

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **THE LYNDALE SCHOOL**

Eastham, Wirral

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105136

Headteacher: Mrs Pat Stewart

Reporting inspector: Mrs Rosemary Eaton  
15173

Dates of inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> February 2001

Inspection number: 188835

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
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	2 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Lyndale Avenue Eastham Wirral
Postcode:	CH62 8DE
Telephone number:	0151 327 3682
Fax number:	0151 327 1931
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Cllr. Tom Harney
Date of previous inspection:	13 <sup>th</sup> May 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15173	Rosemary Eaton	Registered inspector	English	Results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
13462	Roberta Mothersdale	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
1358	Glyn Essex	Team inspector	History Physical education Personal, social and health education Equal opportunities	
1769	Michael Holohan	Team inspector	Science Music Religious education	
20466	Alan Tattersall	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Information and communication technology	
19386	Trevor Watts	Team inspector	The foundation stage Art Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

The inspection contractor was:

QICS

Ibsley  
4 West Cliff Road  
Dawlish  
Devon  
EX7 9EB

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Lyndale School caters for boys and girls aged two to eleven, with complex learning difficulties. This means that they have at least two special educational needs. Currently, 60 pupils attend the school, including 14 in the nursery and reception years, taught in the school's early years unit. Three of these children are part-time. All pupils have statements of special educational need. The largest groups are those with physical or sensory disabilities; communication difficulties, such as autism; and learning difficulties, including a group with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Most pupils enter the school with very low levels of attainment. Their homes are throughout the Wirral. Only two pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and neither of these has English as an additional language. Two of the teachers, including the deputy headteacher, were absent at the time of the inspection.

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

The Lyndale School is a good school with many very good features. Pupils make good progress and achieve well. The quality of teaching is good and the school is very well led and managed. It provides good value for money.

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

- Very good attention is paid to ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunities to make progress. Their individual needs are met very well.
- Children in the early years unit have a very good start to their education.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good.
- The school provides very well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school's links with parents, other schools and the community are all very good.
- The headteacher's leadership qualities are excellent.

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

- In some subjects, teachers do not have ways of measuring how well pupils are achieving or how quickly they are making progress.
- Teachers do not make enough use of computers to help pupils learn in other subjects.

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

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

The school was previously inspected in May 1996. At that time, it was known as Clatterbridge School, and was in a different location. As a result of the inspection, the school was placed in special measures. Since then, its improvement has been excellent.

Pupils now make much better progress. This is in line with a very good improvement in the quality of teaching. Pupils' attitudes and personal development have improved, because they are now expected to be more independent. Attendance rates have risen.

Led with determination by the headteacher, the school has tackled with energy the many important issues arising from the previous inspection. In each of these, very good progress has been made. The support given to the headteacher by the governing body and the local education authority has helped her to carry out her plans for developing the school – for example, by improving the quality of teaching. The new school building has done away with some of the obstacles that existed previously and provides an excellent environment for pupils and staff to work in. It is entirely suitable that its name has changed, because this is a very different school to the one inspected in 1996.

## STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by age 11	Key	
speaking and listening	B	very good	A
Reading	B	good	B
Writing	B	satisfactory	C
Mathematics	B	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	A	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A		

The school sets targets for its eleven year-olds to achieve in the National Curriculum tests. These were met in 2000. However, because of the pupils' special educational needs, they are not precise enough to be a very useful measure. The targets in pupils' individual education plans relate to literacy, numeracy and personal development. They are well matched to their needs, and pupils work hard in order to achieve them. The children in the early years unit make very good progress and achieve very well in all the areas of their learning. Pupils aged five to eleven make very good progress and achieve very well in personal, social and health education. Progress and achievement are good in English, mathematics, science, physical education and religious education. Pupils aged seven to eleven also do well in history. In art, design and technology, geography and information and communication technology, progress and achievement are satisfactory. This is also true of history for pupils aged five to seven. The pupils with speech and language difficulties and communication difficulties are making good progress in their ability to listen carefully and make themselves understood. The pupils with the most profound and multiple learning difficulties make good progress because they are taught in a classroom where activities and resources can be tailor-made to meet their needs. Pupils with autism are helped to make good progress by the calm and consistent way in which they are handled.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and taking part in lessons and activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well in lessons, during breaks and when on visits.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are happy to take on responsibilities and to be as independent as they can.
Attendance	Good. Pupils are seldom absent unless they are ill.

Pupils have very good relationships with each other and with staff. They have great confidence in teachers and support staff, and co-operate willingly. Pupils are learning to play an active part in school life – for example, by electing members of the school council.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	aged 5-11
Lessons seen overall	Very 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.*

During the inspection, the quality of teaching was very good or better in 38 per cent of lessons. No teaching was less than satisfactory.

In English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education, the quality of teaching is good. The skills of communication, including literacy, and numeracy are taught well. The school successfully meets the needs of all its pupils. Therapists play an important part, by providing specialist expertise and working in partnership with teachers. Teachers plan very carefully to make sure that all pupils can take part in lessons and make good progress. They manage pupils' behaviour very well, so lessons are not disrupted when pupils are upset. Because the relationships between pupils and staff are very good, pupils try hard and tackle difficult tasks. Learning resources are generally used very well, although maximum use is not made of computers. Nursery nurses and support assistants make important contributions to pupils' learning, often by encouraging them to try hard and join in discussions.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is a strong emphasis placed on helping pupils to communicate. The curriculum in the early years unit is very good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school works hard to provide pupils with the skills they need for daily life. It offers an excellent variety of cultural experiences.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. All staff know pupils very well and ensure that their needs are met and they are safe and secure.

The school works very well in partnership with parents.

Literacy and numeracy are given suitable priority on the timetable.

Not enough use is made of computers to help pupils learn in other subjects.

The school makes good use of resources such as the multi-sensory room, to meet the needs of pupils with particularly complex needs.

No activities such as clubs are offered outside lessons.

Links with other schools and the community add to the range of opportunities provided for pupils.

Systems for keeping track of pupils' attendance and punctuality need to be improved, because the school is not clear about how long registers are kept open..

A variety of very good systems is in place to reward and encourage pupils' efforts and behaviour.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher's leadership is outstandingly good. Senior staff have significant responsibilities and support the headteacher very well.

How well the governing body fulfils its responsibilities	Very good. Governors are very well informed, actively involved and very supportive of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Regular checks are made on the quality of teaching. The school is developing effective ways of measuring how well groups of pupils are achieving.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school is adapting well to operating a full budget. The development plan steers its work and spending very effectively.

The school is very well staffed with teachers and support assistants.

The accommodation is excellent and resources for learning are good.

Governors set useful targets for many aspects of the school's work, helping to maintain the pace of developments.

The programme of staff development opportunities is very good.

Staff, whatever their role, work very well together as a team.

The school tries hard to apply the principles of best value.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school and are making good progress.</li> <li>• Parents are kept informed about how children are getting on.</li> <li>• The school has high expectations of children. They are encouraged to be independent.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• There are close links with parents, and they feel comfortable approaching the school.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small number of parents feel that the amount of homework is not suitable.</li> <li>• A very few are concerned about the provision of therapy to meet their children's needs.</li> <li>• A similar number were critical of the quality of statements prepared by the local education authority.</li> </ul>

The inspectors agree with the parents' very positive views of the school. The school gives pupils good opportunities to learn when at home. Parents are encouraged to comment on the work set. The provision of therapy is good and the time available is used very well, often allowing therapists to work with children alongside education staff. The statements sampled by the inspectors provide enough information to enable the school to plan suitable programmes for the children.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Pupils make good progress and achieve well. This represents a very good improvement since the previous inspection. At that time, progress was less than satisfactory in 41 per cent of lessons. The main reason for the improvement in standards is a corresponding increase in the quality of teaching. Teachers now have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is seen in the challenging targets they set in pupils' individual education plans. Pupils make good progress towards their literacy and numeracy targets and very good progress towards those for personal development, including their behaviour, therapy needs and independence skills. A strength of the school is its success in meeting the pupils' varied needs and ensuring that they all make good progress.
2. In the early years unit, children in the nursery and reception years make very good progress and achieve particularly well in their areas of learning. This is because they are taught very well. Teachers and support staff work together very effectively to plan each day's work, building on what the children have already achieved.
3. Pupils aged five to eleven make very good progress and achieve very well in personal, social and health education. Progress and achievement are good in English, mathematics, science, physical education and religious education. Pupils aged seven to eleven also do well in history. In art, design and technology, geography and information and communication technology, progress and achievement are satisfactory. This is also true of history for pupils aged five to seven. The way in which the school has implemented the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy is helping to raise standards in English and mathematics. In these and other subjects, the very good programme of staff development has enabled teachers to increase their knowledge and skills, leading to improvements in pupils' progress and achievement.
4. Therapists help pupils with physical and sensory disabilities and speech and language difficulties to make good progress. They work closely with teachers, often in class and sometimes leading lessons. This means that education staff receive very good advice about the most effective approaches – for example, how pupils should be seated. The design of the accommodation allows all pupils to have access to all the school's facilities. Therapy rooms, the hydrotherapy pool and multi-sensory room all contribute to pupils' progress.
5. The pupils with speech and language difficulties and communication difficulties are making good progress in their ability to listen carefully and make themselves understood, so that they can take an active part in lessons. The school's policy for alternative communication is already having a positive effect, as staff are using signing with more confidence and consistency. Pupils with autism are supported by the calm and consistent way in which they are handled. They have confidence in the staff and so are able to cope with changes of routine.
6. Many of the pupils have learning difficulties. The pupils with the most profound and multiple learning difficulties benefit from lessons in a classroom where activities and resources can be tailor-made to meet their needs. For example, they have regular sessions in the multi-sensory room, in order to stimulate responses. Teachers work towards enabling pupils to move into the mainstream of the school and at present,

one of the oldest pupils is spending part of the week in another class, because he has made such good progress.

