

INSPECTION REPORT

MEADOW WOOD SCHOOL

Bushey, Watford

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117691

Headteacher: Mr. John Addison

Reporting inspector: Sue Aldridge
8810

Dates of inspection: 5 – 8 February 2001

Inspection number: 188810

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special – physical and neurological impairment
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	3 – 12 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Coldharbour Road Bushey Hertfordshire
Postcode:	WD23 4NN
Telephone number:	020 8420 4720
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Hazel Whiting
Date of previous inspection:	19 May 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
(Ofsted No. 8810)	Sue Aldridge	Registered inspector	Mathematics Science Information and communication technology Music Foundation Stage	The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
(Ofsted No. 9974)	Daljit Singh	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
(Ofsted No. 22948)	Mary Vallis	Team inspector	English Art Design and technology Physical education	How well does the school care for its pupils?
(Ofsted No. 21527)	Hilary Gannaway	Team inspector	Geography History Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Meadow Wood is a mixed, day, community special school that provides for 28 pupils, from three to twelve, with physical and neurological impairments. All pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need or are being assessed for one. Most pupils have considerable mobility difficulties, and need support to communicate. About two thirds of pupils are white, and one third is of Asian origin. A small number of pupils are from families who do not speak English as their main language. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is low compared with similar schools.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school. Standards of achievement are good at the Foundation Stage, and satisfactory for other pupils. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive, and behaviour is good. Leadership is satisfactory. Although there are weaknesses in the way resources are used, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Children at the Foundation Stage achieve well, and have a good start to their education. Pupils achieve well in art and physical education.
- Relationships between all members of the school are very good, and contribute to the harmonious atmosphere in the school. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop moral and spiritual awareness.
- Pupils like coming to school, they behave well, show interest, and try hard to succeed in lessons.
- Teaching is good. Monitoring and support for teaching is effective. Large numbers of well-trained support staff make a strong contribution to teaching and learning.
- Medical care is excellent, and arrangements for child protection are very good. Pupils are valued, and cared for very well. Procedures for moving and handling are very good, and up-to-date equipment is provided for staff to use.
- The purpose-built accommodation is excellent, and maintained to a high standard. The grounds are well suited for pupils with mobility difficulties.

What could be improved

- There are some weaknesses in the teaching of communication skills: these affect the progress that pupils make in all areas of the curriculum. Weaknesses in teaching of reading and writing limit the progress that higher attaining pupils make in Key Stage 1.
- Subject co-ordinators have too little time to carry out their work, and some do not have all the skills that they need to monitor teaching and learning. This limits improvement.
- There are no assessment arrangements in most non-core subjects. Records of pupils' attainments are not summarised, which makes planning the next steps difficult.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to mix socially with one another in school, and with pupils of a similar age in other schools.
- Pupils' progress reports do not contain a section on every subject that is taught. There is no information on the success of the school's special needs policy in the recent governors' annual report to parents.

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

Following an inspection in 1996, the school was placed in special measures; it was removed from special measures after a re-inspection in 1998. Since 1998, improvement has been satisfactory. Standards of achievement have risen. Teaching has continued to improve, and support staff have been trained well to support pupils' learning. Training has helped teachers to develop a broad curriculum, which meets requirements. Curriculum planning has been further developed. Assessment policy and practice have improved, and the school has established better communication with parents. However,

further development of subjects has been limited by a lack of non-teaching time.

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 5	by age 11	Key	
speaking and listening	B	C	very good	A
reading	B	C	good	B
writing	B	C	satisfactory	C
mathematics	B	B	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	B	C	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	C		

* *Individual Education Plans*

In 1999/2000, the school set a whole-school target for 90 per cent of pupils to progress one level in personal and social development; 85 per cent of pupils achieved this.

Children at the Foundation Stage achieve very well in knowledge and understanding of the world. Pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2 achieve well in art and physical education. At Key Stage 2, pupils achieve well in mathematics. Weaknesses in teaching of communication skills, reading and writing, limit the achievements of a few pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Children soon settle in the nursery, and quickly grow to trust adults. Older pupils show interest in lessons, try hard to complete tasks that they are set, and co-operate well with adults.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave well in classes and around the school. They are pleased to see visitors, and are friendly and polite to them. There have been no exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is satisfactory; it is limited by the restricted opportunities to socialise with others of the same age. Relationships amongst all members of the school community are very good, and contribute to a pleasant working atmosphere.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Authorised absence is usually associated with pupils' medical conditions; there is no unauthorised absence.

Pupils develop a good understanding of the effect of their actions on others, and show caring attitudes towards one another, and respect others' feelings. Opportunities to develop responsibility are fairly limited, but some pupils show initiative, and are keen to help when they can. Certain pupils show great determination and perseverance in using their electronic communication aids.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	aged 5-11
Good, overall	Good	Good

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

Teaching is good, overall. Altogether, fifty-one lessons or parts of lessons were seen; two were excellent (4 per cent), eight were very good (16 per cent), twenty-one were good (42 per cent), eighteen were satisfactory (36 per cent), and two were unsatisfactory (4 per cent). Teaching is good at the Foundation Stage, in mathematics at Key Stage 2, and good, overall, in art, science, design and technology, and physical education. In English, personal, social and health education and all other subjects, teaching is satisfactory. Teaching has continued to improve since the last inspection. Numeracy skills are taught well across the curriculum. Teaching of communication skills, reading and writing is satisfactory. Most teachers plan well in order to meet the different needs of pupils, but occasionally pupils are set unsuitable tasks, and literacy skills of a few higher attaining pupils are not developed well enough. Teachers do not all give homework regularly; the best practice is in Year 6. The school has no homework policy.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	A very broad range of learning experiences is provided for children at the Foundation Stage. For others, the curriculum is broad, balanced, and generally well planned.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The school's development of pupils' communication skills helps them to understand English. They make the same progress as other pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school provides good opportunities for pupils to develop moral and spiritual awareness. There are satisfactory arrangements for pupils to develop socially and culturally, although there are missed opportunities for pupils to mix with other children of a similar age, and to learn about the many cultures in their society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a very high standard of care. Medical support is excellent, and therapists help pupils as well as they can in the time they have available. Staff are well trained in moving and handling pupils, and they are provided with up-to-date equipment to help them in this. Child protection procedures are very good. The school provides a well-maintained, and safe environment.

Overall, links with parents are good. They are very constructive at the Foundation Stage. Staff have worked hard to provide a curriculum that meets the revised National Curriculum requirements, and includes key skills.

Arrangements for the annual review of pupils' Statements of Special Educational Need are good. Not all pupils whose statements specify the need for signing have this provided consistently, because staff are not all skilled enough.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. There is a sense of common purpose, and a clear vision of how the school will develop in future. The headteacher has taken a lead in improving the quality of teaching, and the deputy headteacher leads well through the good example she sets as a successful classroom teacher. Subject co-ordinators are limited in the extent to which they can carry out monitoring of teaching and learning, and this limits improvement.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are a skilled and supportive group. They keep the school's work under review, and have a developing role in influencing its work. They meet most of their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school has set targets for improving standards, and carefully monitors outcomes. Target-setting for improving the performance of individual members of staff is well established. Progress of pupils against their individual targets is reviewed each term, but subject co-ordinators do not have time to check on achievements in their subjects.
The strategic use of resources	Unsatisfactory. Despite a comfortable surplus, there are too few learning resources in some subjects.

There are very good levels of support staff, and an adequate number of teachers. The accommodation is excellent. There are not enough learning resources in design and technology, physical education, geography and religious education. Although good training opportunities, and support and monitoring of teaching by the headteacher and others have contributed well to school improvement, the lack of time for subject co-ordinators has limited further development. The principles of best value are applied in a satisfactory manner.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school • Teaching is good • Behaviour in school is good • Parents feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or a problem • Parents are kept well informed about how their child is getting on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents feel that children do not get the right amount of work to do at home • The school should expect more from their children • Closer working with parents • Better leadership and management • More help for children to become more mature and responsible

Inspectors agree with parents' generally positive views of the school. They agree that arrangements for homework need to be formalised. They share the concerns raised by individual parents about the levels of therapy provided, the lack of expertise amongst staff about the potential of new technology to help pupils communicate, and the lack of opportunities for pupils to mix with other children of the same age. They do not share the other concerns raised.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

The characteristics of the pupils for whom the school caters make it inappropriate to judge the standards they achieve against age-related expectations or averages. In this report, therefore, judgements about achievement take account of information contained in pupils' annual reviews and their progress against the targets set for them. The report also gives examples of what pupils know, understand and can do.

1. Since the last inspection standards have risen. This improvement has been well supported by training for all staff, improved curriculum planning, and the development of assessment procedures. For example, training has helped to ensure that learning support assistants provide good quality support to pupils in most lessons, which helps pupils to progress.
2. At the Foundation Stage, achievements are good, and in knowledge and understanding of the world they are very good. Children soon settle when they come into the nursery; their curriculum provides a very broad range of learning experiences, and staff keep detailed records which are used well to plan the next steps. Staff work closely with parents, who appreciate the provision. These factors promote progress well, and give children a good start to their education.
3. At Key Stages 1 and 2, achievements are satisfactory. Pupils at both key stages make good progress in art and physical education; pupils at Key Stage 2 make good progress in mathematics and science. In all other subjects, standards of achievement are satisfactory, although there are some differences for groups of pupils with different disabilities and levels of attainment.
4. Achievements in the important skill of communication are satisfactory, overall. Most pupils are good at listening, but their opportunities to respond vary. Those that have speech get ample opportunities to answer questions, and take part in discussions across all subjects, and at both key stages, and this promotes progress well. Many others have communication difficulties, and need support to communicate. They do this in a variety of ways, some vocalise, point with their eyes to labels, or wristbands, that represent Yes and No, or use electronic equipment that activates sections of pre-recorded speech. By the time they are seven, pupils with speech utter whole sentences or phrases, and those who cannot speak eye-point or vocalise.
5. As they get older, some pupils without speech learn to use more complex electronic communication aids. Their general progress, across all subjects, accelerates noticeably once they obtain these. By the time they are eleven, higher-attaining pupils understand and carry out quite complex instructions; they can think quickly to give words with similar meanings, and they hold short conversations with adults they do not know well. Those who have no speech can use electronic aids to provide descriptions, of a monster, for example.
6. Although pupils without speech make satisfactory progress, overall, in communication, it is not consistent. This is because they are not always involved as well as they could be in discussions in all subjects. Not all staff have good enough signing skills, and a few pupils need this to support their understanding, and to communicate themselves. Speech therapists are very supportive, and work closely with school staff to support pupils' communication development, but their time is limited. There are also occasions when there have been long delays in providing pupils with much-needed communication aids, although this is being addressed.
7. Achievement in reading is satisfactory. All pupils enjoy books, particularly stories read aloud with

expression and dramatic effect. By the time they are seven, lower-attaining pupils press switches to activate sections of pre-recorded text, and they handle books, showing that they know that pages are to be turned from the front of the book to the back. Higher-attaining pupils know several letter names and sounds, and read short sentences. However, their progress is limited because too little time is devoted to the systematic teaching of reading skills. At the end of Key Stage 2, progress accelerates because teaching is brisk and skilful, which motivates pupils well. By the time they are eleven, pupils have a good understanding of language associated with books, such as *author* and *illustrator*. They read worksheets, and read for information, by using their knowledge of the alphabet to consult reference books, for example.

