

INSPECTION REPORT

Hawthorns Community School

Audenshaw, Tameside

LEA area: Tameside

Unique reference number: 106277

Headteacher: Michael Shore

Reporting inspector: George Derby
25349

Dates of inspection: 28th February – 1st March 2000

Inspection number: 188106

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

© Crown copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Special – moderate learning difficulties

School category: Community special

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Corporation Road
Audenshaw
Tameside
Greater Manchester

Postcode: M34 5LZ

Telephone number: 0161 336 3389

Fax number: 0161 337 9747

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Norman Jones

Date of previous inspection: May 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	
George Derby	<i>Registered inspector</i>
David Heath	<i>Lay inspector</i>
David Smith	<i>Team inspector</i>

The inspection contractor was:

*Westminster Education Consultants
Old Garden House
The Lanterns
Bridge Lane
London
SW11 3AD*

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	1
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	6
Pupils' personal development is exceptional	
The quality of teaching is very good	
The school is very well led and managed	
The pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science are very good	
The way the curriculum is planned, and the assessments made by teachers, are very good	
The school's very strong relationship with parents	
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?	11
The strategic planning for the future of the school	
The roles of co-ordinators.	
How the governors and managers formulate their criteria for school development.	
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	14
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	15

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Hawthorns Community School is a mixed day special school and has 84 pupils aged from four to eleven. All pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need and there are only a few pupils from ethnic minorities. The school also admits pupils with additional needs, and a small, but increasing, number of pupils are autistic or have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school roll is falling and there were 94 pupils in the school during the previous academic year. It is projected to fall again next September. Since the last inspection, the special educational needs of the pupils have become more complex. The school has also embarked upon an 'inclusion initiative' where it supports its pupils integrating into mainstream schools. Well over a half of the pupils are entitled to free school meals.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This primary school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties is a very good and very effective school. The senior management team and governors reflect thoughtfully on the quality of what the school does to help pupils learn, and how it can improve. As a result the school provides a high standard of education for its pupils, has improved well since the last inspection, and is continually improving. Pupils achieve high standards because the teaching is very good and the experiences and learning opportunities they are given are very well put together. The cost, last year, of educating pupils at Hawthorns was about average when compared with similar schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties nationally. It is low when compared to all special schools nationally. The school provides very good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Pupils' personal development is exceptional; they are very confident, well adjusted and are responsible children by the time they leave the school.
- The quality of teaching is very good, and a significant strength is the way teachers give pupils every opportunity to think about, explore and discuss ideas in lessons; this makes for very effective learning.
- The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher, who is ably assisted by the deputy headteacher and senior teacher.
- The pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science are very good.
- The curriculum is planned well, and the assessments made by teachers are very good; this helps pupils to learn effectively and to build, in small steps, on what they have already learned.
- The school's very strong relationship with parents and the support they receive enables them to help their children in the best way possible.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- In association with the local education authority, the strategic planning for the future of this very good school, especially in the light of its falling rolls and the new inclusion initiative.
- The roles of co-ordinators and their skills in enabling them to monitor the quality of teaching and learning.
- How the governors and managers formulate their criteria for school improvement, so that they can check more effectively on the success of the school's work and what they are spending.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement since its last inspection in May 1996, with pupils achieving high standards as a result. The time for lessons has increased as a result of having an earlier start to the day and a reduced lunchtime. Assessment procedures have been streamlined, but are thorough and comprehensive and really help teachers know what levels the pupils are attaining. Baseline assessment procedures, carried out when pupils enter the school, are now excellent. Individual education plans have been similarly streamlined and now contain a small number of realistically achievable targets. The roles of co-ordinators have been reviewed and they work hard in developing their curriculum areas, checking on teachers' planning and monitoring the quality of pupils' work. However, their role could be developed further to include the monitoring of teaching in their subjects.

Science is a strength of the school, and planning has largely moved away from topic work, with pupils following National Curriculum programmes of study. Pupils' achievements are now high, and nearly a third achieved a level just below that expected for their age in the 1999 Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests. (This varies from year to year and in relation to pupils' abilities). The school improvement plan is clearly and appropriately costed, and good links now exist between financial planning and the priorities of the school. There are better systems to monitor the school's performance, but the way the school measures the success of its development plan needs sharpening. Risk assessment is now in place for minibus use.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the school.