7. Some of the pupils with less severe learning difficulties achieve so well that they are identified as likely to cope in a mainstream primary school for part of the week. A number of pupils are currently taking part in such integration programmes at their local school.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

8. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good; they are very enthusiastic about coming into school and greeting staff and each other. They enjoy taking part in lessons and activities and need little prompting to start working again after a break. Pupils are keen to communicate and use signing to good effect to join in lessons and assemblies. They persevere with their work. For example, when answering a questionnaire during a field trip to local shops, pupils were not put off by the fact that the questions were not in the expected sequence. They kept returning to their question sheet, in order to match the questions to the correct shops. Pupils enjoy experiencing new sensations – for example, the rush and sound of sprayed water on a visit to a local car wash.
9. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are very good. Pupils place great trust in the staff. Many of the pupils are reliant on support staff to attend to their personal needs and they are relaxed and confident with them at all times. Pupils' behaviour in the school is mostly very good and there have been no exclusions in the previous year. Where a few pupils do display occasional signs of challenging behaviour, others do not allow themselves to be distracted, but carry on working.
10. Pupils' personal development is very good. They enjoy taking responsibility and often spontaneously tidy up after lessons. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection, when pupils were often too compliant, waiting for staff to do things that they could do for themselves. Pupils develop a good sense of team spirit – for example, during a games lesson, two players could not restrain themselves from rushing over and shaking the hand of the pupil who had scored a winning hit. Pupils are developing their awareness of citizenship – for example, by electing members to the school council. During the inspection, council members were keen to discuss suitable refreshments to offer to council members from another school and ways of ensuring that their visitors felt welcome.
11. Pupils' attendance is good. It is above average for a special school of this type and an improvement since the previous inspection. Very few parents take their children away on holiday during term time. Last year, there was no unauthorised absence, and nearly all absences were because of pupils' medical conditions. During the week of the inspection, a few pupils were late because of a transport breakdown.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

12. The quality of teaching is good. In the early years unit, teaching is very good. During the inspection, teaching overall was excellent in four per cent of lessons and very good in 34 per cent. In 49 per cent, the quality of teaching was good and it was satisfactory in the remaining 13 per cent. This represents a very good improvement since the previous inspection. At that time, teaching was less than satisfactory in 37 per cent of lessons. A key issue for the school was the need to improve the quality of

teaching. This has been achieved through an intensive programme of observations of teachers' work, identifying their strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers were given advice, support and training, and set targets for improvement. As a result, they now have much higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Consequently, standards have risen and pupils make much better progress.

13. Throughout the school, teachers plan very carefully, to make sure that all pupils can benefit from lessons. This is particularly notable because of the complex difficulties each pupil has to overcome in order to learn. Teachers know the pupils very well, and choose activities and approaches that are well matched to their needs: this is a particular improvement since the previous inspection. Generally, the main activity or theme of the lesson is the same for all pupils – for example, exploring a poem, during an English lesson. However, by varying the task given to different groups or individuals, teachers make sure that the degree of challenge is just right for each one – they have to try hard, but are not put off by work that is too difficult. For example, in one class, pupils aged nine to eleven wrote about the poem 'The Wobbly Wheel'. The most able pupils created their own sentences, using written questions and a list of key words to help them. A pupil with communication difficulties used a computer to write his sentence; and another, with severe learning difficulties, matched words, with support from staff. Later, when they reported back to the class, the teacher asked pupils to contribute in different ways – reading or pointing, for example – depending on their ability. As a result, all pupils were able to play a full part in the lesson and make good progress in English and in working independently. Very occasionally, teachers do not expect enough from the most able pupils. For example, in a science lesson in the class for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, one pupil could have gone on to record his observations of toys that moved by pushing or pulling, but he was not challenged in this way.
14. Teachers are very aware of pupils' physical disabilities and do their best to make sure that these do not present barriers to their learning. In this, they are very keen to take advice – for example, from therapists. These frequently work alongside teachers in lessons, analysing pupils' needs and suggesting suitable ways of supporting them. When children in the early years unit visited a car wash, the teacher took blankets to cover the children using wheelchairs, so that they could experience some of the water spray, without getting wet. Teachers and support staff are developing their ability to use signing to help pupils to communicate. Although some are more proficient than others, all have a basic and growing vocabulary. This is already helping pupils to be fully involved in lessons and activities – for example, signing their answers to questions about the story of 'The Gingerbread Man'.
15. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good. Because the pupils have trust in their teachers, they are willing to try hard and tackle difficult tasks. For example, in the hydrotherapy pool, pupils are happy to accept challenges – to propel themselves or hold their nose under water – because they are confident that they will be safe. Similarly, during 'circle time' discussions, some of the oldest pupils are prepared to describe their feelings – 'I feel happy when I meet my mum and dad' – because they know that their thoughts and opinions are respected. Occasionally, pupils find it hard to control their behaviour, and teachers manage such outbursts very calmly. For example, in the class for pupils aged five to seven, one pupil with autism was distressed by a change to his routine, and cried and shouted. The teacher was patient but determined, reassured him and explained his task clearly. This gave him confidence, so that he was able to relax and play a full part in the lesson, going on to make very good progress. Additionally, the teacher's very good handling of the

situation meant that the rest of the class were not distracted and could carry on learning.

16. Teachers make very good use of resources. They often go to great lengths to obtain or create resources for particular lessons, to help pupils make progress. For example, in the class for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, one teacher had produced exciting props to help pupils describe the day's weather. An electric fan, a fluffy cloud and a watering can, and a yellow fabric sun containing a hot water bottle, enabled all pupils to remind themselves about possible answers and use all their senses to help them to make a decision. Information and communication technology resources, such as computers, are not used enough to support pupils' learning: opportunities are often missed.
17. Many pupils need individual support to enable them to achieve their potential. Nursery nurses and support assistants make significant contributions to pupils' learning. For example, the pupils may have ideas but be unable to write them down, because of physical difficulties. Support staff act as scribes in these situations, and pupils then write over or copy what they have written. During lessons when the teacher is reading from a 'big book' or leading a discussion, a nursery nurse is often required to note down pupils' responses. This is an excellent use of their time and skills, and is a particularly strong feature of teaching in the early years unit. It allows the teacher to concentrate fully on helping the pupils to express themselves, rather than recording their achievements. Teachers make sure that particularly significant moments are not missed – for example, when a pupil with visual impairment makes eye contact with an object. Other staff play equally important roles by responding enthusiastically to a line of poetry or an object produced from a 'story sack', and so encouraging pupils to contribute to discussions. Very occasionally, support staff are passive and may even appear bored. This is unhelpful to teachers and is potentially distracting and unsettling for pupils.
18. A small number of parents are concerned about the homework provided for pupils. Pupils are given good opportunities to continue to learn, particularly in English and mathematics. They are encouraged to practise the skills they have learned during lessons and parents are able to comment on the suitability of the tasks and their children's responses. Teachers mark the work carefully and make use of their assessments and parents' observations when planning the next stage of learning.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?**

19. The school has a good curriculum. This is a very good improvement on the situation at the time of the previous inspection, when there were many weak aspects. It is especially good in the unit for the very youngest children. In the early years unit, they are taught a very good range of areas of learning, combined with individual targets for their development in personal and social skills, communication skills, and in other areas that are a priority for each individual child. The planning in the unit is particularly good, both for single lessons and for the longer period of a term or a year.
20. The curriculum is good throughout the rest of the school, with a suitable focus on the major subjects of English and all of the associated communication aspects; on mathematics; and on pupils' personal and social education. Pupils have precise individual targets for the major aspects of their education, and this is a good improvement on the previous report, when targets were considered to be inadequate. The balance between the rest of the subjects of the National Curriculum is

satisfactory. However, too little information and communication technology is taught across the curriculum in support of the other subjects, and not enough time is allowed for geography and history, especially at the lower end of the school. Within each subject, the spread of what is taught is mostly good, and the approach is also good, such as the use of the National Numeracy Strategy for mathematics, and the investigative approach to science. Science is one area in which the curriculum has developed very well, as it now occupies an important place in the school's curriculum.