8. Achievement in handwriting, including spelling, is satisfactory, overall. Once again, there is a weakness in the progress of higher attaining pupils at the end of Key Stage1, as there is no handwriting policy, and no clear planning for the systematic development of handwriting skills. More physically competent pupils would benefit from more opportunities to write. By the time they are seven, lower-attaining pupils are able to grasp a crayon, and make marks on paper; higher-attaining pupils practise letter formation, and improve control by drawing between lines. At Key Stage 2, the regular use of communication aids has helped to promote progress in writing. By the time they are eleven, lower-attaining pupils can, with support, use computers to write; higher-attainers can write at some length, using correct spelling for common words, and making good use of their knowledge of letter sounds to attempt to spell less familiar words. Pupils show great determination and effort in generating writing in this way, and their perseverance is an important factor in supporting progress.
9. Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory at Key Stage 1, and good at Key Stage 2, where there are high expectations of participation and independent work. At Key Stage 1, progress is promoted well by teachers' good knowledge of the pupils, and similar approaches to planning. By the time they are seven, lower-attaining pupils understand mathematical terms, such as *more* and *less*, they are beginning to count and to develop an awareness of shapes. Some recognise simple patterns. Higher-attaining pupils recognise and order numbers up to 10, understand addition and subtraction, match circles, triangles and squares, and can predict which of two containers will hold *more*.
10. At Key Stage 2, progress is promoted well by the brisk pace to lessons; pupils respond well to high expectations and some work independently with little support. By the time they are eleven, lower-attaining pupils count up to eight objects, they have acquired a greater understanding of mathematical language, and are beginning to understand calculators. Higher-attaining pupils use a calculator competently, can calculate doubles of numbers up to 10 mentally; they can multiply and some are beginning to carry out simple division. They record their work using tables and graphs, and can draw conclusions from their work.
11. In science, progress is satisfactory at both key stages. Although pupils make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of the subject, progress in investigative skills is not as clear. Staff use scientific language well, and this helps pupils to understand terms, such as *resistance*. Teachers do not have a way of recording how pupils develop their investigative skills, and although pupils do develop these skills, pupils would make better progress if teachers had a record that enabled them to see what skills pupils have, and what skills need more work before they are achieved. Weaknesses in assessment and recording affect progress in other subjects too. For example, although teaching in design technology lessons is good, the lack of summary records makes it difficult for teachers to identify what needs further work.
12. In art and physical education, achievement is good across the school. In art, progress is promoted well by the range of learning experiences offered, and art plays an important role in supporting pupils' understanding in other subjects. For example, pupils' understanding of life in ancient Greece was supported well by artwork they did on this theme. In physical education, the teamwork between physiotherapists and school staff promotes progress well. The integration of physical exercise, and positioning, into the school day, supports physical development well too.
13. Achievement in personal, social and health education is satisfactory at both key stages. In the

year 1999/2000 the school set a challenging whole-school target for personal and social development. This was for 90 per cent of pupils to progress one level, on each of two scales. In fact, 85 per cent of pupils achieved this, which is satisfactory. Analysis of this work has given some useful pointers to the school, both about the need to moderate assessment, and the need to use one scale rather than two.

14. In general, parents are pleased with the progress that their children make, However, a few are concerned about progress being limited by levels of therapy provision, access to communication aids and a lack of expertise within the school's staff in relation to technological advancements to support pupils with communication difficulties. Inspectors agree that these factors limit progress, but find that progress is satisfactory nonetheless.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Pupils' relationships with their teachers are very effective and they have good attitudes to the school. These positive features help to promote learning.
16. In lessons, most pupils are attentive and show good levels of listening skills; most are eager to learn and enthusiastic. They enjoy the challenges that are presented to them in lessons. When working with support staff, most pupils co-operate well with them; when working in groups, pupils develop the ability to share. They are keen to discuss and show their work to teachers and adults. In several lessons and assemblies pupils were seen to applaud the good work done by their peers. Pupils form very good relationships with teachers, learning support assistants and adult visitors, showing appropriate levels of respect. Those that need a great deal of support co-operate well with adults who provide this. For example, older ones try hard to control their limbs so that adults can help them with dressing.
17. Some pupils work enthusiastically for significant periods of time. In the afternoon sessions, attention and concentration levels remain good, with pupils working well until the end of the school day. Although concentration spans are low for some pupils, particularly those who are severely disabled, they soon come back to task when asked to do so. Many are confident, and motivated by the informed and constructive teaching, which enables pupils to remain on task. This was particularly evident in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, where one pupil worked independently, following a short period of individual tuition, and he successfully calculated several simple division problems. A particular strength is the perseverance shown by some pupils. For example, those with electronic communication aids make a great effort to generate answers to questions, or to produce written work.
18. Pupils usually behave well in and out of lessons. They follow instructions well and are learning to come to order when asked to do so in assemblies and at appropriate moments in lessons. Pupils show respect for one another, for adults, and for the fabric of the building. Parents are appreciative of the good standards of behaviour in the school. No evidence of bullying was seen during the inspection period.
19. Pupils acquire some degree of independence as they mature, and personal development is satisfactory. Some pupils develop increasing levels of self-confidence by helping, and caring for their peers with more complex needs. However, in a majority of classes pupils remain dependent on teachers and classroom assistants, who organise resources and equipment. Pupils are pleased to help where they can, and in one lesson a pupil volunteered to switch off the lights before the class watched a video, then assisted the teacher in solving a problem with the video recorder.
20. Parents have reported that most pupils enjoy coming to school, and attendance is satisfactory. The increase in authorised absence since the last full inspection is explained by the increase in numbers of pupils with medical conditions. There is no unauthorised absence.
21. Since the last full report, the school has sustained the good behaviour of pupils, improved the

relationships between pupils and teachers and slightly increased the opportunities for independent learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

22. Teaching is good, overall. Altogether, fifty-one lessons or parts of lessons were seen; two were excellent (4 per cent), eight were very good (16 per cent), 21 were good (42 per cent), 18 were satisfactory (36 per cent), and two were unsatisfactory (4 per cent). Teaching is good at the Foundation Stage, in mathematics at Key Stage 2, and good, overall, in art, science, design and technology, and physical education. In all other subjects, teaching is satisfactory overall. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the school was last inspected.
23. The very good relationships that exist between all members of the school community contribute strongly to the quality of teaching and learning. Staff and pupils get on well together, they respect one another and this results in a harmonious atmosphere that is conducive to learning; in this respect the school meets its aims well.
24. In general, teachers have good subject expertise, and this is demonstrated in the way in which they use subject-specific language, and encourage pupils to use this too. However, expertise in teaching pupils with communication difficulties varies. Where practice is best, teachers and learning support assistants use signing consistently to support pupils' understanding, and pupils are beginning to use signs themselves as a result. This was seen in a mathematics lesson, when the use of the sign *together*, helped a pupil to understand the idea of addition. Not all staff are confident signers, and this means that pupils are not always included, in assemblies, for example. In some lessons, at Key Stage 2, pupils with communication difficulties are not included in all parts of discussion. This occurs occasionally at the beginning and end of lessons when learning support assistants are busy positioning or toileting some pupils, and not able to support pupils in a group discussion led by the teacher. For example, in science, pupils were not included in a recapitulation at the start of a lesson, although they were supported well in the main activity, being able to eye-point to a board on which the words Yes and No were written, for example. This enabled them to show what they had learned.
25. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to develop reading and writing skills, although there are differences for pupils of different abilities. The most able pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 do not make enough progress in reading, because there is too little time spent in teaching reading skills systematically. However, in Key Stage 2, teaching is brisk and skilful, and progress accelerates as a result. There is no policy or clear planning for the development of writing, and too few opportunities for more able pupils to write, and this limits progress at Key Stage 1. Teaching of writing skills is better at Key Stage 2, and progress accelerates.
26. The teaching of numeracy skills across the curriculum is good. Teachers seize opportunities for pupils to count, add and subtract at all times of the day. For example, at break times, pupils were asked *how many* drinks were needed, and *how many more*; once two pupils were given theirs. Staff use mathematical language well, in mathematics and other lessons. For example, one teacher reinforced positional language, such as *below* and *above*, in a lesson about keys on a computer keyboard. In science, the teacher showed pupils markings on the syringe they were about to use to measure a quantity of water, and referred to *millilitres*. Even in a music lesson, a pupil arriving late was welcomed, then asked what time she had left home, and asked to work out how long her journey had been.
27. Most lessons are planned and prepared well. Written plans are used by support staff to ensure that they know their precise role in lessons. Teachers have worked hard to improve the setting of suitable tasks for pupils of different abilities, as this was a criticism at the last inspection. In most lessons now, pupils are provided with tasks that are pitched at the right level, providing challenge, yet allowing them to achieve success. However, occasionally, pupils are set targets that are not appropriate. For example, a lower-attaining pupil in Key Stage 2 is working on word processing sentences, to familiarise him with the functions of keys on the computer keyboard, yet his targets

for English reveal that he is working on recognising letters of the alphabet, and some whole words.

28. A significant improvement in teaching is in the expertise and use of learning support assistants. Training has increased their skills, and raised their expectations. They now make a strong contribution to direct teaching. They frequently work with individual pupils, supporting their communication, providing physical prompts, questioning, clarifying and motivating. The amount of support given is generally well judged, so that pupils are encouraged to be as independent as possible. They greatly assist in keeping pupils on task.
29. Support staff continue to play an important role in preparing pupils for learning, by positioning them comfortably, for example. In most classes, positioning and toileting are achieved with minimal disruption to learning. In the early years class, highly developed teamwork ensures that children are swiftly, yet sensitively, moved from one position to another, or from one task to another, without loss of pace. There is a very good awareness of the need to provide stimulation, and pupils are placed where they can receive this. For example, whilst waiting a few minutes for individual support, children are placed below a hoop with trailing coloured ribbons, or next to a child turning the pages of the book, and given a toy to handle.
30. Teachers use a good variety of methods and learning resources, well suited to pupils' interests and abilities. Dramatic, animated teaching is highly successful in capturing pupils' interest. Children in the early years class were delighted by the teacher's imitations of animal noises, in a story about the jungle; they responded well, chuckling, smiling and vocalising. Older pupils respond well to such approaches, too, particularly when teachers are clearly enthusiastic about the topic. Conversely, when teachers lack enthusiasm, and they are not assertive in the instructions they give, the pace of the lesson slows, and pupils lose interest. Practical activities are well received by pupils. In mathematics, an exercise in weighing parcels, using non-standard measures chosen by the pupils, worked well. Pupils tackled the task with urgency, keen to find out how many objects were needed to balance the scales. Support staff carried out the recording so that pupils could concentrate on the activity, yet they made sure, by questioning, that pupils were using suitable language, and helped them to draw conclusions.
31. Staff are successful in maintaining pupils' interest when they use appealing resources. Some excellent use of sensory methods and resources was seen, particularly with younger pupils. For example, in the early years class, children were able to find out about woodland creatures by handling furry animals, exploring pine cones, watching a short video, listening to a recording of birdsong, making feeders for birds and tasting and smelling a variety of foods that hedgehogs might eat. These activities maintained children's interest very successfully, and provided much fun and enjoyment.
32. In the early years class, detailed records are kept showing how well children are progressing towards the targets set for them. Children are also given stickers for their achievements, which helps them to develop an awareness of their learning. Across the key stages, teachers record useful notes at the ends of lessons, and use these and their thorough knowledge of pupils to plan the next lessons. They use plenary sessions fairly well to make pupils aware of their achievements. Older pupils are fully involved in setting and reviewing their targets, and this is good practice. However, there are some weaknesses in setting targets that are too broad, and in involving non-verbal pupils enough in reviewing how well they have done. Because teachers do not have summary records in several subjects it is not easy for a teacher to see, at a glance, what pupils have learned and what gaps in learning need to be filled. This adversely affects learning of investigative skills in science, for example.
33. A small number of parents were concerned that their children did not have enough homework. Teachers do send tasks home, particularly reading, but practice is not consistent across the school, and there is no policy on homework. Homework is set regularly in Year 6, and pupils benefit from this. Practice is satisfactory, overall.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED

TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

34. The curriculum is satisfactory, overall. There is a suitable range of learning opportunities for pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2, and for children at the Foundation Stage the range is very good. For pupils from five to eleven the curriculum is well balanced, broad and relevant in all subjects. It meets statutory requirements and includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, including key skills, and religious education.
35. The curriculum at the Foundation Stage is very good. It is well planned and relevant to the needs of children. It takes very good account of all aspects of the Early Learning Goals as well as children's individual objectives, and provides a good start to their education at school. Detailed individual pupil assessment is used very well to inform the planning of suitable activities. This includes a good range of sensory experiences relevant to children's needs. Several good examples of this were observed during the inspection. Recent in-service training has resulted in good arrangements being put in place for pupils transferring from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1.
36. There has been satisfactory improvement in the curriculum since the last inspection. All subjects have good comprehensive long- and medium-term planning based on the revised National Curriculum and QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) documents for foundation subjects. Recently, teachers have worked hard to develop these plans, which include two-year cycles of work to take account of classes that have pupils from more than one year group. The long-term plans list succinctly what needs to be taught, while the medium-term plans clearly describe key areas, thus ensuring appropriate coverage of all aspects of the curriculum. Recently, short-term lesson planning has been revised to ensure that specific curricular outcomes are clearly stated in the planning. As yet, the use of these outcomes to revise and modify curricular planning is variable. Alongside this the school is developing and refining individual objectives for each pupil based on key skills. The aim of these objectives is that by breaking down knowledge, concepts and skills those pupils with the most severe and complex needs will consistently have full access to the curriculum. Although these objectives are still in the development stage it represents a satisfactory improvement on the last inspection when this was a key issue.
37. There are effective strategies for numeracy and literacy. These are supported by generally good planning in English and mathematics and have a positive effect on pupils' learning. Planning of how to teach writing skills needs further development.
38. All pupils and children in the Foundation Stage have Statements of Special Educational Needs and appropriate Individual Education Plans. The school provides satisfactorily for the needs that are broadly described in pupils' statements, although the development of their signing skills is a weakness. Staff work hard to ensure that all pupils have an equal opportunity to access all aspects of provision. However, for the few pupils who are withdrawn from lessons for therapy or links with other schools, there is no monitoring to ensure that they receive a balanced curriculum. Communication aids, which are vital for some pupils' participation in lessons, are not always available as speedily as they should be, and this also limits pupils' access to the curriculum.
39. Links with other establishments are satisfactory. For example, the school shares a site with the local secondary school with which it has a long-standing link. Students from this school come in to Meadow Wood on community service and for work experience. Transition arrangements for pupils leaving the school at eleven are well planned. Supported links, where pupils spend time in their new school, are gradually built up to ensure that pupils know the school well before they transfer. At present, integration links are limited to one pupil. The school is, however, involved in a collaborative project with a local primary school to promote inclusion.
40. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular lunchtime activities that the pupils enjoy. These include dancing, reading, playing games and listening to music. Pupils also have access to a holiday play scheme based at the school, and there are plans to start a cycle club.

41. Links with the community are limited. The school has a suitable range of educational visits to supplement curriculum activities, with all classes having weekly access to the mini bus. These visits include the local library, museums and the local shops, all of which make suitable contributions to pupils' learning. The school receives financial support from a range of local groups. There is a limited number of visitors from the community and occasional visits from theatre groups. However, the school has recently contacted the Community Education Development Officer in order to develop extra-curricular activities.
42. The provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory. Aspects such as self-care skills, choices, group participation, turn-taking and decision making are suitably promoted within a range of strands that include health education, environmental issues and an awareness of the wider community. Suitable targets are beginning to be set using the 'P' scales that relate to personal and social development. There are satisfactory up-to-date guidelines for sex education, which is taught at Key Stage 2, and sufficient attention is given to drugs misuse.
43. The provision for spiritual development is good, and pupils learn to appreciate the worth and values of each person. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. Lessons are planned well to provide pupils with activities that generate awe and wonder. Pupils are taught to develop an awareness of their own thoughts, feelings, and emotions. As a result, they develop a sense of individual identity, and self-esteem. Attitudes of staff to pupils are positive, and encourage mutual respect.
44. There are sound opportunities for a collective act of worship and these complement existing spiritual development. Assembly themes are well planned and designed to encourage pupils to look beyond the obvious; they also provide opportunities to develop awareness of other faiths. Special achievement assemblies recognise pupils' efforts and help to develop self-esteem. Pupils develop personal beliefs, including religious beliefs. During the inspection, pupils were encouraged to ask questions about conservation, and they were made aware of the significant link between faith and conservation. Pupils were inspired by the natural world. There are also opportunities to experience Christianity and beliefs from other world faiths, including visits to places of worship.
45. The provision for pupils' moral development is good. There is a clear emphasis on mutual respect, and high expectations of good behaviour, which results in consideration and care for others. Pupils are polite and extremely friendly, and most can clearly distinguish right from wrong. Circle and story time are used constructively to talk about positive attitudes and values and help children to realise that they need to take responsibility for their actions. Pupils learn that, in society, rules can be interpreted differently, and that sometimes allowances are made for people who break the rules. They are encouraged to tell the truth, and praised when they do. Teachers insist on good manners by emphasising polite and considerate behaviour, respect for one another, and for property.
46. The provision for social development is satisfactory. Development of pupils' communication skills underpins their social development, and this is carried out satisfactorily. Positive relationships are promoted successfully when pupils do mix outside lessons. They are encouraged to show consideration and sensitivity towards one another, taught the value of friendship, and encouraged to interact constructively during break and lunchtimes. Staff provide opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively in the classroom. However, wider opportunities are missed because pupils do not eat as a whole school at lunchtime, and friends are separated by this practice. There are very few opportunities to interact with able-bodied pupils of the same age in neighbouring mainstream schools, and this is a significant weakness.
47. The overall provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. The school celebrates festivals such as Christmas and Easter, as well as those from non-Christian groups, such as Diwali and Chanukah. Through history, pupils are made aware of ancient civilisations, and encouraged to value their own British heritage. Music and art provide some opportunities for pupils to develop their cultural awareness. However, there is scope for further improvement to ensure that

the curriculum fully reflects the cultural diversity of today's Britain.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

48. The school has maintained its very good provision for physical support and welfare, and the very good procedures for child protection. These areas are strengths of the school. Teachers, support staff and therapists work harmoniously to meet the individual needs of pupils who feel valued and secure. Pupils are treated with courtesy and respect. Their dignity is maintained when physical procedures are carried out, and this is helped by the excellence of accommodation, which provides the space and facilities for intimate care and therapies. These procedures are guided well by the school's intimate care policy.
49. Child protection procedures meet the statutory requirements that they should be in line with local procedures. Child protection has a high profile within the school and there is close co-operation between the school nurse and the headteacher, who is the designated person responsible. He liaises closely with a number of outside agencies and benefits from being able to consult a specialist Education Welfare Officer for advice. All staff receives training in child protection on induction to the school. This is updated regularly.
50. Two members of staff are fully trained as trainers and risk assessors in moving and handling procedures: these procedures are very good. All staff, who show a high level of awareness of the needs of the pupils, and of their own safety, have been well trained. Full risk assessment has been carried out to make activities, such as helping a pupil mount a bicycle or enter the swimming pool, as safe as possible. Hydraulic beds and versatile hoists assist moving and handling, and help pupils access the curriculum more fully and comfortably. For example, one hoist enables pupils to be lifted safely from their wheelchairs, and helps to place them at the correct angle in their standing frames.
51. There are good health and safety procedures throughout the school. Fire bells are tested regularly, and fire exits clearly marked. The site is maintained to a very high standard, both indoors and out, presenting few hazards to pupils unsteady on their feet, or using aids for walking. Regular risk assessment takes place on site, and there is risk assessment of all off-site activities, including prior visits to venues when necessary. All electrical appliances are tested annually and the hydrotherapy pool and playground equipment receive regular maintenance. Procedures for transport are satisfactory. There are effective handover procedures at the beginning and end of the day and the large car park provides room for vehicles to manoeuvre safely. However, fire drills are not carried out termly.
52. Procedures for monitoring and supporting positive behaviour are good. The behaviour policy is short, sensible and effective. Sanctions and rewards are simple and fair, allowing staff to deal with pupils on an individual basis. There is good target-setting to improve behaviour, and individual behaviour plans are used selectively. Staff manage behaviour very well, always looking to praise the positive and not over-reacting to lapses. A very good example was seen when a pupil made a fuss during a PE lesson. She was briefly removed from the room, quickly reintegrated into the class on her return, and commended as soon as she deserved praise.
53. Other professionals make a strong contribution to meeting the individual needs of pupils, and assisting their access to the curriculum; this supports well the aims and objectives of the school. The full-time nurse has ensured that there are good systems in place for administering and recording medication. Good training for staff in individual care techniques, such as tube feeding or the administration of oxygen, means that all pupils have equal access to trips outside school. The nurse acts as a link between home, the school and other professionals, such as the paediatricians and has been involved with the deputy headteacher in drawing up the increasingly useful care plans for pupils.
54. The concern that some parents have, that their children receive insufficient speech and language therapy and occupational therapy, is justified. The population of the school is changing, with

more pupils requiring more support. Statements are unhelpful with regards to this provision because they do not specify the amount of input pupils should receive. Therapists submit very good quality reports, as well as attending meetings that precede annual reviews, and action planning meetings that follow reviews. Their support, advice and guidance help staff to implement the class targets set for the physical and personal development of pupils. They move quickly in and out of classrooms, fetching pupils for individual sessions or observing and assisting with procedures within the lesson.

55. A wide range of appliances, such as wrist splints, helps pupils to access the curriculum and give a greater sense of independence. However, there is no technician available to tailor make the aids suggested by the occupational therapist, whose time is particularly restricted. The physiotherapists work in conjunction with all staff but especially those teaching physical education, so that maximum benefit can be gained from physical activities. Speech and language therapists offer good advice about communication aids. Parents are rightly concerned that alternative means of communication sometimes takes too long to acquire. This process is currently being speeded up, however, through the setting up of a Local Education Authority (LEA) panel to consider requests. The school has no teacher with overall responsibility for communication, or up-to-date expertise in the possible uses of new technology, and this is a weakness. Some pupils have understandably made significant gains in learning once they are provided with an appropriate source of communication.
56. Satisfactory systems are in place to ensure that pupils' levels of attendance and absence are monitored satisfactorily. The information is used effectively to investigate all absences and to work in co-operation with parents and the Education Welfare Officer.
57. There has been some improvement in assessment procedures since the previous inspection and these are now satisfactory. Teachers know their pupils well, and are able to identify levels of attainment in core subjects, using either 'P' levels or National Curriculum levels. All pupils are assessed on entry to Class 1 by the use of a base-line assessment that has been modified to meet the needs of pupils at the school. They are reassessed at the end of the year. The use of 'P' scales has helped teachers to assess pupils more accurately. A few pupils have completed the national Standard Attainment Tests at the end of Key Stages 1 or 2 successfully.
58. There are still significant weakness, however, relating to assessment of the foundation subjects and the use of assessment in the planning of future lessons. There has been no assessment developed in most foundation subjects, and although teachers record comments on how well pupils have done in lessons on their lesson plans, these do not form an accessible summary record for them, or the next teacher, to use to plan the next steps in learning. These weaknesses in the use of assessment information limit progress in some subjects.
59. Annual review reports for English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology are good and contribute well to each pupil's annual review of their statement. Annual reviews are carried out in accordance with the recommendations in the existing Code of Practice. Long-term targets set at this time are translated into shorter-term targets for pupils' individual programmes, that are improving all the time. Older pupils contribute to their own reviews and target-setting, which raises their self-esteem and supports personal development. The school makes the provision specified on statements, although provision for signing is inconsistent. Records of achievement and newly developed annotated portfolios of work are beginning to contribute well to assessment procedures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

60. Most parents have positive views of the school. They enjoy a constructive relationship with the teaching and non-teaching staff and much appreciate the school's work on their children's behalf.

