, pictures and text. In less successful lessons, classroom assistants play little part during teacher-led demonstrations of accessing and using programs. This does not make best use of their computer skills.
75. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. By monitoring teachers' planning for lessons and observing teaching, the co-ordinator holds a very clear overview of the subject's strengths and weaknesses and understands very well how it can be developed further. The school's guidance for teachers has been reviewed to ensure it is in line with the latest national advice and teachers and classroom assistants have been trained to be competent in its delivery. New software has been purchased to enable ICT to be used to support other areas of the curriculum. A portfolio of pupils' graded work, representing each level of attainment, is currently being compiled as an exemplar for other teachers.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

76. The computer suite is used well for the teaching of specific skills in ICT and also for one lesson in literacy and numeracy each week to all classes. In general, the suite is used well to support learning in other subjects. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 used a graphics program to create attractive cards for Mothering Sunday and pupils in Year 1 practised their counting by clicking on pictures to place apples on a tree. Classroom computers, however, are not used to best effect to give pupils a chance to practise the skills learned in the suite by using them in practical applications in a real context. There is considerable scope to develop further this aspect of the curriculum.

HUMANITIES

Religious education was inspected in full and is reported below. History and geography were sampled.

77. The arrangements for the teaching of **geography** ensure that pupils encounter all strands of the National Curriculum during their time in the school. The 'carousel' organisation allows pupils to benefit from the expertise of the subject co-ordinators in both history and geography, which, according to the pupils, results in interesting lessons. No lessons in geography were seen but the scrutiny of pupils' work shows that there is a good emphasis on practical activities and the use of the local area and field work to widen the experiences of the pupils, which are very narrow when they first join the school. For example, pupils in Year 1 made a study of housing by drawing the different types of houses they saw on their walk round the locality. Pupils in Year 6 found out about a school in a contrasting area through a visit and subsequent correspondence with the pupils.
78. There is a good emphasis on first hand experience in **history**, so that pupils learn about the past through interesting ways that do not rely too heavily on writing, which many pupils find difficult. In the one history lesson seen, the teacher's good use of old toys helped pupils to discover similarities and differences between toys from the past and those used in the present. There was some good open-ended questioning that made pupils think hard, such as 'What makes you think this toy is old?', but there is scope to include more variety and challenge to discussions. Throughout the school, pupils learn about a suitable range of topics and say they enjoy their work in history.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is based on the locally agreed syllabus and pupils are given a good understanding of Christianity, Hinduism and Islam.
- Good teaching maintains pupils' interest and they achieve very well overall.
- The subject co-ordinator does not observe others teaching and therefore has a limited overview of strengths and weaknesses.

Commentary

79. As at the previous inspection, standards are a little lower than in most schools in Year 6. Standards are well below average in Year 2 as pupils enter school with little or no knowledge or experience of religion and pupils' literacy skills limit their ability to record the work they do. The achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is therefore very good overall. Spiritual awareness in assemblies is encouraged by the visits of representatives from the local churches.
80. Pupils achieve consistently well in all years because the teaching is good. It is based on the locally agreed syllabus and a suitable emphasis is placed on Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. Good use is made of expertise from outside the school. For example, an external teacher who teaches a series of key lessons on the Bible to Year 6 pupils. Local leaders of Christian faiths representing various denominations are frequent visitors to the school.
81. The subject is made tangible and brought alive for pupils by visits, artefacts and pictures. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastically developing the range of these available in school as well as videos that illustrate the subject. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 were building on their recent visit to a nearby church as part of their study of baptism. Artefacts were being used well in the lesson to trigger pupils' memories but their ability to comment at length was limited by their poor vocabulary and speaking skills. Pupils' written work showed that although a good volume of work was produced, its quality was restricted by limitations to write coherent narrative accounts of any length.
82. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed, maintaining the standards seen at the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved but no formal system of assessment has yet been agreed. The co-ordinator does see teachers' planning for lessons but has been given no opportunity to observe others teaching. Her overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject is, therefore, limited.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Music was inspected in full and is reported below. Art and design, design and technology and physical education were sampled.

83. Display around the school and photographic evidence indicates that pupils enjoy a varied curriculum in **art and design** and some of the work on display is well executed. For example, a display based on the work of William Morris shows that pupils in Years 4 and 5 have learned how to make and use templates creatively to replicate the designs of the artist. The pupils' work is well observed and carefully executed, with an appropriate level of precision for their age. Younger children in Year 1 made well-observed pictures of snails, using oil pastels to good effect to capture the markings on

the shell. In the best examples the colour had been smudged to give a subtlety and depth to the work. There are signs of good teaching where pupils have clearly been shown how to use materials correctly to achieve particular effects, and his helps to explain the high quality of some of the work and the success of the 'carousel' teaching arrangements.