21. The National Literacy Strategy for the teaching of English has been adapted well to meet the needs of the pupils. It has proved to be effective in raising standards throughout the school, in all aspects of communication. Similarly, the National Numeracy Strategy is proving to be effective in directing and guiding the teaching of mathematics, and its implementation is largely responsible for the rise in standards since the last inspection. The amount of time devoted to both of these subjects is good, reflecting the importance that the school places on them. Both of these subjects have improved very much since the previous inspection.
22. The curriculum is very relevant to the needs of the pupils in the school. The focus on developing pupils' personal skills is particularly important. Many pupils have few skills in relating to each other when they first come to the school – for example, how to behave, take turns, and work and play alongside each other. The school provides very well for this aspect of their education through personal, social and health education lessons; 'circle times', in which matters of interest and behaviour are discussed; and during daily routines. These help pupils develop skills such as cleaning their teeth and washing their hands, dressing and undressing, and eating with good table manners.
23. The second major focus of the curriculum – again, particularly relevant to the needs of the pupils – is the emphasis on teaching children to communicate. They are encouraged to listen carefully to what they are being told or shown, and to develop ways of responding to each other and staff through speech, signing or choosing. An increasingly important facet of the curriculum is the provision for the least able pupils, who have severe and complex needs. The school now has a multi-sensory room, to enable all of a child's senses to be stimulated. Several members of staff are developing this area, in order to increase its use, and that of other multi-sensory resources, in meeting the needs of pupils with such profound and multiple learning difficulties.
24. At the time of the previous report, the least able pupils were not well integrated into the whole life of the school, and they took part in a great deal of therapy away from their lessons. This situation has changed completely, with pupils now fully integrated into classes, and having good additional support to help them to make the most of the lessons. The greater amount of therapy is now part of pupils' education within the classroom.
25. A strength of the school is its attention to providing equality of access to the curriculum for all pupils. Although there is no formal system for comparing the performance of different groups of pupils, there is a very high level of awareness of individual needs and of the importance of opportunities for inclusion. Examples of this in practice can be found in physical education lessons and in the arrangements for some pupils with profound and multiple difficulties to join other classes for selected activities.
26. The length of the school day is now sufficient to meet recommendations. Sound use is made of part of the lunch periods, both for supporting pupils with their eating and

drinking skills and manners, and in providing activities when the meal is finished. In some classes this time is used particularly well. For example, in the early years unit, staff provide a small selection of educational and leisure activities, and they interact with the children and encourage their play and their language development. In other classes, much the same thing happens, although there are instances where the children are more passive, perhaps watching videos for several days each week. There is scope for more structured activities during this lunch period, especially since most pupils are transported to school and this restricts what can take place after school. The almost complete lack of voluntary activities, such as clubs, is unsatisfactory at the moment, and this situation has not changed significantly since the previous inspection. The school is considering introducing a French language awareness club, and a line dancing club, but these ideas could be further extended.

27. The school has very close links with a number of schools in the community. Many of these support a very active integration programme for pupils and nearly all are exceptionally supportive of the special needs of the pupils who are integrating. Only rarely does a school demonstrate a lack of sensitivity to the needs of the pupil. The school is very well supported in the inclusion of pupils by the local education authority's co-ordinator for medical and physical impairment. Particularly close links have been forged with a local primary school – where, for example, pupils exchange school council visits – and a secondary school, whose pupils give concerts and which is involved in developing a modern foreign language programme at The Lyndale School.
28. The school has very good links with its immediate neighbourhood and the wider community. These partnerships support fund raising and offer pupils the chance to experience opportunities to extend their learning. For example, during the inspection, pupils visited a nearby car wash, their local shops and a riding school. Many local people – for instance, at a public house – raise funds for the school to purchase resources, in addition to larger commercial concerns, such as a car manufacturer, which is donating money for a sensory garden. The opening of the new school building was celebrated with a community collage designed by an artist in residence. The resulting 'Tree of Life' consists of images created by neighbours, local education authority representatives, parents, pupils and staff of the school.
29. The school provides very well for pupils' spiritual, social, and moral development. The provision for their cultural development is excellent. This is a very good improvement since the previous inspection.
30. Class 'circle times' allow pupils to reflect and share their thoughts in an intimate candle lit group of staff and children. Whole school collective acts of worship are joyous and uplifting, and promote a special and moving spirituality. Pupils' work is greatly valued and displays around the school provide a rich and stimulating reflection of their achievements, interests and individuality. Pupils are encouraged to consider others – for example, the school participates in activities such as Operation Christmas Child, where pupils prepared parcels for refugees.
31. Staff provide very good role models for pupils and have very high expectations that pupils will behave well. The school's weekly achievement assembly celebrates pupils who have done well in school and have either earned a 'Golden Leaf' by observing their class Golden Rules or achieving a personal goal. Very good opportunities are taken to promote good manners at lunchtime. However, more opportunities could be given to the more able pupils– for example, requiring them to go to the counter and make a choice of their lunch, rather than just waiting for it to be brought to them. The



recent formation of a school council is offering pupils good opportunities to meet and discuss the running of their school and learn something of democratic procedures. Pupils are given plenty of chances to gain in confidence by taking part in performances in front of their families and other pupils – for example, in Christmas productions.

32. Pupils have access to an extremely rich variety of cultural experiences in school and during visits. Poetry, stories, songs, food and art celebrate both pupils' own and the wider cultural influences in our society. 'Story sacks' contain a wealth of exiting resources from a wide range of cultures, designed to stimulate pupils' senses, broaden their knowledge and open their minds to traditional and contemporary subjects and stories.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

33. The school's procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are very good; this is a great improvement since the previous inspection.
34. Lines of responsibility for child protection are very clear. Whilst the headteacher is the designated person for child protection, the school nurse provides very effective support. The school's strategies for recording critical incidents make a very good contribution to raising the whole staff's awareness of child protection issues.
35. The school's arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of pupils are comprehensive. They include detailed risk assessments for activities outside the school and during lessons and, for example, the moving and handling arrangements for individual pupils. Detailed care plans have been drawn up for younger pupils, and these will soon extend to all pupils. Pupils' personal development is very well co-ordinated and monitored through the personal, social and health education curriculum, achievement certificates and the staff's very detailed knowledge of all of the pupils. Conscientious caretaking procedures ensure that twice daily checks are maintained on the hydrotherapy pool and that all fire fighting equipment and alarms, hoists and lifting equipment, and electrical appliances, are regularly maintained. The school benefits from having a full time nurse and her assistant on hand to ensure pupils' health is well cared for. Their personal needs are very well met and staff preserve their privacy and dignity at all times. Therapists and paramedical staff work in close collaboration with the school. All pupils benefit from the tempting and attractively presented healthy food available at lunchtimes.
36. The procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are satisfactory. There are good systems in place for parents to let the school know why their child is absent. However, the school is not complying with the requirement to take an attendance register twice each day. There is no policy on how long registers should be kept open and so the school is unable to monitor patterns of punctuality either for the pupils or the school transport. This situation has not changed since the previous inspection. The good attendance levels are supported by the good practice of holding most of the pupils' medical and therapy appointments in school. The school's book for recording when pupils are late to school has not been kept up to date. Procedures for signing pupils in and out of school during the day are good.
37. The school's procedures for monitoring good behaviour and eliminating bullying are very good and well co-ordinated. Pupils respond well to the consistent approach to rewarding good behaviour – for example, they might earn a reward from their teacher

for being kind, another from a lunchtime supervisor for good manners or from a transport escort for behaving well on a minibus. Gold stars are additional incentives for pupils to work hard and behave well in order to earn a Golden Leaf in assembly and have their achievement celebrated by the whole school.