These parents understand that the school sees them as key partners in their children's education, and welcome and value their support. However, a small but significant minority is rightly concerned about the regularity of homework, which is only given consistently in Year 6.

61. The senior management team, governors, and staff work diligently with parents, and continue to achieve parents' active participation. Workshops are held for parents, which support standards in reading and communication. Parents are encouraged to support the school and pupils' learning through the Parent-Staff Association, the Woodlanders. The association has been very active in fund-raising and in providing an opportunity for parents to meet socially.
62. The school provides a satisfactory level of communication between the school and home. Parents are actively encouraged to attend parents' evenings and annual reviews and special arrangements are made for parents who are unable to attend. Some parents bring their child to school and take this opportunity to meet and talk to class teachers. This offers them the chance to visit the classroom, acknowledge their child's achievements and understand the topics being taught. Parents receive clear and purposeful written information in a friendly style through the school prospectus and the annual report from governors. However, information about the provision for special needs is omitted from the governors' annual report. This affects the general quality of information and fails to meet statutory requirements.
63. Parents are invited to annual reviews and to medicals, to enable them to understand the progress their child is making. They also receive an annual report on pupils' progress. Parents appreciate these reports, and information on subjects reported is good, but reports do not meet requirements because they fail to report on all the subjects taught. Parents praise and value in particular the excellent quality of medical support and the home-school diary, which enables parents to assess their child's daily progress and makes communication between home and school more accessible. Parents have agreed to support the school by signing a home-school agreement, which further reinforces the relationship between parents, governors and pupils.
64. Since the last report, the school has made significant progress in addressing parents' concerns about communication between the school and themselves. However, there is scope for further improvement, in particular keeping parents well-informed as to what the school's plans for development are. For example, some parents wrote of concerns about out of date computer equipment, and the school has advanced plans to address this.
65. A few parents expressed other concerns that inspectors agreed with. For example, parents are disappointed that pupils do not get out into the school grounds often enough, that no member of staff has specific expertise in how technology can support pupils' communication, and that pupils have waited a long time to be allocated electronic communication aids.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

66. Leadership is satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear vision of how the school should develop in the future, to meet the needs of pupils with physical and neurological impairments in a more inclusive way, and capitalising on advances in information and communication technology. Staff share a commitment to improvement through school self-evaluation, and there is a sense of common purpose. There have recently been a number of positive developments that will help the school to move towards its goals, including an opportunity to work more closely with other mainstream schools, and an exciting link with an external agency which should provide better assessment of pupils' communication needs.
67. Over the past four years, the headteacher has led well on monitoring and supporting teaching, and external personnel have also been involved, to bring an impartial view, and give additional support. Significant improvements in teaching testify to the success of the work that has been done, and teachers are now quite accustomed to having targets set and regularly reviewed. This means that staff are well prepared for performance management.

68. Since the school's last inspection the staff team has been strengthened by the appointment of a new deputy headteacher. Governors decided to appoint a teaching deputy, which was sensible at the time, since the school needed to cut back on expenditure. However, it does mean that the deputy headteacher has little time for development work. Nevertheless, she has led well by example, and teachers appreciate the fact that she is a fellow practitioner. She has taken a lead on the curriculum and its assessment, and led well the development on whole-school target-setting to improve standards. Her recent attendance on a school self-evaluation course has improved her skills and confidence in monitoring and evaluation. The school's capacity for improvement, which is good, has been increased by her appointment.
69. Subject co-ordinators have several responsibilities each, and no regular non-teaching time intended for carrying out their duties. Despite this, several have supported their colleagues, taken training courses, some in their own time, and audited resources. All have overseen successfully the improvements in curriculum planning and assessment, and all have a sound grasp of what needs to be done to improve provision further. For example, they are aware that they need to monitor teaching and learning in their subjects, and subject leaders in most foundation subjects know that they need to develop assessment and recording systems. However, not all subject co-ordinators are confident in their ability to carry out monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, as they have not all had training.
70. Senior managers are well supported by skilled and committed governors, who keep the work of the school under review and are beginning to influence developments. For example, one governor encouraged the formulation of longer-term strategic planning, and another supported the school's application for Investors in People status. Governors fulfil most of their statutory obligations well, although the recent annual report to parents did not include a statement on the success of the school's special educational needs policy. Reports on pupils' progress do not meet requirements because they do not cover all the subjects taught.
71. Arrangements for staff development are good, and have supported school improvement well. For example, training has significantly improved the skills of the large number of support staff, and they now make a strong contribution to teaching and learning. This has helped to improve standards. Staff are well managed, and working in teams helps to maintain good communication and build positive relationships amongst staff and other professionals. All staff have an identified line manager, and arrangements for performance review extend to support staff, and to lunchtime supervisory staff, who are well managed by the school's administrator.
72. Financial administration is carried out very effectively by the school's administrator, who provides the headteacher with monthly statements. Governors are kept well-informed, and the minor recommendations of the recent auditors' report have been implemented.
73. There are a number of weaknesses in the way the school uses its resources, which is unsatisfactory, overall. Following a period when the budget was fairly tight, there is now a comfortable underspend, and the school is fortunate in having the services of a good supply teacher. Despite this, subject co-ordinators do not have enough time to carry out their many responsibilities. This has meant that they have missed opportunities to develop their subjects. For example, whilst they have been developing subject planning, co-ordinators have not all been able to check that there are sufficient resources to teach broader programmes. Funding has not been allocated to subjects according to needs, but simply shared out. There are shortfalls in learning resources in design and technology, physical education, geography and religious education. However, the school does link funding satisfactorily to priorities through the School Development Plan. It applies the principles of best value satisfactorily, ensuring that it gets good value for money from its purchases, and it is beginning to compare pupils' achievements with those from a similar school locally. Staffing levels are satisfactory, overall.
74. The school has excellent purpose-built accommodation, and grounds that are well suited to pupils with mobility difficulties, although there is no shade and no safety surface for younger children to play on. There is good storage space, and there are plans to move resources to a central storage area, audit these, and implement a system of checking these in and out. However, not all the facilities are used well. The hall is not used for dining, as pupils eat in their classrooms, and the

soft play area is used very little. The outdoor areas, although well-adapted for pupils for mobility difficulties, are used very little, and some parents expressed concerns about this.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

75. The headteacher, governors and staff should:

- Improve the teaching and learning of communication, reading and writing by:
 - ensuring that all pupils are included in discussions
 - increasing staff expertise in the use of signing, and in the use of new technology to support communication
 - continuing to work closely with external agencies to keep to a minimum the time it takes for pupils to be assessed for, and provided with, communication aids
 - increasing the time given to teaching reading skills to higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 1
 - developing and implementing a handwriting policy
 - providing more opportunities for higher attaining pupils to write
(Paragraphs 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 14, 24, 25, 38, 55)
- Develop the roles of subject co-ordinators by:
 - providing them with training in monitoring and evaluation
 - providing them with the time to carry out key tasks
(Paragraph 69)
- Improve assessment by:
 - developing systems in those foundation subjects that do not have these
 - developing a summary record of pupils' attainments that teachers can use to plan the next steps in learning
(Paragraphs 57, 58)
- Improve learning resources in design and technology, geography, physical education and religious education
(Paragraph 73)
- Increase opportunities for pupils to socialise, in school and with pupils of a similar age in mainstream schools
(Paragraph 46)
- Meet statutory requirements by:
 - ensuring that the governors' annual report to parents contains a section on the success of the school's policy on special educational needs
 - ensuring that pupils' annual progress reports contain a section on each subject taught.
(Paragraph 70)

Governors should consider including the following minor points in the action plan:

- develop and implement a homework policy
- ensure that targets for individual pupils are specific and measurable
(Paragraphs 32, 33)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

51

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

27

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	16	42	18	4	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

	Nursery	Y1 – Y7
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	3	23
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	Y1 – Y7
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3	23
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	3	23

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	11.66
National comparative data	10.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.6

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

Attainment

Fewer than 10 pupils were assessed at the ends of Key Stages 1 and 2.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y7

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.0
Average class size	4.5

Education support staff: YR– Y7

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	443

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	99/2000
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	£
Total income	447524
Total expenditure	432786
Expenditure per pupil	16646
Balance brought forward from previous year	24320
Balance carried forward to next year	39058

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

26

Number of questionnaires returned

18

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	83	17	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	39	44	6	0	11
Behaviour in the school is good.	56	39	0	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	50	22	0	0
The teaching is good.	61	33	0	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	56	28	11	0	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	28	6	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	28	17	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	56	28	17	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	61	22	6	6	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	11	11	0	22
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	22	6	0	6

Other issues raised by parents

Several parents expressed concerns about the small amount of speech and occupational therapy their children receive; they were also concerned about the time taken for children to receive electronic communication aids.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

76. Standards of achievement at the Foundation Stage are good. Children at the Foundation Stage make very good progress in knowledge and understanding of the world, and good progress in all other areas of learning. As soon as they arrive in the nursery class, they are assessed and are set suitable targets for development in all areas. They are provided with a rich variety of learning experiences, and good levels of support. Detailed records are kept of children's progress, and targets are reviewed regularly and frequently. Close contact and co-operation with parents is maintained, and this helps to promote progress well. The children in this age group have considerable communication and mobility difficulties, and some need close medical supervision; none has much discernible speech. As there are so few children, it is not appropriate to distinguish between the achievements of lower- and higher-attaining individuals. The good quality of provision has been maintained since the last inspection.

Personal, social and emotional development

77. Children soon settle in the nursery class, and appear to be quite happy after only a few sessions. They clearly trust adults, and this makes them feel safe and secure, which helps them to learn.
78. Teaching and learning are good; two sessions were seen and teaching was good in one and satisfactory in the other. Good quality assessment, target setting and thorough planning of activities ensure that all children work on suitable activities. Children are well supported; staff position them carefully, warning them that they are about to be moved, which builds children's trust. At break times staff encourage children to interact with one another, and during play sessions staff initiate activities and model actions for children to copy. Children's self-esteem grows as staff give them stickers as rewards for good work and effort. They begin to be toilet trained; some will remain dry until taken to the toilet, although they do not yet communicate the need to go. Children co-operate well with adults to dress them, but not all help with their own physical movements. Gradually, they show a greater awareness of adults and peers, and sometimes appear to be reaching out to other children.

Communication, language and literacy

79. Teaching and learning are good; three sessions were seen and teaching was good in two and satisfactory in one. There is good collaboration with the speech therapist in planning suitable programmes. Children show an increasing awareness of the adults around them; they seek eye contact, and will vocalise at appropriate times, such as during assembly. Good use is made of switches for children to press to activate recorded messages, and all staff provide an environment that is rich in language. Children gradually gain in confidence in activating switches. For example, one pressed a switch several times to play a recorded greeting. In the *Hello* sessions, children begin to recognise themselves in photographs. Some children make quite deliberate sounds, that approximate well to *Yes* and *No* responses.
80. Stories are told with great expression and animation, and children love this. They respond with chuckles, smiles and vocalisation. They clearly enjoy books, and show that they know how these work, when they turn the pages from front to back, then push the book to the floor when they have finished with it. Children begin to join in with reading stories aloud when they activate switches to play a recorded section of the text, although they do not always do this at the right time. There is a good variety of texts to provide ample opportunities for practice. Children make great efforts to grasp writing tools, and staff support their efforts well; some children are beginning to make marks on paper.