Progress in:	by age 11	Key	
Speaking and listening	A	<i>very good</i>	A
Reading	A	<i>good</i>	B
Writing	A	<i>satisfactory</i>	C
Mathematics	A	<i>unsatisfactory</i>	D
Personal, social and health education	A	<i>poor</i>	E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A		

* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.

Individual education plans are currently the main focus for assessing whether the school is doing all it can or could do more. Evidence from the careful monitoring of pupils' progress towards these shows that the school is well on track to meet, or exceed, its overall target by summer 2000.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils really enjoy attending school and show a wonderful enthusiasm for learning. Most concentrate very well, and although a few find it difficult to stay at their work the staff's good encouragement results in them returning to the activity and settling quickly.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good in class, around the school, and in the wider community. Pupils play co-operatively with each other. They occupy themselves well in the playground, playing games and talking to their friends.
Personal development and relationships	Outstanding. Pupils grow in confidence throughout their school life, and by the time they leave their self-esteem is high and they are very independent and mature. They show care and concern for each other.
Attendance	Good. Pupils usually arrive punctually, and lessons start promptly.

Pupils are clear about how they should behave and what the school expects. They behave very well at lunchtime. They enjoy the school assemblies, sing tunefully, and listen carefully to the teacher's message. Pupils form very constructive relationships with one another and are courteous and respectful to staff. Older pupils act in a really responsible manner and are quick to support distressed, younger pupils, when they have an accident. In lessons, they get their work out and know what equipment is needed; they assist teachers in tidying up and collecting work. They take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils respond well to the has a positive effect on their behaviour, and especially on those who enter the school with

behavioural difficulties. Exclusions are very rare. The pupils' attendance level is close to the national average for primary, mainstream schools, and significantly above the figure for similar special schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 5-11
Lessons seen overall	Very good

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

The very good quality of teaching contributes significantly to the high standards pupils achieve and has improved since the last inspection. Fifty-one per cent of the teaching seen on the inspection was very good or excellent. One lesson was excellent; this was because of the high quality of the teacher's explanations, the lesson presentation, and the superb way in which the pupils carried out their scientific investigation. They learned very effectively as a result. Nearly 80 per cent of the teaching was good or better, and 97 per cent satisfactory or better. Just one lesson was unsatisfactory because the teacher did not use all the time available for pupils' learning. Overall, the quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science was very good. Literacy and numeracy are very well taught. This is because of the training teachers have received and the excellent support and demonstrations from the deputy headteacher, who is a lead teacher in literacy, and from the mathematics co-ordinator, who is highly skilled in this work. The needs of a very small group of pupils who have complex communication difficulties are not addressed as fully as they could, as the school has limited systems, such as symbols, signing and electronic communication aids, to support these pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	This is very good, with a good emphasis on physical development through lessons taught by a specialist teacher. The quality and range of the work challenges pupils well, and the very good range of learning opportunities, including educational visits and residential activities, means that pupils gain a really good breadth of experience.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The needs of such pupils are well considered. Although there is no additional funding, pupils entering the school have support from a specialist bilingual teacher, and the school encourages on-going support from families and siblings.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Arrangements are very good. Spiritual development is very well promoted through lessons such as science and information technology, as well as through the very well presented assemblies. Moral and social development is actively encouraged through the school's excellent ethos. Opportunities for pupils to understand their own culture and those of others are very well developed.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Staff care very well for their pupils. Arrangements for child protection are very good. Procedures are well organised and all staff are vigilant in protecting pupils from harm.

All pupils receive certificates for their achievements and ‘planet awards’ for good work and behaviour. The strong and effective strategies have a very positive effect on pupils’ personal development. The curriculum is well matched to the needs of most pupils, and adjustments are being made to plans in light of the changing population and the new National Curriculum. There is a marked improvement in the setting of precise targets in individual education plans.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership and management by the headteacher and senior staff maintains a clear focus for the development of the school. Management lead by example, setting high expectations for themselves, for other staff, and for pupils.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They are active in checking on the school’s performance and their own effectiveness. The newly formed governing body is supportive of the school and is developing its role as a critical friend.
The school’s evaluation of its performance	Effective. Pupils’ progress is monitored very well, appraisal is in place, and the headteacher monitors teaching. Governors have set targets for the performance of the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of its staff and its resources, including some old computers. Very good use is made of the wider community to enhance pupils’ learning. Standards funds are well managed and the school’s inclusion project is having a beneficial effect on pupils’ progress.