38. There are satisfactory procedures for the assessment of pupils' achievements and progress. The individual education plans contain effective targets for literacy, numeracy and for pupils' personal development. Pupils' individual targets are well matched to the needs identified in their statements and the school successfully incorporates their therapeutic needs, such as physiotherapy, speech therapy and occupational therapy, into its planning. Annual reviews are carried out conscientiously and, when possible, pupils are involved and their opinions sought. Effective procedures have been developed in order to assess and record pupils' achievements in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, but there is a lack of consistent assessment in other subjects. This means that teachers are not able to check how much progress pupils are making or set targets for them to achieve. The school makes satisfactory use of the assessment information it does collect, in order to identify pupils who are ready to be integrated into mainstream schools.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

39. Parents' views of the school are very positive. They are comfortable with their relationship with the school. Parents appreciate the fact that they can phone the school to talk to teachers, the school nurse or headteacher, and are welcome to visit. A splendid room for parents has been provided, although few play an active role in the day-to-day life of the school. During the course of the inspection, the Parents' Group held one of its regular meetings, and all the parents were very enthusiastic about the amount of information and help they receive from the school, and from each other. As many families live some distance from the school, the school recognises that not all parents can easily come into school by public transport, and it is prepared to help those parents who have difficulty attending formal school meetings, such as a pupil's annual review. Meetings and workshops – for example, on a core signing vocabulary or childhood illnesses – support parents in continuing the work of the school at home and help to ensure the health and well being of their children. For instance, during the Parents Group meeting, they were able to ask the school nurse exactly when a child would be able to return to school after an infectious illness. The school is open to suggestions from parents – for example, it has recently followed up a parental concern over breaktime snacks, by introducing a healthy snack system.
40. Parents and staff value the regular exchange of information and insight into domestic and school life, presented through the home-school books. Staff, especially those in the early years unit, are conscientious about maintaining the daily communication. The easily recognised symbols on the award stickers of pupils' weekly achievement certificates, help parents to check how well their children are getting on. Regular class newsletters give parents further information of their child's weekly activities.
41. Many parents support the school's practice of providing regular homework for pupils and often contribute a written commentary on their child's approach and success with tasks. Parents willingly support the school's social and fund raising ventures and have helped to create an outstanding resource for all areas of the curriculum with the creation of a range of 'story sacks.' The school works closely with parents when supporting pupils' integration into mainstream schools and has had a very positive response to its home-school agreement.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

42. The headteacher's outstanding leadership has been the key factor in the excellent progress made by the school. Central to this is her total commitment to providing all pupils with an education that enables them to reach their full potential. In particular, she is passionate in her belief that The Lyndale School is first and foremost a primary school. This means that the pupils' entitlement to the same opportunities as children in mainstream schools cannot be compromised, even though the curriculum may need to be adapted to meet their needs. After the inspection in 1996, the headteacher very successfully identified the steps needed to bring about the necessary changes and raise the school's expectations of what the pupils can achieve. In putting her plans into action, she has received very good support from the current deputy headteacher and senior teacher, governing body and local education authority. These have all helped her to overcome obstacles caused by considerable staffing and accommodation issues. Problems have been tackled systematically, firmly and openly.
43. The deputy headteacher and senior teacher worked together to manage the school successfully during the headteacher's absence due to ill-health. Both have made significant contributions to establishing a team spirit within the staff. Whatever their role, staff are professional and enthusiastic and justifiably proud of what they have achieved.
44. Led by a knowledgeable and experienced chair, the governing body is very well informed, actively involved and very supportive of the school. The governors are keen to develop their first-hand knowledge of the school, so that they can play a full part in making decisions about future developments. For example, when considering new policies, governors welcome presentations by the staff concerned, as when a teacher informed them about alternative methods of communication. Additionally, the school has established a policy for governors' visits to classrooms. This means that staff are quite clear about the purpose of such visits, appreciating that governors approach them in a spirit of partnership rather than criticism.
45. The school development plan sets out the school's priorities very clearly, showing a continued emphasis on raising standards of achievement and the quality of teaching. Since the previous inspection, the programme of visits to classrooms by, for example, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and local education authority inspectors, has been intensive and very effective in improving the quality of teaching. In a positive move, subject co-ordinators are now beginning to take on some of this responsibility, in order to help them identify areas for development and to share good practice. The governors set useful targets for many important aspects of the school's work – for example, to enable non-classroom staff, such as drivers and kitchen staff, to communicate with pupils through signs and symbols. The headteacher is investigating ways of setting targets for groups of pupils, using nationally available levels that are more finely graded than the National Curriculum tests, in order to measure how quickly they are making progress. This will enable the school to compare its performance with that of other, similar schools. In turn, this information can be used to guide developments – for example, in the curriculum.
46. Since the previous inspection, there have been excellent improvements in the way that the school manages its available finance. In 1996, financial management was poor and the school failed to provide value for money. It has turned the management of finance around and now provides good value for money. Its priorities for development effectively promote pupils' progress. This is evident in the very good

improvements in pupils' learning brought about by the effective introduction of the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies. The school has taken the prudent step of managing its finances in partnership with the local education authority. This ensures that the head teacher and governors receive good information to keep track of expenditure. They make effective use of the funds available by seeking best value in purchases. The school is imaginative and manages funds from the community well to improve the already excellent building. This is evident in the plans to develop the outside environment, with community support.

47. The school is in its first full year of operating the budget and is beginning to have a clearer idea of the cost of running the new building. This is already enabling the school to plan more accurately for future expenditure, without the need to maintain funds for unexpected contingencies, such as the heating costs for the pool. The school has received additional funding during the year because of an increase in pupil numbers. This has led to a greater than expected amount of surplus. However, it has planned well in order to make effective use of this money to enhance pupils' learning – for instance, by providing more stimulating lighting in the hydrotherapy pool. The administrative staff are efficient and support the work of teachers and classroom staff well, so that they can concentrate on promoting pupils' learning.
48. The school is very well staffed by both teachers and support assistants. The previous inspection found that there was an inadequate number of support staff, but this has been rectified. There is now ample support for pupils' learning and physical needs. At the meeting for parents held before the inspection, three parents felt that the provision of therapy was insufficient. The inspection found, however, that the levels of the various forms of therapy available and also of the nursing care provided, are good. These staff work very closely and effectively with teachers and support assistants.
49. Teaching staff's qualifications cover a limited range of subjects of the curriculum but this does not affect the quality of the curriculum which they deliver. A major factor in this has been the very high quality of the staff development programme provided. A key issue raised in the 1996 inspection was the need for the school to raise the quality of teaching through the use of in-service training. The school's response to this issue has been extremely successful. Records show a very extensive range of training undertaken by all staff, both as individuals and as a whole-staff group, which has clearly done much to raise standards both in subjects of the curriculum and in the general care and welfare of the pupils. Training opportunities show a clear link with the school's priorities for development and examples of areas which have benefited from increased staff expertise include literacy, numeracy, the provision for pupils with complex communication difficulties and the use of signing. The 1996 inspection pointed out that there was no staff handbook and that arrangements for the induction of new staff were unsatisfactory. A draft handbook is currently out for consultation and it offers a sound set of guidelines for staff but there is still no formal system for the induction of new staff. However, two recently appointed staff reported that they had received very good support on an informal basis. There is still a need, however, for a system that will ensure that new recruits receive a consistent programme of support. Overall, however, the arrangements to provide staffing to cover a complex set of roles and responsibilities are very effective. Job descriptions are comprehensive and specific and staff are very clear about their roles and those of their colleagues. Very good teamwork is a major factor in the quality of the provision made and reflects the high morale of staff.

50. The school's accommodation is excellent and all pupils can easily reach all parts of it. The buildings and internal fixtures and fittings have been adapted very effectively from their previous use to meet the various and complex needs of pupils. Toilet and changing facilities, for example, and the provision of equipment such as electric hoists, make a very important contribution to the high standards of care provided. Specialist facilities such as the hydrotherapy pool and multi-sensory area are of very high quality and there is also a very good range of accommodation for other uses such as therapy, medical needs and for parents. Classrooms are spacious and airy. They contain some outstanding displays and provide a very stimulating learning environment. The accommodation is kept very clean and well maintained by the caretaker and his staff. The grounds have not yet been developed to match the excellent standards of the internal accommodation, but plans to do this are included in the school development plan.
51. The quantity and quality of learning resources have been improved since the previous inspection, when they were described as adequate. They are now good in the majority of subjects and they reflect the considerable amount of thought and investment that have gone into their development. This is particularly apparent in developments such as the 'story sacks', which do so much to enrich pupils' learning, and in the acquisition of 'big books' for mathematics. Specialist furniture and equipment for those pupils who need them are also of high quality, although the provision of alternative communication aids, such as equipment controlled by switches, whilst good in the early years unit, is not yet sufficient to match the school's ambitions.

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

52. In order to raise standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:
- (1) Develop suitable systems for recording what pupils achieve in every subject. Use the information collected in order to measure how quickly pupils are making progress and to set targets for groups of pupils to achieve. (Paragraphs 38,45)
  - (2) Plan more consistently for pupils to use information and communication technology to support their learning in other subjects. (Paragraphs 20,97)

In addition, the following issues should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- (a) Make better use of the lunchtime to provide structured voluntary activities – such as clubs – for pupils. (Paragraph 26)
- (b) Improve the procedures for checking pupils' attendance and punctuality. (Paragraph 36)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

63
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Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

44
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### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	34	49	13	0	0	0

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

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

Pupils on the school's roll

No	of
pupils	

Number of pupils on the school's roll	60
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	34

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

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

### ***Attendance***

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	7.36

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

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

**Exclusions in the last school year**

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

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

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes: YN – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.6
Average class size	8.57

**Education support staff: YN– Y6**

Total number of education support staff	18.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	575

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	580151
Total expenditure	542502
Expenditure per pupil	10433
Balance brought forward from previous year	42733
Balance carried forward to next year	80382*

\*The balance of finance carried forward is large. This is because of the need to maintain a higher than normal contingency because of the uncertainty of costs, such as for pool heating, in this first full year of managing the budget. The school received additional funds for accepting more pupils late in the financial



year. There is good planning to utilise the surplus to improve resources, for instance to complete the installation of lights in the new pool area.