Mathematical development

81. Teaching and learning are good; one session only was seen, but in this, good teaching was associated with good target-setting, good levels of support and the use of suitable methods. Staff make good use of number songs and rhymes, and children are beginning to vocalise along with these; similarly they also join in with counting exercises. Good levels of support enable children to explore simple measures through sand and water play, and to grasp, place and release puzzle pieces.
82. In common with all areas of learning, support assistants make a good contribution to direct teaching and learning. In one session seen, a learning support assistant used good mathematical language, and reinforced counting well. She also showed high expectations by approaching more difficult concepts. As she offered a child puzzles, she emphasised shape, such as *round* ladybirds, and *square* blocks. She also pointed out that when *two* pieces had been placed correctly there were *two left*. She carefully counted the four pieces, at the start of the exercise then again at the end, pointing to each piece as she did so. Throughout this short session, the child was most co-operative, attentive and responsive; she clearly found it interesting and stimulating.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

83. Children make very good progress in knowledge and understanding of the world. They have a very rich variety of learning experiences which are drawn together well as themes or topics. Teaching and learning are very good; out of five observations, three were good, two very good and one excellent. Good use of switches is very effective in developing children's understanding of cause and effect. Children who have only been in class for a few sessions were seen operating equipment by using switches. For example, one was switching a fan on and off. With great fascination, he watched the multi-coloured ribbons streaming in the wind blown from the fan.
84. During the inspection, children were following up their visit to the woods, made earlier in the term, by finding out more about woodland creatures. An excellent range of resources was used to promote children's learning. They were encouraged to hold furry animals, and a short video about a hedgehog was skilfully used. All children had the opportunity to explore a range of plant material collected from the woods, and a piece of electronic equipment was set up to activate a recording of birdsong when children activated it by interrupting a beam. Tactile experiences were increased with the making of a grass hedgehog using pop socks and seeds. These experiences, enriched with the good use of associated language, combined very effectively to promote children's learning. The lesson pace was brisk, children's excitement very well managed, and adults clearly enjoyed the session as much as the children did. The following day, children extended their learning further in a session where they considered what hedgehogs might like to eat. They showed interest and curiosity when they tested several different foods, tasting and smelling them, before deciding which hedgehogs might prefer. This session was fun, and children responded well, trying out different foods, reaching out, making eye contact, and some responding with one or two words.

Physical development

85. Teaching and learning are good; two sessions were seen and teaching was good in both of these. The teacher has a particularly good level of expertise in this area, and works well with physiotherapists to set suitable targets for children.
86. Lessons are fun, and there is a brisk pace, which helps to maintain children's interest and motivation. As a result they try hard, and respond well when given opportunities to show others what they can do. Because they are well supported, they increase their confidence in the swimming pool, kicking their legs in turn, and swaying from side to side. In a lesson in the hall, there was a quiet, calm and purposeful atmosphere, which helped children to concentrate on their individual activities. Each had their turn to demonstrate their success, and they were suitably

praised for their achievements. For example, one was praised for looking really closely at the ball before hitting it. All were able to show clear gains in this session; one followed the movement of a chiffon scarf, moving hands to catch it as it fell, another was able to use a walker to walk up to a large ball and kick it. Records show that these gains are sustained over time, with children developing better balance and control over their movements, as well as developing the ability to become still and relax, to music, for example.

87. The accommodation and facilities provided for this age group are generally spacious and well-suited for children's physical needs. However, the lack of a safety surface outside is a weakness.

Creative development

88. Teaching and learning are good; two sessions were seen, and teaching was good in both of these. Children have opportunities to explore a wide range of medium, and begin to develop preferences. For example, one prefers musical experiences, rather than art activities. One child's favourite instruments are the cabassa and bells, and this child will vocalise when familiar songs are sung. Other children like messy tasks, such as spreading glue, or applying paint; they choose colours by vocalising, and with support, can apply materials such as cotton wool to finish off a representation of a squirrel.
89. During the inspection, children joined some of their older peers to make food for birds, using pine cones, fat and birdseed. Activities were well selected to promote communication as well as knowledge and understanding. For example, children were given good hand-over-hand support when exploring the cones and the fat with their hands – some really enjoyed this, others were not so sure. Personal preferences and religious beliefs had been taken into account, ensuring that the fat was vegetarian and Kosher. There was very good use of alliterative language used by the teacher as children explored the fat. She described it as *slippery*, *slimy*, *squishy* and *snakey*, as it became warm and soft from handling. Support assistants talked quietly to children as they carried out activities, and were rewarded with smiles, vocalisation and increased eye contact.

ENGLISH

90. Standards of achievement in English are satisfactory, overall, across both key stages. Standards are satisfactory, overall, in speaking and listening, reading and writing although there are slight variations for pupils of different abilities. Since the last full inspection in 1996, the National Literacy Strategy has been successfully introduced, standards in all three attainment targets have risen, and the quality of teaching and learning has improved.
91. During Key Stage 1, pupils' communication skills are encouraged in a wide variety of ways. Pupils are given constant opportunities to make choices and express preferences. They listen well because all adults insist that they pay attention. Social skills and turn-taking in conversation are developed through the use of voice or communication aids, although the use of these aids is not always consistent. For example, pupils who use coloured wristbands to indicate 'yes' or 'no' are not always wearing them and signing is not used enough throughout the school for those pupils who benefit from this type of communication. This means that some skills being developed at home are not reinforced enough at school. The use of simple aids, such as the Big Mack, is an effective means of enabling young pupils to feel included. For example, the greeting "Hello, how are you?" was recorded for one pupil who was then enabled to ask a number of peers for their response. By the age of seven, higher-attaining pupils speak a short sentence; other pupils, who use voice to communicate, use phrases such as 'want to work on folder', and lower-attaining pupils respond by eye-pointing or vocalisation.
92. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils make satisfactory progress, overall, in communication. Speech and language therapists work closely with all staff to advise on specific targets and appropriate communication aids. However, some progress is restricted because of the lack of time available

for speech therapy and the time that it takes to acquire some communication aids. Once pupils receive their aids, progress is usually rapid. By the time they are eleven, higher-attaining pupils receive and act on complex instructions. They respond to quick questioning as they supply 'scared, terrified' as synonymous for 'frightened.' Pupils reliant on electronic aids work very hard to describe a monster and a lower-attaining pupil used humour to enliven a class discussion as he deliberately gave a wrong answer. At the moment, although there are links with the bilingual service, they do not advise on communication for the small number of pupils who speak two languages. Opportunities for socialising and communication are lost because pupils do not meet together as a community to eat lunch, and often spend breaktimes in their classrooms.

93. Standards of achievement in reading are satisfactory, overall, by the end of Key Stage 1. All pupils clearly enjoy well read stories and this, together with sufficient books that engage their interest, helps progress. Pupils of average and lower ability make satisfactory progress in reading, but a few higher ability readers do not make enough progress. This is because there is too little systematic teaching of skills at an appropriate level. The youngest pupils keenly anticipate the next word in a story, they can press switches to activate the punch-line and show delight in sound effects. Some pupils are able to turn the pages of a book and lift flaps to reveal pictures. Older pupils recognise their name and familiar symbols, and can sequence photographs. Higher-attaining pupils know letter names and sounds, and can sometimes read short sentences, showing a high degree of concentration. Pupils continue to make progress at the beginning of Key Stage 2. More able pupils know that books have a title page, an author and an illustrator and they recognise some simple punctuation marks. They are beginning to use their knowledge of phonics to read new words. Progress is rapid at the end of Key Stage 2, because teaching is brisk and skilful, and pupils work very hard to meet their targets. Pupils can read their worksheets and use their knowledge of the alphabet to use an index before consulting reference books. By the time pupils are eleven, standards of achievement are satisfactory.
94. Standards of achievement in writing are again satisfactory for middle and lower-attaining pupils but unsatisfactory for the most able at the end of Key Stage 1. The youngest pupils are encouraged to grasp a crayon and make marks on paper with the aid of arm splints where necessary. Pupils in Year 2 improve their co-ordination skills as they use circular and up- and down-motions to draw lines. More able pupils practise letter formation and draw between lines. The absence of a handwriting policy and clear planning for the development of writing skills is impeding the progress of more physically competent pupils. There are also too few opportunities for more able pupils to write. Information technology is beginning to be used to support the spelling and writing of pupils.
95. Standards of achievement are satisfactory across Key Stage 2 although, again, pupils would benefit from a consistent approach to handwriting for those for whom it is relevant. Younger pupils in this key stage can tell adults their news in sequence. They can, by the use of eye pointing where necessary, select symbols on the computer to match the writing. Higher-attaining pupils can complete sentences by adding a word, making good attempts at copying the letters correctly. By the age of eleven the most able pupils can write a significant amount using the correct spelling for the most common words and using good phonic knowledge to attempt others. The regular use of communication aids has had a significant impact on the ability of pupils to communicate their knowledge and ideas, and has helped to improve their spelling skills. This often requires much perseverance and hard physical effort on the part of pupils. The consistent encouragement of all adults plays a significant part in the success of this process.
96. Teaching was at least satisfactory in eight out of the nine lessons seen. Four lessons were good or very good and one lesson was unsatisfactory. The youngest and oldest pupils in the school receive particularly good teaching. Here, teachers have high expectations, they use a wide range of methods to engage pupils' interest and they convey their enthusiasm to the pupils. As a result, the youngest and oldest pupils learn best. Teachers have worked very hard to modify the National Literacy Strategy to meet the needs of the school. This has been implemented successfully. All teachers use multi-sensory teaching to good effect. For example, pupils clearly enjoyed activating a voice by pushing a pad when listening to 'The Three Little Pigs.' Most work is well-matched to the ability of the pupils, but there is sometimes a lack of planning for the consistent development of reading and writing skills for the higher ability pupils at the end of Key

Stage 1. Not all teachers are equally confident with the use of signing and this means that some pupils, especially in the early part of Key Stage 2, do not benefit sufficiently from this means of communication. This was a reason for one lesson being judged unsatisfactory. Pupils who require signing to support their understanding are also disadvantaged during whole-school occasions, such as assemblies. The quality of relationships is high in all classes. Teachers, therapists and support staff all work in harmony to assist learning and meet the individual needs of pupils.

97. The school has concentrated hard on the assessment of English. The annual progress reports to parents shows clearly the levels the pupils have reached in all areas of the subject, and the individual education plans (IEPs) set targets for the next year. These are closely linked to the pupils' statements and annual reviews. Older pupils contribute to their own termly targets. All teachers are good at assessing pupils orally. Written comments on work are helpful for older pupils. Teachers are developing on-going systems that record pupils' attainment and progress in a manageable way, and should help them to plan future work.
98. Leadership in the subject is satisfactory and improving. The co-ordinator is keen and knowledgeable but has too little time to monitor the subject consistently. She has done a very good job in setting up an attractive library with good quality books. However, although this is central to the school it is considerably underused. The school has a good number of reference and story books, well supplemented by the local library service, which provides an efficient loan service. The self-esteem of pupils is raised by the choice of reading scheme, which is that used by many mainstream schools. Pupils can, therefore, share books more readily with their brothers or sisters. However, there are too few books reflecting ethnic diversity, and books do not celebrate or support well enough the varying cultural backgrounds of pupils. There are a good number of big books to support the National Literacy Strategy, and many taped stories.