The success criteria in the school improvement plan lack the clarity required to provide a fully effective means of evaluating school development and cost effectiveness. Subject co-ordinators do not yet monitor the quality of teaching in their subjects. The school is beginning to apply the principles of best value.

PARENTS’ AND CARERS’ VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are high expectations of the children. • Children like coming to school. • Staff are comfortable when parents ask questions or have problems. • The school is well led and managed. • Pupils become mature and responsible as they grow older. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport arrangements to and from the school, and the quality of vehicles. • Some children’s difficult behaviour.

Inspectors agree with the very positive views the parents have of the school. Transport has been a problem but the school is vigilant about any lateness, and most buses and taxis are now on time. The local authority regularly checks the condition of vehicles and puts them off the road if defects are found. The school has recently admitted a small number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and has responded well by setting targets for improvement as well as increasing the level of support staff in classes.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils' personal development is exceptional; they are very confident, well adjusted and are responsible children by the time they leave the school.

1. Pupils make very good progress against their personal targets in their individual education plans. These are very appropriately and carefully set by teachers, so that any particular aspect of their personal development, and especially the conduct of the new intake of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, is specifically focused to help the pupils make all the progress they can. The pupils' needs are also very well catered for by the excellent range of opportunities they are given during lessons and throughout the school. Educational visits and residential programmes also provide rich opportunities for pupils' personal development. The same is true of the developing programme of personal, social and health education, and circle time opportunities, such as when the pupils consider the positive characteristics of a partner's personality.

2. The youngest pupils, increasingly, enter the school with very immature behaviour and poor social skills. Last September's intake was particularly challenging and had a marked effect on the attention, concentration and behaviour of the more established pupils in the first class. With the well considered, high quality, additional support put in by governors, and the high degree of expertise of the teacher, the pupils in this group are making remarkable progress in their personal and social development. In a numeracy lesson, there was a superb example of two pupils playing really co-operatively, sharing a floor jigsaw and negotiating in quite a mature way about how to fit the pieces. Other, lower attaining pupils, some with autism, find it difficult to join in with others. These now sit and concentrate for longer periods of time and are willing to be shown how to do things, such as form their letters correctly.

3. Pupils work extremely well together. In a design and technology lesson in Years 3 and 4, one pupil, with good encouragement and direction from the teacher, showed another a new feature of a computer program. The patience with which this was done, and the high degree of co-operation and collaboration, is a credit to the considerable emphasis the school places on pupils' personal skills. It reflects creditably the school's mission statement of *Feeling good, having friends, new confidence and emotional growth*.

4. As they move through the school, pupils take increasing responsibility and develop greater independence. They operate the overhead projector in assemblies, give out, and collect in, work in classrooms, and have the confidence to sing solo to the whole school. Older pupils become increasingly responsible for their own learning. The school encourages them, through its very good approach to teaching literacy, to find out information from reference books, such as the features of minibests. Although information technology is used for pupils to research topics, more use could be made of it. The teachers and support staff know the individual pupils very well and are in an excellent position to give them very effective guidance to help them where they are having personal difficulties. The pupils' self-esteem is built up well by the praise they receive for their good efforts and work, and by the very good merit system of *planet* rewards, which is well known by pupils. A special assembly, each week, celebrates these achievements.

5. The school is very successful in helping the pupils to become good citizens. There is a clear and extremely effective moral code which aids pupils to have a very good sense of right and wrong. They show considerable respect for other people's feeling and values, particularly shown when moral stories or issues relating to famine or the floods in Mozambique, are discussed in the very good daily assemblies. Older pupils readily give help to younger pupils who are in distress. Pupils are really encouraged to reflect on what they do and what is going on in the wider world. One older boy was heard to say that he really enjoys the time the teachers light the candle during assembly and the prayer that follows.

6. The pupils leave school as happy, confident, competent children well prepared for the next stage of their education. Parents say they recognise the improvement in their children's self-esteem and confidence when they attend the school's pantomime each year, an epitome of their excellent social and emotional development.

The quality of teaching is very good, and a significant strength is the way teachers give pupils every opportunity to think about, and explore and discuss ideas in lessons; this makes for very effective learning.