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

60

Number of questionnaires returned

39

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

	Strongl y agree	Tend to agree	Tend to dis- agree	Strongl y dis- agree	Don't know
My child likes school.	87	7	3	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	87	10	0	3	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	59	26	3	3	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	50	26	10	7	7
The teaching is good.	87	13	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	82	15	3	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	95	5	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	79	21	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	87	13	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	95	5	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	76	21	3	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	64	17	3	3	13

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

A very few parents are concerned about the amount of therapy available to meet their children's needs.

A similar number were critical of the quality of statements written by the local education authority.

## **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**

53. The youngest children in the school get a very good education in the early years unit, which has its own separate curriculum, staff and resources. Children are taught in two classes within the same unit; one is mainly for the more able children who make faster progress. The children in the other class mostly have more complex and severe needs. There is some movement of children between the two classes, and some lessons are run jointly. In both classes, the children make progress that is very good for their levels of ability; their achievements are very good in each of the Areas of Learning that make up the syllabus for the unit. This is principally because the teaching is very good. This is a good improvement on the situation at the time of the previous inspection, when the teaching was considered to be unsatisfactory in some of the lessons seen, although the report was generally positive.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

54. Children develop very well, particularly in their confidence and self-esteem. This is a major focus of the work in the unit; it is an area that teachers and support staff strive to develop at every opportunity, whether as part of everyday life, or as the specific aim of a lesson. All of the children will sit together in a friendly way at snack times and at midday lunch. They sit in a semicircle for reading and stories, and only occasionally interfere with each other. The more able children take turns well, and will share toys, pencils and paintbrushes. They play together at activities such as the home corner, the sand tray and in the ball pool. They are friendly to the pets that are brought into the class, and they enjoy a party or a celebration such as Harvest, Christmas or Divali. The children with the most complex needs are beginning to relate to adults and their classmates, and to see them as individuals. Many of the more active and mobile children learn to undress themselves for swimming or physical education, and to dress themselves again afterwards.

#### **Communication, language and literacy**

55. Children make very good progress in their overall communication, especially in their comprehension of what is happening around them. As they develop through the unit, children become more able to communicate in different ways. Teachers and other staff such as classroom assistants and therapists make innumerable opportunities every day for pupils to listen, and to respond. For example, at the end of one particularly good lesson, the teacher gathered all the children together to go over what they had learned, and held a very positive discussion with them. She provided good opportunities for children to listen to each other, take their turn at speaking, and remember what they had been doing. The final activity involved the teacher reading a story to the class – ‘The giant who came to tea’ – and the children sat and listened with rapt attention.
56. The more able children begin to listen carefully, pay attention and follow simple instructions. They understand almost everything that is said to them, and respond positively, by repeating words, anticipating the next line in a rhyme or song, and joining in with actions, signs and, for example, animal sounds in a song. Many children understand a range of signs, and some are beginning to make the signs themselves. The most able pupils can speak in short sentences and phrases, and make their meaning known, although some children's speech is not always sufficiently clear to

be readily understood the first time. The more able children hold a book correctly, point to pictures and recognise the initial letter of their own name, and some other letters as well. The children with the most severe and complex needs have good awareness of people, and some of the things that are said to them. They look at faces, moving toys and puppets, and choose between two different things, such as drinks, toys or snacks.

## **Mathematical development**

57. Children's achievements in mathematical skills are also very good. Staff encourage the learning of a sense of number by introducing counting and numeral recognition in many lessons that have a focus on some other part of the curriculum. The most able children can count up to ten by rote, and can recognise most of the numerals. Some children can write the numerals, although not neatly, and often need some prompting. They will echo the numbers with the teacher as they count to ten, or sing number songs and rhymes – such as 'Five currant buns'. Teachers use resources very well to help children understand the value of numbers – for example, toy frogs during 'Five little speckled frogs'. The more able children understand concepts such as 'under', 'behind' and 'inside', and they recognise several different shapes, including triangles, squares and circles. The least able children have little or no awareness of numbers and what they mean, but are beginning to understand about making a choice of one thing – for example, a toy – from two.

## **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

58. In developing their knowledge and understanding of the world, children have watched videos, and staff have taken them on visits to local places of interest such as the coast, a supermarket and an open market, a garden centre to see the water features, a carwash and a funfair. They learn to make and enjoy some foods such as gingerbread men, biscuits shaped like farm animals, or ice cream sodas, and they learn the names of the different parts of their bodies, often during action songs or when washing before and after meals. The children with the most severe learning difficulties have experiences in the multi-sensory room with different lights and sounds. With some good equipment, and the knowledge of how to use it, teachers are encouraging children to begin to use single-touch switches, voice-operated switches and pressure switches to operate toys, lights and sound makers, learning that they can change or control some part of what is around them. The more able children learn to use a computer in simple ways, perhaps with a drawing program to make screen patterns, using the mouse and some keys. They control a toy lorry from a control box, making it move along the corridors, forwards, backwards and turning corners – for instance, as they go to fetch the register from the office.

## **Physical development**

59. Children's physical development is also very good, although it may be limited by their particular needs in some instances. Children receive very good provision for this aspect of their education, both in terms of staff expertise and in the equipment that is available. They take part in swimming and hydrotherapy, games, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and different forms of play in the ball pool and in the soft play room, and they ride bikes and play together indoors and out. In physical education lessons in the hall, for instance, the least able children rolled along mats, bounced on a trampette, rocked over a soft cylinder, crawled over the mats and through a large tube, went down a slide and rocked in a large wobbly bowl. Children learn about their bodies, and how to move them, sometimes to music. The more able pupils begin to

manipulate small items with increasing confidence and skill, such as scissors, brushes, glue spreaders and pencils. The less able children are learning to hold a cup or a spoon with an adapted handle to help with their eating and drinking. Teachers and support staff have very good relationships with the children; they manage the children very well, and have very good knowledge of their needs.

### **Creative development**

60. Children's creative development is very good. They are very well encouraged to take an active part in drawing and painting and they enjoy the process of making marks, circles and lines and splashes of colour. Some children's co-ordination makes their grip and hand movement unsteady, and they continue to struggle, needing much support from staff, whilst others can hold pencils or brushes properly. Teachers encourage children to make such items as paper chains, collage pictures, musical instruments, party hats and clay models of leaves with patterns on them. Children and staff sing together, and some of the children are beginning to learn the words to popular songs and rhymes, especially the ones with actions and signing. Many of the higher attaining children recognise a range of musical instruments such as a drum, tambourine, shaker and xylophone, and they will play their instruments during a song, doing well to start and stop the playing at about the right time. The teaching in such lessons is well thought out and imaginative.
61. The unit is very well led and managed. It is run largely as a whole-team effort, with regular meetings of teachers and support staff, all of whom contribute positively not only to the actual teaching each day, but also to the planning of what will be taught, and the routines of each day. There is a very good policy for how the unit will be organised, and what the principles of the education are. The overall plan of what will be taught is very good; it follows current national guidelines, and adapts them very well to meet the needs of the children. The co-ordinator has a clear plan for developing the unit, including the arrangements for stimulating children's senses in a wide variety of ways. This is becoming increasingly necessary as the pupils who are coming into the unit recently often have more severe and complex needs than pupils of former years. There are also plans to develop the play areas outside, including a shelter from the sun and the rain, and a better hard play surface. Staff are enthusiastic and committed to giving the children the best start possible, and there are positive plans to continue to develop the provision. The unit is a strength of the school. Children begin their education with a particularly good start here.

### **ENGLISH**

62. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress and achieve high standards. This represents a very good improvement since the previous inspection. It is in line with a similar improvement in the quality of teaching, which was unsatisfactory in nearly one third of lessons in 1996. Teaching is now good, sometimes very good. The National Literacy Strategy has been adapted well to meet the needs of the pupils, and has had a particularly good impact on pupils' spelling and their ability to use the sounds made by letters in order to help them attempt to read new words.
63. Many pupils make especially good progress in their ability to listen well and communicate by speaking or using signs. Listening skills are often very good, with pupils showing great patience as they wait for others to make themselves understood. Teachers are skilled at encouraging pupils to express themselves, and provide many good opportunities for them to speak and listen, during lessons in all

subjects. The most able pupils use an increasingly wide vocabulary and develop their ability to speak out in class, sharing their ideas. In some classes, teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to play imaginatively in structured situations, which encourage them to take part in conversations. For example, in one of the classes for the oldest pupils, a 'post office' allows pupils to take the role of shopkeeper or customer, asking and answering questions and communicating their requirements. Pupils between the ages of five and seven, and older ones with particular difficulties, benefit from working with speech and language therapists. These work closely with class teachers so that, for example, pupils develop the same listening skills in lessons as when they are withdrawn for therapy. The school is committed to enabling pupils to use alternative methods of communication, such as signing. Again, the speech therapists work in partnership with the co-ordinator, to ensure that pupils are taught consistently and are not confused by teachers using unorthodox signs. This work is in its infancy, but already the staff are becoming more confident and pupils in the early stages of developing language are benefiting particularly. For example, they are able to join in with hymns during assemblies, increasing their confidence and self-esteem.