MATHEMATICS

99. Standards of achievement in mathematics are satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. The best progress is made by pupils at the end of Key Stage 2. There has been satisfactory improvement since the school had a full inspection in 1996; more time is devoted to teaching the subject, the curriculum is broader and better planned, and the quality of teaching has improved. The school is making satisfactory use of the three-part structure of the numeracy strategy, and some successful oral/mental and plenary sessions were seen. Through plenary sessions, and by reviewing their targets, pupils develop an awareness of their learning, and higher-attaining Year 6 pupils have a clear grasp of what their targets are and how well they are progressing towards them. Teachers also use lessons well for enabling pupils to work on their individual mathematics targets. However, there is some room for improvement in setting more specific targets.
100. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make satisfactory progress in building on their mathematical learning at the Foundation Stage. This is well-promoted by good knowledge of the pupils and similar approaches to planning. By the time they are seven, lower-attaining pupils are aware of cause and effect and are developing an understanding of mathematical vocabulary, such as *more* and *less*. They respond well to number rhymes, songs and finger games, and enjoy stacking cubes, and counting them before knocking them down. They develop an awareness of shape and space when they explore in the soft play area. Pupils are beginning to search for people and objects that have gone out of sight. Higher-attaining pupils can discuss their work, and represent work with objects and marks on paper. With some prompting, they recognise simple patterns. These pupils recognise and order numbers to 10, and they understand the combining action of addition and the reducing action of subtraction. When shown two containers, higher attainers predict which holds more or less, and they compare two lengths and masses. All pupils are aware of significant times of the day, and higher attainers can name days of the week. These pupils use three-dimensional shapes to build models, and are able to match and sort circles, triangles and squares.
101. Younger pupils in Key Stage 2 continue to make satisfactory progress, but towards the end of

Key Stage 2 progress accelerates. Teaching of the oldest pupils is very good. There are high expectations of participation, and independent work. Pupils respond well to this by doing their best; they concentrate for considerable periods of time, and make every effort to respond using electronic aids or answering questions verbally. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace, and pupils are kept thinking throughout. By the time they are eleven, lower-attaining pupils can sort and match objects given a variety of criteria; they recognise digits up to five, and count up to eight objects. These pupils are beginning to recognise and repeat simple patterns; they match and sort simple shapes and colours, and compare objects according to size. They also place objects in correct positions showing understanding of language such as *big, little, on, in, and next to*. All pupils are beginning to understand and use calculators. Higher-attaining pupils use these competently, to add and subtract numbers up to four digits, for example. All pupils develop their ability to calculate mentally. Higher attainers can calculate doubles of numbers up to 10, but need a number line to assist with numbers over 10. They have good recall of addition and subtraction of numbers up to 10, and are beginning to add two-digit numbers. These pupils can count in twos, fives and tens to one hundred, and are able to multiply. Some are beginning to carry out simple division. All pupils can use standard and non-standard measures, although lower attainers need support and prompting. Higher-attaining pupils are able to record using tables and graphs, and they can draw conclusions from their work.

102. Teaching and learning are satisfactory at Key Stage 1, and good at Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 1, four lessons were seen; two were satisfactory and two were good. At Key Stage 2, five lessons were seen; one was excellent, one very good, one good, and two were satisfactory. A strength that all lessons have in common is the quality of relationships between staff and pupils; these are warm and harmonious, and pupils' efforts are genuinely valued. All staff show caring attitudes towards pupils, and generally support them well. Good practice was seen in a Key Stage 1 lesson, where a hearing-impaired pupil was working on understanding of addition. The teacher used signing to good effect, and the pupil was clearly making the sign for *together* to indicate his response to an addition problem.
103. However, in some lessons, support was less good at the beginning and end of lessons, when support staff were busy positioning or toileting some pupils. This meant that they were not able to support other pupils as well in oral/mental sessions, or plenary sessions. As many pupils need adult support to help them communicate, this results in them being less well included in these activities, or waiting their turn for the teacher's attention. At the end of one session, in Key Stage 1, staff discussion about toileting of a pupil detracted from the quality of a plenary session, and was inappropriate in the hearing of pupils.
104. Staff make effective use of good quality resources. For example, in one lesson, pupils were motivated by a good range of games, and pupils were keen to use these. One learning support assistant was successful in encouraging a Year 6 pupil to complete a counting exercise, making it clear that this needed doing before the game could be used. Staff also make generally good use of the available resources to assist pupils to communicate. For example, number cards are used for pupils to eye-point to in mental sessions; simple switches are used to activate recorded *Yes* or *No* responses; and screens of electronic communication aids are used well for number-matching exercises. Mathematical resources, such as washing-lines for sequencing numbers, number squares, and puzzles are of good quality, and are well displayed so that teachers can refer to them to support pupils' understanding, or assess understanding and skills.
105. Teachers plan activities well to ensure that pupils develop mathematical understanding. A good example of this was seen in a Key Stage 2 lesson, where pupils had to choose from marbles, cubes and beads to find out how many objects would weigh the same as each of a series of parcels. This helped pupils to understand and use non-standard measures.
106. Numeracy skills are reinforced well in other subjects. Most teachers use mathematical language, both in mathematics lessons and in other sessions. For example, a teacher used a discussion about the keys on a computer keyboard to reinforce positional language well, such as *below* and

above. In a science lesson, pupils were able to use syringes to measure out a quantity of water in an investigation into soil permeability. The teacher pointed out the markings on the syringe, and referred to *millilitres*. Opportunities for pupils to count, add and subtract are seized at all times of the day. This was seen in design technology, and at break times, when pupils would be asked *how many drinks* were needed, and *how many more* if two pupils already had theirs.

107. At both key stages, individual support and tuition helps pupils to make progress against their individual targets. However, targets are not always as specific as they might be. For example, a target that states that a pupil will double and halve numbers does not make it clear which numbers are to be worked on, neither is it helpful in deciding when the target has been reached. Teachers' ongoing records show the progress that pupils make, and the recent practice of selecting pieces of work for teachers to level is helping to improve skills in assessment. Reports to parents are detailed and give a clear picture of attainment and progress. However, there is no summary record of pupils' achievements to pass on to the next teacher or school, and this is a weakness.
108. Leadership in mathematics is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has provided training and support for staff in implementing the National Numeracy Strategy. She has been on a training course in school self-evaluation and is now well prepared to monitor teaching and learning. However, there is no non-contact time allocated specifically for this task, and she has considerable additional duties as deputy headteacher and a classroom teacher for four days each week. The policy for mathematics needs to be revised to reflect changes in practice.

SCIENCE

109. Standards of achievement in science are satisfactory at each key stage. Pupils make generally good gains in their knowledge and understanding of the subject, but progress in investigative skills is not as clearly demonstrated. For a few pupils with communication difficulties at the beginning of Key Stage 2, progress is limited by the fact that they are not always given the support they need to answer questions in discussions. Pupils are given a broad range of learning experiences, and the curriculum is generally well planned, with targets set to ensure that most individual needs are met. Assessment against these targets is good, but as there is no record kept of pupils' achievements in investigative skills, these do not always develop in a systematic way.
110. By the time pupils are seven, they are able to make simple observations, and higher-attaining pupils can describe what they see in one or two words. Lower-attaining pupils explore their environment, the feeling of the sun, rain and wind, for example. They respond to noises and movement around them. Higher-attaining pupils recognise common creatures in the garden, and can identify the signs of autumn. When exploring tastes, textures and images, lower-attaining pupils make a number of positive responses. Higher-attaining pupils describe simple properties of materials, such as *hard* and *soft*, *rough* or *smooth*. Lower-attaining pupils are able to distinguish between different sounds, and eye point to show their choice. Higher-attaining pupils make shadows using a candle or a torch in a dark environment; they are beginning to be able to distinguish between forces that push and pull.
111. By the time they are eleven, higher-attaining pupils have an enthusiasm for science, they can plan simple investigations, and record their results using tables and diagrams. However, pupils do not yet have a clear understanding of fair testing. They use scientific terms, and make confident predictions. Their knowledge and understanding of living things is good, they can talk about materials and link these to their uses. Pupils test materials for magnetism, conductivity and solubility, and can construct electrical circuits and explain how they work. They know that forces are measured in Newtons and that a Newtonmeter is used for the purpose. Lower-attaining pupils follow simple instructions and can make predictions. They are able to distinguish between living and non-living things, but cannot describe what conditions are needed to support life. When given common objects, lower attaining pupils can say what they are made of, and whilst they know that

some materials are magnetic and some are not, they do not yet know that it is a particular kind of metal that makes objects magnetic. Lower attainers make simple circuits, and know that sounds are made when things vibrate.

112. Teaching and learning is good, overall, at each key stage. Altogether three lessons were seen, one was satisfactory, one good, and one very good. Teachers have good subject expertise, and high expectations of the most able pupils. These pupils are given challenging tasks, and teachers urge them to use the scientific language they have used themselves. For example, in a lesson on forces, Year 6 pupils were told, "I want to hear words like *friction*". In this lesson, new ideas were carefully introduced, and pupils were moved briskly on from one task to another, which held their interest well throughout the session; the teacher questioned them regularly to assess their understanding, clarifying points where necessary. As a result, pupils all understood what the term *resistance* meant by the end of the session. However, there is a weakness in planning for pupils with communication difficulties at the start of Key Stage 2. As a result, pupils who are unable to communicate on their own do not always have the support that they need to take part in discussions. For example, a pupil who needs a board with *Yes* and *No* written on it, and an adult to observe his eye pointing, was not offered the opportunity to use this during the discussion at the start of a lesson, although the board was used later on. This meant that he was excluded from the first part of the lesson and did not have the opportunity to show what he could recall.
113. In general, pupils have good support in lessons. Learning support assistants make a significant contribution to direct teaching by supporting individuals, and by questioning pupils. For example, one was heard to ask a pupil, "Is there much friction on this surface?" Pupils do not lose heart, and persevere with tasks, even when they find them challenging. One pupil, who was being supported by an adult recording, made it quite clear that she would like to hold on to the pencil too.
114. Teachers are skilful in capturing pupils' interest by planning tasks that are related to other work, and using a good range of resources. For example, in a lesson for younger pupils, the theme from the story of the three little pigs was used well to present an activity in which pupils built houses of different materials, then used the force of air to test the strength of these. Towards the end of this session, when a vacuum cleaner was being used to clear away some straw, pupils were able to see that air can both push and pull. Pupils were delighted by the use of a fan and a hair dryer to provide a force, and higher attainers were confident when suggesting which of these might be used in testing the three houses. The teacher capitalised on learning opportunities by pointing out to pupils that some people in other countries do live in straw houses. In another lesson, the teacher corrected a pupil's rude response by giving a number of examples of how he could have responded differently. In this lesson, she had prepared an imaginative range of surfaces for pupils to use when testing for resistance. These, in themselves, provided pupils with an insight into the nature of different materials, and motivated pupils to investigate the topic.
115. There has been satisfactory improvement since the school was given a full inspection in 1996. The science curriculum is now broad, and well planned to cover the Programmes of Study of the National Curriculum. Co-ordination of the subject is at an early stage of development, as there is no time allocated for monitoring of science teaching. The co-ordinator does monitor planning to check coverage, and has considered the resource implications of Curriculum 2000. The audit she has carried out has revealed shortfalls in some areas, and she is acting on this. Under the circumstances, leadership is satisfactory.

ART AND DESIGN

116. Standards of achievement in art are good throughout the school. Pupils make good progress at both key stages. They make particularly good progress at the beginning of Key Stage 2 because of the enthusiasm of the teacher and the wide range of experiences that they encounter; art is used very effectively to support learning in other subjects. Since the last full inspection there has been considerable improvement in standards, curriculum breadth, and the quality of teaching and

learning.