7. The quality of teaching was judged to be very good or better in just over a half of the lessons seen and good or better in eight tenths. It was satisfactory or better in nearly all lessons, although in one lesson the teacher did not make good use of time available and the pupils did not learn all that they could. This made the lesson unsatisfactory, but it was the only weakness in the 32 lessons, in which the teaching was, overall, very strong. The majority of teachers know that the time in lessons, during the day, needs to be used to the full as pupils are in school for only a relatively short time. On rare occasions, some lessons finish late, leaving less time for the subsequent lesson.

8. Particularly outstanding features of the teaching are the quality and use of the support staff in lessons and the very valuable contribution they make to the pupils' learning. They work very well with teachers and take full responsibility in assisting pupils to learn. They are skilful in giving the right amount of encouragement and in demonstrating what pupils are to do. They extend pupils' learning well, and use their initiative to good advantage. In one lesson, for example, the support assistant saw that pupils in the group were quickly getting through the work set by the teacher, and provided appropriate extension activities to challenge them further. Support staff fulfil an important role in leading small groups during literacy and numeracy sessions, and do this very well. They are clear on their role and what has been planned, occasionally they could be better used in the whole class part of the lesson, and in making assessments on pupils' listening, talking, and mathematical responses.

9. Also outstanding is the way all staff encourage pupils' full participation, giving them opportunities to think and explore ideas relating to the lesson and to make links with what they already know. This is carried out skilfully and is very successful in enhancing pupils' ability to solve problems and think for themselves. For instance, in a Year 6 science lesson where the teaching was excellent, the teacher really 'pushed' pupils hard to predict which objects would conduct electricity, including a fastener made of paper with a wire stiffener inside. Pupils really thought about the idea of conductivity, and related their thoughts to the

superb practical demonstration by the teacher at the beginning of the lesson. They used the information relating to work carried out previously on circuits to test their objects in newly constructed circuits. Their learning was excellent and they rose to the challenge, really wanting to 'solve' this 'problem'.

10. Teachers prepare their lessons carefully and thoroughly, and what the pupils are to learn is made clear to them. The work is nearly always very well matched to pupils' abilities, and clearly planned to take the needs of different pupils into account. Nearly all teachers present their lessons in a very dramatic style; they know that many of their pupils have been disaffected before attending Hawthorns and have low self-esteem. Teachers have a burning desire to ensure that all pupils learn as much as they can, and they know that this dramatic and lively approach really engages them and helps even the most difficult pupils listen and concentrate. Coupled with an often breathtaking pace, these features are the key to the success of the teaching. All staff know their pupils very well, and by means of thorough, and accurate, assessment are able to effectively plan suitable work for the wide range of pupils' attainment. A very small number of pupils with complex communication difficulties have relatively recently been admitted to the school, representative of the more diverse population of pupils the school is receiving. Although teachers and support staff are very careful to give them every encouragement and enable them to be included in discussions or question and answer sessions, the school does not have the means of supporting their communication through electronic aids, signs or symbols.

11. Teaching is skilful, and the teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm rubs off on the pupils. The pupils were engrossed in a Year 3 and 4 lesson on using artefacts in history to find out about people's life styles, and were especially interested in the use of nibs and inks, and Second World War identity cards. Through this, they learned ways of asking the most appropriate questions to find out about the past. The way teachers question the pupils is also a significant strength; it is nearly always challenging and thought provoking, even for the youngest pupils in the first class. Teachers carefully match their questions to the different abilities of pupils, such as in a Year 4 and 5 literacy session on the book *Hairy Maclary*. There were clearly different expectations of the pupils, with the lowest attaining pupils being asked to describe some basic characteristics of the dog, while higher attaining pupils were expected to predict the next line of the rhyme. The pupils were 'glued' to their seats, superbly interested and listening intently.

The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher who is ably assisted by the deputy headteacher and senior teacher.

12. The headteacher and governors create a very strong ethos which very effectively supports the pupils' learning. This is most apparent in the high quality displays and the polite and eager pupils, which exemplify the work the school has put into the pupils' achievements. The school meets its aims superbly.

13. Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is very good. The school has responded positively to, and managed well, the introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies and inclusion initiative, taken on since the last inspection. The headteacher maintains a clear focus and inspiration and is provided with outstanding support from the deputy headteacher and the increasingly effective, expanded senior management team. The senior teacher is instrumental in providing a range of opportunities to enhance pupils' personal development

and in supporting parents in the management of their children, through the *Positive Parenting Programme*. Staff have acquired skills well in order to carry out the new functions, and the pupils are clearly benefiting from the work in these areas. Clear priorities have been set in the school improvement plan, and the school sets high standards and has high expectations of staff. Very good teamwork among staff, and excellent relationships, supports the development process well and the senior management team provides a strength in the drive for higher standards.

14. Management and staff are very reflective in the evaluation of the school's performance. The headteacher has undertaken training and has introduced more effective and more rigorous ways of checking on the impact of the school's work. Improvements in curriculum planning and the streamlining of assessment mean that the school has a better understanding of pupils' level of attainment, and planning for them is much improved.

The pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science are very good.

15. The good achievements result from the very good quality of teaching. Particular strengths are the very good attention given to the subject-specific vocabulary emphasised in lessons, the good opportunities for pupils to speak throughout the school day, and the way the curriculum is planned. The school has taken on the literacy and numeracy strategies with superb enthusiasm. However, staff have a good critical awareness of the need to plan lessons effectively to get the most from pupils, many of whom, initially, find it difficult to concentrate for long periods of time. Teachers know that lessons have to be entertaining, and that the different parts of them must be of just the right length to maintain pupils' interest. Both strategies have been suitably adapted, and the English co-ordinator leads the staff well, providing very good quality demonstration lessons for Hawthorns staff as well as for teachers from other schools. Numeracy developments are recent, and the mathematics co-ordinator is embarking on a programme of demonstration lessons in the near future. The co-ordinator has produced a well considered *code of practice* to help staff manage the introduction of the numeracy strategy. Pupils respond very well in English and mathematics lessons and learn very effectively.

16. In English, the pupils' knowledge of texts is increasing. Near the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have a clear understanding of what constitutes fiction and non-fiction, and know that they can gain useful information from their non-fiction texts. They have a good understanding of the parts of speech and increase their knowledge of verbs when they relate them to how different animals move; they describe these movements very imaginatively, making really good oral contributions to the lesson. The teachers have a good, and improving, knowledge of how to teach literacy, through the training they have received and the support they get from within the school, and this helps pupils to achieve as well as they do. In the wider aspects of English there is really good emphasis on pupils' independence and decision making skills when they select their own library books. Listening and speaking is very effectively promoted across the curriculum, and pupils' confidence to speak to a wider audience, despite any prevailing speech or grammatical immaturity, is particularly strong. They demonstrate careful listening by their accurate responses to questions. Pupils write for different purposes with varying levels of independence. Some use full stops and capital letters with reasonable accuracy and begin to use tenses correctly in their writing. Most read simple passages with understanding and higher attaining pupils read a wide range of texts with accuracy and expression. Some read silently, with sustained interest.

17. In mathematics, mental activities are really sharpening pupils' skills. Most teachers make this work 'snappy' and match the questions well to the different pupils' abilities; pupils respond well by trying their hardest. Pupils are learning a wide range of skills in handling numbers, and teachers themselves say they have learned a great deal from the training they have received. The oldest pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 add two numbers mentally by using the strategy of counting on the smaller of the two, such as $24 + 3$ (*which becomes 25, 26, 27*). Higher attaining pupils learn the notation of vulgar fraction such as quarter ($1/4$) and know that four of these make one whole. Lower attaining pupils identify a quarter or a half of a shape such as a circle or square. A wide variety of resources helps maintain pupils' interest, such as the *gotcha cards* which identify the number in a 'counting on and back' activity. In many lessons there are opportunities for pupils to record results in tables and on charts, and they know there are different ways presenting information. Occasionally, the whole class part of the lesson goes on a little too long, but teachers soon become aware of any slight loss of interest by pupils and quickly move on to the next part.