64. In reading, pupils undertake a good range of pre-reading activities and those who are able join a reading scheme. All English lessons involve the class gathering together to share a 'big book'. As a result, most pupils appreciate that words and pictures carry meaning, and they enjoy following simple story lines or joining in with phrases they remember. For example, in a very good lesson with pupils between the ages of five and seven, the teacher read the story of 'The Gingerbread Man' very expressively, one pupil delightedly anticipating the refrain 'You can't catch me, I'm the Gingerbread Man'. All pupils, including those with autism and severe learning difficulties, were able to enjoy and understand the story, because the teacher made effective use of signing and objects – such as a fox puppet – from a 'story sack'. In the class for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, the teacher himself creates excellent 'big books', to meet the varied needs of the pupils. For example, a book about the 'Sleeping Beauty' allowed them to experience a sparkling magic wand made from glitter and to hear music announcing the arrival of the king and queen. In this class, and the one for pupils aged five to seven, pupils' reading skills are developed effectively as they learn about a 'letter of the week'. The teachers use bags containing a variety of exciting resources – such as a large toy snake, a scarf, some seeds – which help pupils to make connections between the letter 's' and the sound it makes.
65. More able pupils, and those of the seven to eleven year-olds whose reading has progressed sufficiently, make use of their knowledge of letter sounds in order to tackle new words. However, although this helps them to narrow down the possibilities, so that they suggest words that begin with the same letter or two, most pupils still need help to break down words – such as 'content' – into smaller parts and then blend them together correctly. Teachers throughout the school identify key words in the 'big books' and stress them consistently during lessons. This helps pupils to recognise them and so increase the number of words they can read fluently, without having to sound out the letters separately. However, for some less able pupils, the weekly change of book and key words may not allow enough time for them to consolidate their learning. All around the school, lively displays encourage pupils to read in order to find information. In other subjects, they are often required to read instructions or refer to books, which enables pupils to practise reading and to appreciate its importance. Pupils are encouraged to take home library books and they make regular visits to the local library for story telling sessions. The school's resources for reading, including the library and 'story sacks' are very good quality and well organised, so that teachers have every opportunity to use them effectively. The school's planning

systems ensure that pupils experience a wide range of literature, including fiction, non-fiction and poetry. The most able pupils follow published reading schemes, which they enjoy. When reading aloud, they try hard to put expression into their voices, because teachers regularly remind them about the significance of, for example, exclamation marks and question marks.

66. Pupils' good progress with their reading helps them with their writing. Their knowledge of the sounds made by letters means that they are well placed to attempt to spell new words. In addition, more able pupils are encouraged to use word books or dictionaries. Sometimes, teachers and support staff are too quick to spell out words for pupils, rather than first asking them to try to be independent. Teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to develop their handwriting skills. The youngest and least able pupils, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, are in the early stages of writing. They are encouraged to hold pencils and crayons correctly and to make increasingly controlled marks on paper. Initially, many pupils need an adult's hand – for example, to help them to draw a line from left to right – but most progress to being guided by spoken instructions and finally to being independent. As they gain control of their movements, the average and most able pupils learn to trace over letters and words written by adults, then to copy, before managing on their own. Teachers provide a sensible balance of activities to develop pupils' handwriting or spelling skills and opportunities for them to be creative and record their ideas. Pupils in the early stages of learning handwriting are asked to explain their ideas to adults, who write them down for the pupil to write over or copy. For example, during a poetry lesson, pupils aged seven to nine years old were able to express their thoughts about snow or rain because the teacher and support assistants asked gently probing questions and pupils were confident to communicate with them. Pupils aged nine to eleven build on this early work, by trying to incorporate more interesting language into their poems, producing effective lines such as 'A bird in the tree sings, the branches twang as the wind pings.' Throughout the school, there are times when the most able pupils could be expected to be even more independent or to extend their writing. Few pupils write more than a couple of sentences and it is unusual for them to plan their writing or attempt to improve it.
67. There is scope to extend the range of writing that pupils undertake. For example, there is little evidence of them writing lists, instructions or diaries. Pupils use their writing effectively in other subjects – for example, to label diagrams in science or answer questions in history or religious education. For some pupils with physical difficulties, specialised information and communication resources enable them to record their ideas independently and make good progress in writing. In general, though, the use of information and communication technology is under-developed, and needs to be included in teachers' plans. The co-ordinator for alternative communication has plans to acquire programs that will enable less able pupils to write using symbols.
68. English is well led and managed. The co-ordinator has produced a good policy and has sensible plans for future developments.

## **MATHEMATICS**

69. Pupils make good and often very good progress in numeracy lessons. The quality of teaching is always at least good and often very good. Consequently, most pupils achieve well in relation to their targets for learning. Pupils who require additional support in lessons make as much progress as others do, because teachers use the

targets in their individual education plans in order to plan suitable work. The school has worked extremely effectively to raise standards since the previous inspection. Planning is now effective to provide pupils with a rich range of work in numeracy. This is evident in the good display of pupils' work throughout the school. The quality of teaching is considerably better and reflects the shared commitment throughout the school to promote pupils' numeracy skills. The school has introduced the National Numeracy Strategy well, with an effective emphasis upon improving pupils' skills in mental arithmetic.

70. Pupils up to the age of seven make good progress, concentrating well as the teacher engages them in number games and tells them number stories. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed the humorous pictures in a 'big book' about a crocodile, where lizards use the lengths of their own bodies as a means of measuring the crocodile for an overcoat. There are effective links with other lessons to deepen pupils' understanding. For instance, pupils count backwards and forwards, with numbers attached to the joints in a snake from the head to the tail, linked to their work for the Chinese New Year. The teacher makes effective use of her knowledge of their achievements in order to arrange them in working groups. The highest attaining pupils help to cut paper tape to represent each other's height and this provides a good opportunity for them to place heights in order. Lower attaining pupils estimate the order of size of their feet by looking at each other's shoes. They have fun painting their own feet and those of support staff, printing footprints and comparing them. This provides a good means for them to decide on longest and shortest feet, promoting number language well. The teacher uses time efficiently, ensuring that pupils have a good opportunity to learn about what each has been doing in their group. This is successful in promoting progress in learning because relationships between pupils are very good, and they take an interest in each other's work. They enjoy co-operating as they sing an amended version of 'Ten green bottles', choosing bottles in decreasing order of sizes to knock down as they sing together.
71. Pupils up to the age of eleven achieve well. During mental arithmetic sessions, teachers direct questions based on their knowledge of how well pupils achieved in previous lessons. Pupils concentrate very well because they want to show the teacher and each other what they know – for example, that they can half and double numbers. Teachers provide good resources for pupils to help them to find the answers. In one lesson, pupils counted blocks as the teacher halved them, beginning to remember some of the more common halves, such as half of twenty. In a number of classes, teachers check how well pupils are learning in mental arithmetic, deploying nursery nurses to keep a record of significant moments of learning. Teachers plan well-structured lessons with plenty of resources to engage pupils' attention. For instance, in one lesson, higher attaining pupils were already familiar with two-dimensional shapes. When looking at model three-dimensional shapes, they responded well to the teacher's demonstration of how to sort them. They considered how many faces and vertices shapes have, as the teacher helped them to plot their results on a chart. Pupils began to establish a range of facts about faces and vertices, and to consider whether or not they could identify shapes from the statistics they had collected.
72. Throughout the school, pupils who have difficulty communicating their ideas receive effective support to contribute in other ways. This was effective, for instance, in lessons to promote the names of regular shapes. Pupils typed the names of the shapes into their communication devices to read out names such as 'pentagon'. Staff provide very effective support and ensure that pupils attend well, helping them to participate and so make good progress in lessons. Pupils who have learning needs



that are more complex receive activities geared to their particular needs. Staff provide a very high standard of care and plan suitable opportunities for pupils to make early steps to learn numeracy. They ensure that resources provide effective visual stimulation. This was particularly successful in a lesson during which pupils use the shapes in the soft play area to compare lengths.

73. The subject co-ordinator leads the subject very well, supported by a shared commitment from staff to promote numeracy well. The co-ordinator has good information about what colleagues are teaching through good opportunities to observe lessons, providing support and sharing ideas. This ensures, for instance, that pupils of the same age, but in different classes receive similar work so that they gain equal access to the areas of learning. A strength of the provision for numeracy is the way that teachers provide good opportunities to promote numeracy within other lessons. For instance, they provide good opportunities for pupils to measure quantities when they make soup to accompany the story of 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch'. They use number songs particularly well to teach counting, adding and subtracting. There are good examples of assessment to record pupils' progress in numeracy. The school recognises the need to add to the use of national measures such as statutory assessments in order to set targets for improvement in the subject. There are limited opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology to promote more progress.