117. At Key Stage 1, pupils learn to explore and use a wide range of materials. They have good opportunities for choice as they look at pictures and objects of reference before using their manual skills to roll and push play dough as they make hedgehogs. They use handprints and paint-brushes with support, with some pupils beginning to overcome their dislike for tactile experiences. This was observed when time was given for one pupil to explore wood chippings, at arm's length, using lolly sticks. Eventually she had the confidence to make direct contact with the material. Higher-attaining pupils at the end of the key stage make very good progress. They look closely at the shape of bricks, and observe change as paints are mixed. High levels of concentration are shown as they use sponges to make brick patterns on pre-cut houses.
118. Pupils continue to experience the use of a good range of techniques and medium during Key Stage 2. They learn to evaluate their work and make links with other lessons. Pupils in Class 3 identify squares, rectangles and curves in the work of Paul Klee as they look very closely at examples of his work. Language skills are reinforced as pupils select paint and paper before making their representations based on the artist's work. Geography provides another stimulus for very effective work. After looking at commercial maps, pupils made their own, using the striking colours of tissue paper to represent features, with wool overlaid to show roads and rivers. Learning about the Vikings provides an opportunity to make clay long boats, pleasing to look at and fun to touch. By the age of eleven, pupils' work benefits from their ability to observe detail closely. An example of this is the care shown in cutting out, with help when necessary, figures to decorate Greek urns. Wax-resist work gives pupils the opportunity to demonstrate some knowledge at the Greek alphabet.
119. It was possible only to observe three lessons during the inspection, all of which were good. From this evidence and from displays and teachers' planning it is possible to judge that teaching is good, overall. Teachers challenge pupils well and plan very interesting tasks well-related to work in other curricular areas but also designed to develop the discrete skills, knowledge and understanding of art. Work is planned very carefully for individual pupils and is well related to their targets. Access to the curriculum is given careful thought. Physical aids, such as wrist splints, are provided, suitable materials and methods are chosen, and a high level of very effective and sensitive support is given; all contribute to good learning and the high levels of interest and concentration pupils show. Information technology is beginning to be used as a teaching tool, for example, through commercial programs, such as *Art Attack* and *Dazzle*.
120. The curriculum co-ordinator is enthusiastic and resourceful. She has good subject knowledge and very good knowledge of what is possible with individual pupils. She has collected together sufficient resources to develop the subject and the accommodation in all classrooms is good. Pupils benefited from a visit to the local park to watch a sculptor at work, but no artists or craftspeople have visited the school. The curriculum is generally well-balanced, although there are few opportunities for three-dimensional work, or for collaboration in making larger pieces of work. Pupils have been introduced to the work of a range of European artists, but art from other cultures is not explored enough. There is no formal assessment of the subject, and there is no report on art included in pupils' annual progress reports.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

121. Standards of achievement in design and technology are satisfactory at both key stages. Pupils are having an increasing number of opportunities to make choices, contribute to simple designs for products they make, and evaluate their work. Since the last full inspection, standards have risen, the curriculum is broader and better planned, and teaching has improved. However, weaknesses in assessment limit the progress that pupils make.
122. By the age of seven, higher-attaining pupils can investigate the texture and appearances of different sandwich fillings. They can discuss and evaluate them and are able to follow the sequence of a simple recipe. They know that heat changes some materials such as chocolate. Middle and lower ability pupils are well supported as they flatten dough and use cutters to make pig shaped biscuits. A lack of sufficient resources means that some pupils have to wait their

turn. The youngest pupils show much pleasure in making bird food for a topic related to animals. They look and listen carefully as the seed is dropped on to their trays and most pupils are happy to touch it. Pupils make simple models from cardboard boxes, developing dexterity as they cut and stick, for example, when making a crocodile. Simple designs record the shapes and materials used.

123. By the age of eleven, pupils are able to follow a plan to make products that are pleasing to the sight and touch. They tear newspaper, scrunch it then glue it into position as part of a sequence which results in very attractive stuffed masks on a pole. They solve problems and develop knowledge of expression as they choose whether to give their mask a sad or happy face. Good investigation and use of reference skills takes place before pupils make musical instruments linked to work on Greece. They identify the individual parts of the instrument before making their plans. After assembling the instrument, such as pan pipes, they decorate them then evaluate the whole procedure. Skills include measuring and cutting on a block, with pupils being as independent as their physical ability allows. Younger pupils in Key Stage 2 work co-operatively to make flap books. They understand how the flaps are attached and stick them in suitable positions to cover speech bubbles. Pupils respond well to good opportunities for literacy and communication as they read the words under the flap and explain to the class what they have done. Pupils show their enjoyment of the lesson through words or facial expression.
124. Only three lessons of design and technology were observed. Scrutiny of displays and photographic evidence adds to the judgement that teaching is good, overall. The two lessons seen at Key Stage 1 were good. The only lesson seen at Key Stage 2 was satisfactory. Where teaching is good the teacher uses a wide range of multi-sensory activities to engage the pupils' interest. She develops their language skills as well as their skills and knowledge of design and technology. Picture and symbol cards are used well to reinforce oral instructions to choose whether biscuits and cakes are *hard* or *soft*. This encourages good language development as pupils eye point to their answers. In the successful lesson in Key Stage 2 the teacher provides opportunities to celebrate success and, by good planning for support staff, ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities to participate in the lesson. All relationships are positive and productive, leading to lessons that are enjoyable and successful.
125. The co-ordination of design and technology is satisfactory. It is a subject that is improving because it is now taught discretely and not as part of the art curriculum. The co-ordinator has no time for monitoring lessons or teachers' records and this is a weakness. The co-ordinator benefits from attending local support meetings and the school benefits through her acquisition of some materials from the local waste recycling centre. Resources are a weakness, however. It is inefficient that a purpose-built food technology room has too few resources even for small classes of pupils. The height-adjustable table has been removed, so surfaces for food preparation are inadequate. There are too few tools adapted to the needs of the pupils, who do not have enough opportunities to develop the skills to use basic tools. Social skills are developed as pupils go out into the community to look at the computers and bakery in a supermarket, and pupils learn care for the environment when visits are made to the recycling plant. Subject documentation is out of date and assessment is unsatisfactory. There is no regular assessment, and the subject is not reported on in annual reports to parents. There are plans for the use of information technology to enhance the subject once the school's new systems are in place.

GEOGRAPHY

126. It was only possible to see one lesson during the week of the inspection. Judgements are, therefore, based on a scrutiny of plans and other documentation, discussions with the co-ordinator, classroom displays and written work from both key stages.
127. Standards of achievement are satisfactory at both key stages. Since the school last had a full inspection, the curriculum has been widened, it is better planned, and teaching and learning have improved. From the age of five, pupils choose from a range of pictures the one that best shows the weather for that day. This card is then displayed for all to see. As they move through the key

stage, pupils progress in their understanding of seasons, and learn appropriate words such as *cold*, *snow* and *sunny*. They show interest and curiosity when watching a video on water, know the difference between clean and dirty water and that water goes down a pipe after use. By the age of seven, when completing an Africa project, pupils choose a picture of an African animal from the library and create a model using card and paper, and paint it. They begin to explore the school environment finding their way round school, and visit local shops with support.

128. For seven-year-old pupils entering Key Stage 2, work continues to build on previous modules. They explore different environments during outings, such as a boat trip on the canal. They follow this up by writing a 'thank-you-letter', using symbols and words. Pupils contribute to displays showing places of interest they see on their journey home and on a journey round school. In map work during Year 5, higher-attaining pupils use a map to mark places of interest to them such as their house and the local supermarket, and complete a key. Lower-attaining pupils colour parts of the map showing places of interest. Most pupils are able to identify London accurately as being in England, and Africa as being in the world. By the age of eleven, pupils know that the sun is big compared with the earth and that it gives light. They know that there are different forms of transport, such as buses, trains and cars, and identify which one they come to school in. They consolidate work on environmental issues by recycling cans and bottles.
129. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall, and in the single lesson seen at Key Stage 1. Individual lesson planning is generally satisfactory ensuring that pupils have access to appropriate activities and a range of geographical experiences that contribute to their learning. Throughout the subject, skills gained are not consistently or systematically recorded in order to reinforce learning. As a result, pupils do not always make the progress they should. Marking is inconsistent, but feedback from staff ensures that pupils know what they need to do next. In the one lesson seen, planning was minimal. However, the teacher knows the pupils well and questioning is suitably targeted and modified to check each pupil's understanding. The focused task, given to pupils while watching the video, ensured that they concentrated appropriately. Good relationships between staff and pupils keep pupils interested and motivated. It gives them the confidence to ask questions if they do not understand. Plenary work, reviewing the lesson, carefully involved all pupils in an explanation of what they had seen.
130. Geography is not always taught every term as it rotates with history on a modular basis. A suitable amount of time is spent on the subject and coverage is good. Long- and medium-term planning is comprehensive and has recently been updated in line with Curriculum 2000. The co-ordinator has checked the plans of other staff to ensure that they are appropriate. Nevertheless, the co-ordinator role is underdeveloped because there is no non-teaching time. Consequently, it is difficult to ensure pupils are taught all aspects of the subject progressively as the co-ordinator is not able to monitor teaching and learning. The budget allocation is small, and resources, such as stocks of maps, are inadequate. There is a variety of displays of pupils' work on the local environment, and a suitable range of visits, particularly local ones. Geography makes a sound contribution to social development.

HISTORY

131. It was only possible to see one lesson during the week of the inspection. Judgements are, therefore, based on a scrutiny of plans and other documentation, discussions with the co-ordinator, classroom displays and written work from both key stages. Standards of achievements are satisfactory, overall, and this is an improvement since the school last had a full inspection. Since then, the curriculum has been improved, and so has teaching. Standards are best in Year 6, where good teaching and well-targeted individual objectives result in consistently good progress. At both key stages pupils benefit from a very practical approach to history.
132. From the age of five, pupils experience activities that promote early history skills. For example, they develop their understanding of cause and effect by using switches to change programs on the computer and their environment. By the age of seven, pupils make satisfactory progress in comparing the past with the present, while watching a video on the Victorians, for example. They begin to consolidate their knowledge of how life has changed by taking part in practical activities. For example, pupils investigate the differences and similarities between old and new toys, and

use an old washing-board to find out how people used to wash clothes. Higher-attaining pupils compare their present kitchen with that of their grandmothers.