18. Science is now planned from the National Curriculum programmes of study, and science teaching is particularly strong throughout the school. At the time of the last inspection, science was under-emphasised and there was a lack of consistency in the approach of teachers, with some planning discrete lessons and others using a 'topic' approach. Time for science has been increased and the quality of teaching and learning is very good. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2, eight pupils achieved a Level 3, a level just below the national expectation and a proportion which is considerably higher than that in similar special schools. At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils develop an increasing vocabulary connected with the movement of vehicles, such as *roll, slide, spin*, which link with forces such as *push* and *pull*. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 are reasonably knowledgeable about science and understand what makes a test fair. They are able to carry out experiments and investigations sensibly and show great enthusiasm when doing this.

The way the curriculum is planned, and the assessments made by teachers, are very good; this helps pupils learn effectively and build upon what they have already learned in small steps.

19. The curriculum is broad and very well balanced, with very good and appropriate emphasis on pupils' personal and physical development. A skilled specialist teacher for physical education teaches all the pupils, and the older pupils attain standards close to those of pupils of similar ages. They experience a wide range of activities, including swimming and residential visits. Their attainment is very good in relation to their creative abilities in gymnastics and dance. The attainment of younger pupils is not reaching the levels achieved in previous years, and this reflects the pupils' increasingly complex needs. Nevertheless, they make good progress. In the early part of the school there is a good and appropriate transition between the *Early Learning Goals* curriculum for younger pupils and the National Curriculum programmes of study. There is now a much more cohesive approach to planning, with clear links between long-, medium-, and short-term plans. The amount of time pupils have to learn has increased since the last inspection, as well as the allocation of time to science. The assessment of pupils has developed very well and is no longer unwieldy; it is very informative and helpful in aiding teachers' planning. Baseline assessment, when pupils enter the school, is sophisticated, wide ranging, and often used to inform the local education authority of the needs of pupils when the statement of special educational needs gives

insufficient information for the school to plan pupils' immediate targets. Individual education plans are realistic, and the small number of targets are linked closely to the performance criteria set for the refined early levels of the National Curriculum. The school is now measuring pupils' attainments against these, and it plans, from September 2000, to use the information gained about the profile of the school in relation to other special schools, to set improvement targets. This is very good practice.

The school's very strong relationship with parents and the support given to them enables them to help their children in the best way possible.

20. The school works hard to keep the parents well informed by means of regular newsletters, and a well-presented prospectus and the Annual Governor's Report cover all aspects of the work of the school year. Pupils' individual targets are well understood by parents because the school makes every effort to involve them as much as possible. They are well advised about their child's progress and can be influential in the setting of forthcoming targets. Parents are very supportive of the school, and great praise for its work was expressed at the pre-inspection meeting for parents and through the questionnaires. The school's *Positive Parenting Course* gives good assistance and guidance to parents about child care and runs for eight weeks. The school has variable response to this, but recently three groups of six parents took the course, run by the senior teacher ; where parents have difficulty in getting to school, transport is often provided. The deputy headteacher, from time to time, provides valuable support for individual parents who are having difficulty with their child or want to know how they can help them at home. Homework also makes a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, and for the youngest pupils there is very good and close contact with parents and with external support agencies which can help children and families.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Together with the local education authority, improve the strategic planning for the future of this very good school, especially in the light of its falling rolls and the inclusion initiative.

21. The school plans well for its future development as far as it is possible, for instance in looking at how staff training can to be targeted to meet the needs of the changing population of pupils. However, its ability to plan strategically is weakened by its uncertain future. The number of pupils being admitted to the school is now less than in previous years. This falling roll situation has been compensated for, in the interim, by the local education authority agreeing to fund the school's places to the same level as previously. This was on the basis of the school undertaking an inclusion project, supporting pupils from Hawthorns to integrate into a small number of local mainstream schools. The school has responded well to this invitation, and the co-ordinator has worked hard to set up contacts with schools and to organise placements for a small number of pupils. The receiving schools speak highly of the liaison and the support from Hawthorns staff. On the evidence of records and discussion with staff, pupils are clearly benefiting. However, the future of this project is not assured, and the short time-scale regarding its announcement and introduction has meant that a great deal has had to be achieved quickly. The headteacher and governors are rightly concerned that this is a reaction to the problem of fallings rolls and potential redundancy situation, rather than part of a strategic plan which looks at the role of the school as part of a continuum of special

educational needs provision in the borough. The headteacher consults with other headteachers of special schools and has led a working party with local education authority staff to look at future patterns of education and criteria for admission to special educational needs provision. However, as yet, with no clear longer-term strategic plan set in the context of the borough's intended development, the potential for the school's effectiveness to become increasingly limited is considerable.