## SCIENCE

74. Pupils achieve well in science and make good progress both in their knowledge and skills. This is as a consequence of good teaching that generally places a great emphasis on ensuring that all pupils play an active part in lessons. Teachers are confident in the teaching of the subject and provide tasks which are enjoyable and stimulating for all the pupils.
75. Pupils make good progress in lessons. By the age of seven, pupils are developing their skills of scientific investigation, through activities such as putting the features on a face, or identifying the properties of a range of materials. Pupils with communication difficulties are encouraged to compare and identify a range of sounds, and pupils with profound and complex learning difficulties use touch and sensation well to compare a range of materials. The pupils progress well in their skills, such as their ability to observe and record how materials change when heated. This was illustrated by a lesson in which pupils' excitement and interest in the results of heating chocolate were evident. It also resulted in them understanding that some materials melt when heated. The teacher used questioning well to ensure that higher attaining pupils are effectively challenged. She asked 'What is happening to the chocolate?' – ensuring that pupils observed the experiment closely. This was followed by 'Why is the chocolate melting?' which required pupils to give reasons for their answer. Their recording skills were further developed by an experiment to compare the eye colours of the group. Higher attaining pupils were able to record their results in a graph, other pupils can label pictures and, with the aid of support staff, pupils with profound and complex difficulties, can make comparisons.
76. By the age of 11, pupils are beginning to develop a scientific vocabulary, with higher attaining pupils using complex words such as 'transparent' and 'reflection.' These pupils are beginning to work independently, on experiments such as using colour filters to match the colours of the rainbow. A notable feature of teaching throughout the school, is the care taken to ensure that pupils with a wide range of abilities make good progress – for example, the effective use of signing for pupils with

communication difficulties. With support, pupils with profound and complex difficulties are able to carry out experiments and draw conclusions. In one lesson, they were helped to experience pulling and pushing forces, as they operated a clockwork hamster, pushed toys across the floor and rode a rocking horse. Occasionally, teachers miss opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in lessons. For example, during an investigation of solids, liquids and gases, the teacher carried out the exciting activities – such as stirring salt into sand or water, watched by the pupils. Later, the experiment had to be repeated, to remind them about what had happened.

77. The quality of teaching and pupils' learning have shown significant improvements since the last inspection. The production of a clear policy and detailed curriculum planning are important elements in this success. Assessment procedures have also been developed and now give a clear picture of pupils' achievements and progress. The substantial investment in resources means that pupils can undertake a wider range of practical work. For standards to be further improved it is necessary for the school to further develop the use of computers in science and to investigate the possibilities of using the school grounds for practical science activities.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

78. Pupils' achievements and progress are satisfactory, as is the quality of teaching. During the inspection, the teaching varied from satisfactory to very good. This is a good improvement from the previous inspection, when some of the teaching was unsatisfactory.
79. Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject to teach pupils up to the age of seven how to use different tools and to explore the use of different materials. These pupils learn to use a paintbrush, and spread colour onto paper, making portraits of themselves, and pictures of other people such as clowns, as part of a circus topic. The more able children begin to learn about mixing colours, and using different textures when they paint. They have tried printing with their hands and feet, and have made pictures with charcoal on papers of different colours. Pupils have taken digital photographs around the school, of things with different colours and patterns. The least able pupils are given effective support to enable them to join in during lessons. Some need verbal prompting or hand-over-hand assistance. Their awareness of colour and shape is increasing, and they can hold a brush or crayon with help.
80. In the classes for the pupils aged seven to eleven, teachers continue to help pupils to develop their art and design skills satisfactorily. Pupils develop their skills using a brush, pencil and crayon to make sketches of their ideas, and pictures of their finished work. Some three-dimensional work is carried out, but this does not go far beyond some basic clay work and paper pictures, such as pictures of heads with the hair as a mass of snakes, as part of a Greek topic. One very good lesson saw the teacher and class discussing the work of Matisse. The pupils went on to examine a bouquet of real flowers, with very good prompting and probing by the teacher, and then to making their own pictures in the style of Matisse, using small pieces of the coloured papers as the petals, leaves and stems. The activity was very well chosen to enable all pupils to be fully involved and independent, and so make very good progress. Later, they said what they liked or disliked about their pictures, and how they would like to change them, or develop them further.
81. Pupils with profound and multiple difficulties also make satisfactory progress. During the inspection, they were asked to roll a clay ball out, then press it into a frame, and

decorate it with seashells. However, the planning was more like a list of activities that pupils were going to do, rather than what they were expected to actually learn. This led to staff helping the pupils too much, in order to get the picture finished, and to have something to show for it at the end. The lesson was too rushed, and pupils were mainly having a tactile experience of having their hands pressed over clay or through a bowl of shells, rather than a good creative or artistic experience. Pupils have been on trips out, such as to an art gallery in Liverpool where they drew pictures of their favourite works of art, and wrote poems about them. The more able pupils wrote the poems and drew their pictures almost unaided, whilst the pupils with more complex needs worked as a group with a resident poet and artist at the gallery.

82. The leadership and management of art and design are satisfactory. The plan for what will be taught over the long term needs to be updated, and could usefully include more time for three-dimensional work, the use of computer art programs, and the work of other artists as inspirations for lessons. The overall improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The teaching has improved well, but developments have been restricted by the co-ordinator's other role as the co-ordinator for mathematics, which has had to take priority recently.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

83. Pupils' achievements and progress are satisfactory. In the small number of lessons observed, the quality of teaching was good and pupils made good progress in food technology. However, they follow a limited range of topics to promote learning in designing and making, so their progress overall is satisfactory rather than good. No judgement was made in the previous inspection, so it is not possible to comment on how well the subject has developed.
84. Pupils up to the age of seven have good opportunities to work with a range of materials – for example, by investigating wheels and axles in a range of toys. Teachers plan lessons carefully, to give pupils plenty of practical activities, well matched to their needs. For example, during the inspection, pupils designed and made fillings for pasties, linked to the story of 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch'. The teacher had structured the project effectively, so pupils had previously tasted the ingredients – such as vegetables – and so were able to make an informed choice of filling. Adults helped with difficult tasks such as rolling out pastry, but pupils were encouraged to be as independent as possible, so that they could make good progress in their practical, making skills. Pupils whose needs are more complex make satisfactory progress as they consider the choices available to the lighthouse keeper to make a hot lunch, such as soup. The teacher provides good opportunities for pupils to taste ingredients until they reach a consensus, opting to make healthy vegetable soup. Teachers take full advantage of chances to promote numeracy – for example, by encouraging pupils to measure quantities when they add ingredients to make soup or to look for shapes, such as rectangles, as they roll pastry to make pasties.
85. Pupils up to the age of eleven continued the same theme, by designing and making sandwiches. They tasted and evaluated different types of bread and built upon this by considering a range of fillings, awarding marks out of three. During one lesson, they co-operated very well together as they made sandwiches, such as cheese and celery, egg and cress, practising skills such as spreading and cutting. Pupils are clear about the purpose of such activities and appreciate that the rest of the class are to taste the sandwiches and identify their favourites. In the class for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, a soup was designed and made. Pupils' progress was satisfactory rather than good, because they were organised to work as

a class group, led by the teacher. This limited their opportunities to be actively involved – for example, in preparing vegetables.

86. The co-ordinator has only recently taken responsibility for the subject. She plans to extend the range of topics, in order to raise levels of achievement. For instance, the successful food technology projects will be developed to enable older pupils to design packaging for food.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

87. Pupils' achievements and progress are satisfactory. The quality of teaching is satisfactory for pupils aged seven to eleven. Judgements cannot be made about teaching for pupils aged five to seven, because of the timetable during the period of inspection. No teaching was seen during the previous inspection and no judgements were made, so it is not possible to consider the improvement in the meantime.
88. The pupils aged five to seven investigate their homes and gardens, what is in them and where they are, who lives there and what they are made of. Later, they learn about the journey to school, and about the different kinds of weather they might encounter during the year. However, too little time is devoted to the subject, and pupils do not learn sufficiently about places that are very different from their own neighbourhood, or about things that have a common theme world wide, such as food, or weather.
89. In later years, from the age of seven to eleven, pupils discover more about the wider area around where they live and go to school. They visit the local shops and other places locally such as the village and the beach. They learn about different kinds of buildings such as the houses, shops, cafes and pubs, and they draw and colour in maps to show where they are in the local village. Some pupils have made a large graph of the kinds of buildings they found. Others have drawn a map to show where all the shops are in a shopping street, and have done a survey about them, including their telephone numbers, when they are open, if they are still operating, and so on. Teachers are very encouraging in these field trips into the community, and the surveys help pupils to develop a good sense of the most basic elements of the subject. They find out about contrasting places – for instance, villages in Wales, Holland and Mexico – but these could equally valuably include an icy place, or a rainforest village, for greater contrast. Teachers plan their lessons well, and they concentrate on the main geographical skills, with a good focus on mapwork. The resources that are used are chosen carefully, and pupils have many opportunities to listen, understand, and to speak. Teachers use question and answer methods well, and have high expectations for pupils to be fully involved in the lessons. In one lesson, looking at the results of a traffic survey, the planning for the series of lessons was good, but within this particular lesson, almost all of the skills were related to mathematics, not to geography. Pupils counted the cars, lorries and buses they had seen, and discussed very sensibly how they might illustrate these numbers on a graph. They went on to do some careful cutting, colouring and pasting of pictures of vehicles, and were developing their fine motor skills well, but not so much their geographical understanding.
90. The leadership and management of geography are satisfactory. However, the plan for what will be taught over the long term is still inadequate, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Pupils make a sound start on local geography, but do not extend this sufficiently into the other aspects of the required curriculum. The resources within the

school are barely satisfactory, but pupils go on some trips locally to enhance their learning.