84. In **design and technology**, pupils encounter a suitable range of opportunities for designing and making things during their time in the school. Pupils experience a range of different materials and fixings to make items such as colourful puppets with moving parts in Year 1. Pupils in Year 5 designed and made colourful purses, using several different sewing stitches. The finished articles show a range of skills, the better examples demonstrating an average level of precision and detail. The curriculum is well mapped out in a rolling programme spread over four years and is based on national guidance that has been modified to meet the needs of the school. There are good links between subjects and pupils are taught to evaluate their products critically.
85. Pupils enjoy a wide range of activities in **physical education** lessons. Games and athletics are strong throughout the school, as teachers are confident when leading lessons. The swimming programme is successful, with at least 80 per cent of pupils reaching the national standard of swimming 25 metres by the end of Year 6. Teachers are less confident when teaching dance and gymnastics and training in these areas is planned. Resources for the subject are good. There is a good hard surface and small field as well as a hall and a good supply of small apparatus. A good range of extra-curricular clubs develops pupils' interest and learning further and the subject leader has arranged for people with expertise from outside the school to enhance provision. This is a good example of her confident, effective leadership.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is enabling all pupils to enjoy music, particularly singing.
- Music is developing pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness as they are given good opportunities to make music and hear professional players.
- The subject is intelligently led to maximise pupils' musical experience.
- No formal assessment procedures are yet in place.

Commentary

86. Pupils enter the school with little or no experience of music. Standards are, therefore, well below average until pupils have been in school for several years. By Year 6 pupils are attaining standards similar to those in most schools. The achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is very good throughout the school and they are encouraged to enjoy the subject. Current standards are similar to those at the time of the last inspection.
87. As most class teachers have few skills in the subject, a specialist musician is employed to work alongside them. His enthusiastic, lively approach ensures that pupils of all levels of attainment enjoy their lessons. The specialist teacher works with classes, ensuring that all aspects of the subject are taught and that pupils' musical vocabulary is extended. Class teachers observe the music lessons in order to develop further their

own expertise. The pupils' experiences in music making are varied and supported by the school's adequate music resources, which are supplemented by the teacher's own instruments that add a multicultural dimension to lessons. He has, for example, an excellent range of instruments from the Philippines that enabled pupils in Years 4 and 5 to produce the authentic sound of Asian music to accompany dancing.

88. The co-ordinator works with the whole school, for example in hymn practices and in rehearsing choirs for special events. In such singing sessions there is a clear emphasis on the need for clear enunciation, constant rhythm and variable volume to express meaning sensitively. As a result of these effective arrangements, singing is a particular strength of the subject.
89. The local education authority music service provides guitar tuition for older pupils and contacts with instrumentalists and groups such as brass ensembles to provide concerts in school. These and visits to pantomimes and concerts at local secondary schools give pupils the opportunity to experience live music. They also develop pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness. Pupils also have good opportunities to take part in concerts and performances, which helps to build their confidence and self-esteem.
90. The subject is very well led and managed by the headteacher, who is the subject co-ordinator. She has overcome the limitations of a small staff of non-musicians in a creative way. She offers pupils a varied range of musical experience despite limitations of teacher expertise. Within this system, she has yet to develop a scheme to assess their attainment and progress however. Beyond the classroom, pupils are offered the opportunity to learn to play the recorder as well as sing corporately in choirs. Since the time of the last inspection the provision has improved considerably, partly due to the contribution of the visiting specialist.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

This area of the curriculum was sampled.

91. The programme for **personal, social and health education and citizenship** is well embedded into the school curriculum. The caring school ethos supports pupils' personal development and builds confidence by helping the pupils to feel valued and that their views are important. The introduction of 'circle time' provides opportunities for pupils to talk and share their thoughts and feelings with classmates. The subject contributes well to the good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils. The limited provision for sex and relationships education and drugs awareness, whilst meeting statutory requirements, narrows the programmes for personal development, because pupils are not fully prepared for the next stage of their education. The House Captain System is providing opportunities for increasing involvement of pupils in the life of the school. Pupils feel they are helping with decisions and giving voice to their particular needs and opinions. The curriculum further supports aspects of pupils' moral and social development by helping them to enjoy being part of the school community and to be aware of the impact of their actions on others.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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