Develop the roles of co-ordinators and their skills further, in enabling them to monitor the quality of teaching and learning.

22. The role of subject co-ordinators has developed since the last inspection and they now monitor planning and pupils' work. The English co-ordinator, who is also a particularly skilled lead teacher for literacy, demonstrates teaching approaches and techniques, and informally evaluates how teachers are tackling the teaching of literacy. This is clearly having a marked effect on the quality of teaching, because the standard of this work is high. The headteacher has had formal training on ways of evaluating teaching and the school's performance and has attended a course, together with the early years co-ordinator. The deputy headteacher, as part of management training, has also looked at ways of checking on staff's work and keeps a very comprehensive monitoring file, containing good quality information and evaluations. The headteacher evaluates the quality of teaching through formal monitoring. The written commentary is sometimes too general, and not always stringent enough, to have the desired effect on changing practice where some strengths and weaknesses have been identified in broad terms. For instance, the headteacher is aware that in one area of the school the dynamic approach seen virtually everywhere else by teachers (a significant feature in helping pupils learn), is not present and pupils' response is not as sharp as it could be. More time needs to be given for co-ordinators to develop a full role, and particularly with regard to monitoring and evaluating teaching. Too much of this work lies with the headteacher and some senior managers, and time needs to be set aside for a proper programme to be carried out by all with subject responsibility. Some good quality exemplar portfolios of pupils' levelled work have been produced, for instance in English, but this good practice needs extending to all subjects.

How the governors and managers formulate their criteria for school improvement so that they can check more effectively on the success of the school's work and what they are spending.

23. The newly re-constituted governing body is quickly becoming aware of the issues and uncertainties the school faces, and well-established governors have worked hard in their planning for school improvement through their involvement in the formulation of the plan. However, this plan, although comprehensive and containing detailed action plans, often lacks the criteria necessary for governors and senior staff to be able check on whether their actions have been successful in having an impact on standards within the school. Statements made are sometimes expressed in terms of 'things done' rather than progress made or standards achieved. This also makes it difficult for governors to check whether what they are spending the school's finances on is fully effective.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

24. The school should now:

- together with the local education authority, improve the strategic planning for the school's future, especially in the light of its falling rolls and the inclusion initiative;
- improve the roles of co-ordinators and their skills further, in enabling them to monitor the quality of teaching and learning;
- ensure that criteria in the school improvement plan identify the impact of the school's actions in raising standards, so that governors and senior managers can check more effectively on the success of the school's work and the impact of their spending.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	32
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	19

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	47	28	19	3	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	84
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	49

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	7	School data	73

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999 National Curriculum tests – six pupils

Teacher Assessment

	Working towards Level 1	Level 1
English	5	1
Speaking and listening	4	2
Reading	3	3
Writing	6	0
Mathematics	2	4
Science	0	6

Task and test results

	Working towards Level 1	Level 1	Level 2C
Reading task	4	1	1
Reading comprehension			1
Writing task	6	0	0
Mathematics	5	1	0

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999 National Curriculum tests – 26 pupils

Teacher assessment

	Working towards Level 1	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
English	4	11	11	0
Speaking and listening	3	10	12	1
Reading	4	11	11	0
Writing	3	9	14	0
Mathematics	3	9	14	0
Science	3	8	13	2

Test results

	Below Level 3	Level 3
English	24	2
Mathematics	23	3
Science	18	8

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	0
White	88
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

YR– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.7
Average class size	11.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff:

YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	286

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
----------------	------------------

	£
Total income	680327.00*
Total expenditure	675237.00
Expenditure per pupil	7238.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	42340.00
Balance carried forward to next year	47430.00

**This includes £109186 for financial support of two units based in mainstream schools for pupils on the roll of those schools. Taking this away from the expenditure at Hawthorns School for 1999, the expenditure per pupil was £6021.*

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out
Number of questionnaires returned

84
54

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	76	19	4	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	59	33	6	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	57	34	0	0	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	52	35	9	4	0
The teaching is good.	83	9	6	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	70	22	6	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	24	4	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	80	19	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	74	15	7	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	74	19	2	2	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	65	28	4	4	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	74	19	2	2	4

Other issues raised by parents

Problems with lateness of school transport and the condition of vehicles.