133. Younger pupils at Key Stage 2 progress to sequencing activities for the day. They begin to develop an understanding of *then and now* during work on time-lines. For example, older pupils construct time-lines mixing national events with those that affect them, such as a new teacher arriving at school. They complete a map display on the Vikings - working well together painting, colouring and choosing materials. By the age of eleven, pupils are developing a sound knowledge of the past and people's part in it. They know that ancient Greeks lived a long time ago, and that only boys went to school. While participating in a simulated dig, pupils knew to dig carefully for artefacts because, "if you break them you have no evidence of the past". During work on the Second World War a higher-attaining pupil showed his ability to empathise; when talking about evacuees the pupil said he would be sad to leave home.
134. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall, although in the one lesson seen in Year 6 it was very good. Staff plan a variety of practical experiences for pupils. These contribute well to both pupils understanding of history and their enjoyment, ensuring good behaviour and attitudes. Although lesson planning is satisfactory, skills gained are not consistently or systematically recorded in order to reinforce learning. Consequently, pupils do not always make as much progress as they could. Occasionally, only a narrow range of resources are used in lessons and this restricts pupils' ability to compare different sources of evidence. In the one Year 6 lesson seen, the lesson moved at a good pace with frequent changes of activities that kept pupils engaged and motivated. This contributed well to learning. Imaginative resources, and the use of a class display, previously completed by pupils, helped them to remember facts from the previous lesson. Good summarising from the teacher, before the start of the written work, ensured that pupils understood the task and felt confident when completing the work.
135. Although history is taught on a modular basis with geography, a suitable amount of time is spent on the subject. Long- and medium-term planning is good and covers the entire revised National Curriculum. The co-ordinator has monitored plans of other staff to ensure they are appropriate. However, the co-ordinator is not able to monitor teaching and learning as there is no non-contact time in which to develop the role. Assessment is inconsistently used, making it difficult to ensure that pupils continue to build on their knowledge, skills and understanding. There is a small budget allocation and although resources are adequate, resources such as artefacts often have to be borrowed. Good displays of work have a positive effect on pupils' self-esteem. Visits to places such as local museums support learning and make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' social and cultural development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

136. Standards of achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) are satisfactory at each key stage. This is an improvement since the school last had a full inspection. There is now a broad programme of learning experiences, and the subject is well planned, including individual targets, which are appropriate for most pupils. However, a small number of lower-attaining pupils at the beginning of Key Stage 2 are set tasks that are not appropriate. For example, one pupil is working on word processing sentences, and yet he is not yet able to reliably recognise the letters of the alphabet. Progress is promoted well by pupils' great enthusiasm for working on computers, and individuals often concentrate for much longer than staff had anticipated. Weaknesses in assessment limit progress somewhat; targets are not always specific enough, and the school lacks a summary record of skills that pupils acquire. When targets are too broad it is difficult to measure success. For example, *improve control of one switch* is not a measurable target, and therefore success is not easy to assess. There is no record showing clearly what skills pupils have acquired, making it difficult for teachers to plan the next steps.
137. Younger pupils with communication difficulties soon become familiar with switches, which they

use to generate recorded messages, or to operate toys or pieces of electrical equipment. By the time they are seven, lower-attaining pupils use a switch to control a computer program, or to turn music on or off on a cassette player. During the inspection, one was observed concentrating well to make choices of items of clothing in which to dress the boy in *The Snowman* story. He was supported well in this task, and was occasionally pressing the switch himself to make the selection. Higher attainers can turn on and use the computer, use the mouse to control a pointer, click to produce an effect, and pick up objects on the screen and place them elsewhere. Some can type their own name and print out their work.

138. In Key Stage 2, some pupils with communication difficulties have electronic communication aids, and some of these connect to computers. This gives them good access to the curriculum, and accelerates their general progress. At this key stage, pupils have discrete ICT lessons, and by the time they are eleven, all pupils can work several items of electronic equipment, including a television, video and tape recorder. Some use communication aids and are able to shut them down successfully. When using a computer, lower attaining pupils use a large keyboard with a key guard, a rollerball mouse and a big pointer cursor to access programs. Higher-attaining pupils are confident users of personal computers, which they can start and shut down successfully; they print their work, and with some guidance can save, retrieve, then print a document. They can also copy type, write in bold and change the size of the font. A few can copy and paste pieces of work.
139. Teaching and learning are good at Key Stage 1 and satisfactory at Key Stage 2. Altogether, five lessons were seen where the subject formed part of the focus, or was the subject of the lesson. Teaching was judged to be good in three lessons and satisfactory in two. Lessons at Key Stage 2 are well planned to incorporate recapitulation, task setting and a plenary session when pupils can share and celebrate achievements. The recapitulation is used well to check pupils recall and understanding, but in one lesson would have been more effective if a large chart showing a keyboard could have been displayed. This would have helped some pupils to indicate the position of certain keys; as it was, several pupils were not able to take part in this session because they were not able to speak.

MUSIC

140. Standards of achievement are satisfactory, and this is an improvement since the school last had a full inspection. Pupils now have a broad range of learning experiences, well planned to cover the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. These include lessons, as well as opportunities to perform, and listen to others make music. For example, pupils listen to a range of music playing when they arrive in school most mornings, there is a musical element to school productions and assemblies, and musical performers have visited the school. When there are opportunities for singing, children's recorded voices are played and pupils can join in with this however they are able. This is good inclusive practice.
141. Pupils' progress is limited by weaknesses in assessment. There is no system for teachers to record detail of pupils' achievements in music, which makes it difficult to plan the next steps, and build on existing learning. Although teachers annotate their lesson plans, these do not form an accessible summary of pupil's achievements.
142. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. During the inspection period only one lesson could be seen. In this teaching was satisfactory. Pupils were encouraged to warm up their voices with several exercises, and then to sing a chosen nursery rhyme in different voices. Pupils tried hard to join in, but not all were capable of doing this. Higher-attaining pupils were able to identify instruments from their sounds. For example, one recalled that a trombone had represented a cow in a piece that pupils had listened to previously. The smooth passage of the lesson suffered from the late arrival of several pupils, who had been delayed in heavy traffic. The teacher quickly capitalised on this by encouraging a higher-attaining pupil to work out how long her journey had taken. The pupil did this well, and the exercise helped to settle her into the music lesson. In general, teachers could make more use of information and communication technology as a way of

enabling pupils to compose and perform.

143. The co-ordinator is not a specialist, but is enthusiastic about the subject. There is no time allocated to monitoring of teaching and learning, although teachers' plans are collected in. However, the co-ordinator is part of the way through a course which will help her make the best use of an expensive piece of electronic music equipment, and there is an audit of resources. All classes have a supply of percussion instruments for general use, and there is a good range of different types of music from many countries and cultures.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

144. Standards of achievement in physical education (PE) are good, and this is an improvement since the last full inspection. The curriculum is now better planned, and teaching has improved. Progress is promoted particularly well by the excellent co-operation between therapists and teachers. They work closely together to meet the pupils' targets for physical development. For example, the physiotherapist shares her expertise with the class teacher during swimming sessions in the hydrotherapy pool, as well as checking that pupils are having experiences to their best advantage during gymnastics.
145. By the age of seven, the most able pupils have sufficient co-ordination to steer a tricycle around obstacles. They can climb and slide on soft play apparatus and balance independently. They show a good range of movements during dance and drama sessions. Less able pupils work on targets set by the physiotherapist, with the help of highly effective support staff. Concentration levels are high as pupils work hard to knock a ball from a quoit or stretch out to catch a chiffon scarf as they lie on a mat. Other pupils show pleasure in rocking on a large physiotherapy ball then stretch to reach a range of objects.
146. By the age of eleven, pupils use a range of strategies, including the use of a funnel, to knock over skittles with a ball. Individual skills of eye/hand co-ordination are practised when pupils participate in the team game boccia. They show good recall of the rules and co-operate with enthusiasm in a game that has status and meaning for them, as it is played at the disabled Olympic Games. Good progress is made in meeting personal targets, such as those relating to communication or working co-operatively, as well as those addressing physical development. Pupils show confidence and pleasure as they are supported individually in the hydrotherapy pool. More able pupils can swim unaided using strong leg kicks and making use of special floats. Other pupils relax as they are guided quietly through the water on their backs, gently floating or using their limbs to help movement.
147. Teaching was good in each of the small number of lessons seen. Target-setting, including targets for swimming and gymnastics, is gradually being introduced to complement other targets for physical development. However, regular recording of assessment in all areas of PE has yet to be established. The excellent teamwork of staff promotes good learning, and their high numbers help to ensure that sufficient regard is paid to health and safety. Teachers convey their own enthusiasm for the subject to the pupils. This results in hard work and happy lessons. The moral and social development of pupils is very well promoted, as they are taught to be good winners and losers. Communication skills are enhanced as pupils learn appropriate body language for these roles, and voices are developed as they practise being spectators, cheering on their preferred winner.
148. The co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory. However, no time is provided for the co-ordinator to monitor teaching, and this is a weakness. The curriculum is generally broad and balanced but there is room for improvement. Outside areas of the school are significantly underused and are not contributing as they should be to improving mobility and providing the challenge of steering wheelchairs over a range of surfaces and slopes. The co-ordinator has received training through the Top Sport initiative and because of this commitment the school benefited from additional resources. The annual sports day, which she organises, provides a pleasant occasion when the school community and parents can meet together and celebrate success.

149. Accommodation for PE is satisfactory. The hall is sufficiently large and provides a safe environment for indoor games and other physical activities. The soft playroom is well equipped but is used infrequently. Large outdoor play equipment is well maintained but not used for much of the year. The school lacks a flat enclosed outside area where the large number of wheeled toys and tricycles could be used in safety. The excellent hydrotherapy pool is a considerable asset to the school, although there have been filtration difficulties. The large changing rooms enable the physical needs of pupils to be met with dignity, and the hoist and hydraulic bed enable them to be transferred to the water in safety.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

150. It was only possible to see two lessons during the week of the inspection. Judgements are, therefore, based on a scrutiny of plans and other documentation, classroom displays, discussions with the co-ordinator and photographs of pupils engaged in activities from both key stages. Standards of achievement are satisfactory at both key stages, and this is an improvement since the school last had a full inspection. The curriculum is now broader, and better planned, and teaching has improved. Standards are best in Year 6, where good teaching and well-targeted individual objectives result in consistently good progress.
151. Pupils take part in a range of relevant activities throughout both key stages. By the age of seven, pupils are beginning to have some understanding of the world's major religions through participating in celebrations and festivals. From the age of five, pupils have many opportunities to celebrate special times. They enjoy birthdays and participate in celebrations such as the Chinese New Year, Diwali, Harvest Festival, Easter and Christmas. They further consolidate this work through paintings and collage. For example, they make papier-mâché balloons during the Chinese Moon festival. They listen intently to and often act out stories such as that of Rama and Sita, and Bible stories about Jesus and Moses. They take part in a Nativity play, listen to a variety of religious music and explore the sights and sounds of different faiths.
152. As pupils move through Key Stage 2 they are involved in work on rules discussing issues such as food rules in different religions. During work on Moses, younger pupils remember that the basket had been put in the river. As they progress through the key stage, pupils of average attainment begin to have some idea of what a slave is and know they would not have liked that life. Work is further reinforced by pupils participating in role-play. This helps to consolidate appropriate skills and develop empathy. For example, a lower-attaining pupil said he would be sick if he was a slave. Higher attaining pupils discuss what a plague is, and that they would not like to suffer from it; they use their communication aids to express their views. By the age of eleven, all pupils have completed work on the major religions increasingly taking part in a range of activities, including visits to temples, churches and synagogues.
153. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the two lessons seen at Key Stage 2, one was unsatisfactory and one very good. Individual lesson planning is generally satisfactory with a good emphasis on practical activities. This ensures that pupils remain motivated and behave well. Pupils are usually positioned correctly so that they can fully participate in the lesson. Occasionally, incorrect positioning and a lack of signing results in some pupils not being as actively involved as they could be. The knowledge teachers and support staff have of pupils contributes well to their ability to participate and learn. For example, in the one very good lesson seen, very good relationships and good humour resulted in pupils concentrating well, remaining on task and enjoying the lesson. This constant engagement of pupils by the teacher resulted in very good interaction between pupils and a willingness and enthusiasm by all to take part in the role-play session. Very skilful use of questions was used to give the teacher feedback on pupils' understanding before they started the written work. Pupils responded well, as they felt confident to complete the work. However, in the less successful lesson, questions were not directed to individuals, to reinforce and check understanding, and this led to missed learning opportunities, and insufficient progress being made.

154. Religious education planning is based on the Agreed Syllabus. Long- and medium-term planning is comprehensive and the co-ordinator has checked the plans of other staff to ensure that they are appropriate. Assessment lacks thoroughness and the co-ordinator has not been able to monitor teaching and learning due to her other responsibilities and a lack of time. Plans are now underway to rectify this. Resources are inadequate. There are not enough artefacts and the co-ordinator does not know if all resources are suitable for pupils as, until recently, they have not been kept centrally. The subject is not reported in the annual report to parents. Work in school, and visits to a range of religious establishments ensure that religious education contributes well to the moral and cultural development.