## **HISTORY**

91. Progress and achievement are satisfactory for pupils aged between the ages of five and seven, and good for those between seven and eleven. Since the 1996 inspection, standards in history have improved significantly. Teaching is now good, resources have been improved and pupils make much better progress.
92. The youngest pupils are beginning to understand words and ideas relating to the passing of time. They have looked at differences between daily life in modern times and in other periods and know, for example, that milk was delivered by horse and cart 'in the old days' and that children's toys have changed over the years. Much of their early work in the subject is linked with their growing knowledge of their own community, and teachers make good use of this. The amount of time allocated to the subject in these early stages, however, is very limited and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to make anything more than satisfactory progress.
93. The allocation of time for the subject for older pupils, however, is much better and by the time they are eleven, pupils have made good progress in key skills. For example, they are learning to place events in chronological order and finding out about the past using different sources of information. Pupils in Years 3 and 4, for instance, understand why archaeologists have to dig and why it is important for them to record their finds carefully. Higher-attaining pupils in this group could also refer to times before and after Jesus Christ. Teachers do much to stimulate pupils' curiosity by asking challenging questions and through the imaginative use of practical activities. In their study of the Ancient Greeks, for example, pupils wear clothes which resemble those of the period studied and use wax tablets and the Greek alphabet for simple messages. Pupils very much enjoy these activities. Similarly, in a very exciting lesson, pupils took part in an 'archaeological dig' using a sand tray, unearthing pieces of pottery (card) and reassembling them. They made very good progress in their historical enquiry skills – for example, their ability to draw conclusions from what they have found out. Lower-attaining pupils and those with complex needs benefit particularly from the very good use by teachers of objects, pictures and role-play to illustrate historical themes. In a lesson about Louis Braille as part of their work on famous people, for example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties responded well to the use of costume and of 'bumpy letters' during the telling of his story.
94. History is well planned and managed by the co-ordinator, but the allocation of time for the younger pupils is inhibiting further progress.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

95. Overall, pupils' progress and achievement are broadly satisfactory. There were limited opportunities to observe pupils using information technology during the inspection, due to the absence of the specialist teacher. In lessons throughout the school, pupils use computers to improve their spelling – for instance, to copy words. They show that they are developing satisfactory skills in using the mouse and keyboard to make changes on the screen. Staff have satisfactory skills to guide pupils to use the equipment to support a limited number of lessons. Older, more able pupils use a CD-ROM to read a story, in order to answer questions. They are confident in using the mouse to move the story along.

96. The school has replaced most of its obsolete equipment, improving the quality of resources significantly since the previous inspection. There is a particularly good specialist room for pupils to learn skills in information and communication technology.
97. Staff have received a good introduction to training to develop skills in using equipment. This has raised confidence, particularly in the use of digital cameras to support learning. For example, digital photographs are used effectively to provide support materials for the school's impressive range of 'story sacks'. Staff require more training to introduce pupils to a wider range of technology to promote better progress. Teachers have a limited amount of software available to use during lessons in all subjects. There is, therefore, limited evidence of planning for pupils to use computers to support their learning – for example, by using them for research in history or to create graphs in mathematics.
98. The co-ordinator is currently absent and this has delayed developments. There is insufficient recording of pupils' progress in developing skills in using information and communication technology to help teachers to plan further work.

## **MUSIC**

99. Little teaching of music was seen during the inspection and it is not possible to make a judgement on pupils' progress or achievement.
100. Music does feature in the life of the school, with pupils participating in singing in assembly. Music is also used to create an appropriate atmosphere in lessons, such as the use of Chinese music in religious education to support a lesson on Chinese culture. Teachers also make effective use of music to create a welcoming environment when pupils arrive. In the limited number of lessons seen, pupils clearly enjoyed the subject and responded positively to a wide range of composers, including Beethoven and Tchaikovsky. In one lesson, pupils aged five to seven identified loud and soft noises and used everyday objects – such as saucepan lids – to create sounds. The teacher catered very well for the varying needs of the pupils – for example, by providing a loud cymbal for a pupil with hearing impairment. In the class for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, pupils enjoyed holding instruments and shaking or banging them to make sounds, in order to accompany taped music and songs.
101. Great efforts are made to provide pupils with a wide range of interesting musical experiences through visiting musicians. Interactive saxophone workshops, concerts from a local secondary school and visits by the police band are all important elements in widening pupils' experiences and heightening their enjoyment of music.
102. Since the last inspection an effective music policy has been developed and curriculum planning is in place. Resources are now good and enable all pupils to perform on keyboards and other instruments.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

103. Pupils make good progress in physical education and achieve well, according to their individual difficulties. A small number of pupils are showing appropriate levels of co-ordination and stamina while others have multiple difficulties that severely limit their movement and flexibility. A noticeable strength of the subject, however, is the way that all pupils are enabled to enjoy access to physical activities with their peers.

Teachers are very effective in promoting maximum participation by all pupils. They achieve this through very good planning in which full account is taken of individual needs, very effective organisation of activities and very good teamwork with support assistants. As a result, pupils feel confident and secure in a variety of activities. They are encouraged to work as independently as possible and they are very keen to improve their performance. The subject also does much to contribute to their personal and social development. For example, a group of mainly Year 5 pupils was observed taking part in a simplified version of cricket and have clearly made very good progress in their ability to compete as part of a team. They encouraged each other, observed the rules carefully, tried very hard to succeed and when the winning hit was made by a pupil playing in his wheelchair, both sides applauded him with genuine pleasure.

104. During the inspection, pupils aged five to seven provided an example of the good progress made in games skills. In a very good lesson, they took part in three different and challenging activities that called for accuracy and control in throwing and, by the end of the session, all were showing improved levels of skill. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders were also showing good progress in their ability to respond to instructions, co-operating with their partners and showing pleasure at their success. The teacher organised the three groups very effectively, so that no time was wasted. Good levels of subject expertise are apparent in the very effective 'warm-up' sessions and in the challenging use of questions to prompt pupils to think about the effects of exercise on their bodies.
105. In a lesson for most of the seven to eleven year-olds, more able pupils could remember that the warm-up exercises would 'get our heart beating faster.' The pupils put a great deal of effort into their work, and were busy and committed at all times. Pupils with physical difficulties were able to play a full part in the activities, often with support from adults.
106. In the class for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, the teacher and support staff work hard, and with some success, to attract pupils' attention and encourage them to do as much as possible for themselves. However, the lesson seen lacked variety – for example, no recorded music – and each lesson planned is very similar to the last. These pupils show very clear gains in their movement, confidence and independence, as result of their lessons in the school's excellent hydrotherapy pool. All pupils have time in the pool, but its limitations for more extended swimming or group activities, however, mean that the physically more able pupils lack sufficient opportunity to develop as much as they could, in terms of technique and stamina, for example. The absence of a good award scheme for swimming and an effective method of recording pupils' achievements also contribute to the lack of challenging targets for the most able swimmers.
107. Standards in physical education have improved significantly since the inspection in 1996. Pupils now make good all-round progress, teaching is good or better and the quality and use of resources have both developed well. The monitoring of teaching and the assessment of pupils' progress are still areas of weakness, however. Assessments lack detail and do not do justice to the achievements of pupils in the different areas of the subject or of their physical and personal development.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION**

108. Since the start of the current academic year, a very good programme of work for personal, health and social education has been in place. It fully reflects the aims and

general philosophy of the school and includes high quality planning for the full range of relevant areas of study such as relationships, emotional well-being, health and safety and citizenship. In addition to twice-weekly lessons, these aspects of pupils' development are also addressed in circle-time, in other subjects of the curriculum and at break times when social skills in particular are emphasised. As a result, pupils are making very good progress and achieve very well.

109. In the discrete lessons observed, teaching was good. It made effective use of the very good relationships that exist in the school to encourage pupils to discuss the lesson topic, which in this case was dental hygiene. Teachers adapt the content of lessons very effectively, to meet the needs of pupils of different ages and abilities. For example, in the class for five to seven year-olds, the importance of cleaning teeth was taught through a story – 'My day at the dentist'. Pupils were interested and happy to answer questions and to join in with actions, such as opening their mouths wide. Older pupils examined, and were shocked at, photographs of teeth in various stages of decay. They appreciated the importance of regular brushing and the link between sugar and tooth decay. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties enjoyed looking at their teeth in a mirror, pretending to visit the dentist. A variety of visiting speakers adds to the quality of the school's work in this area of the curriculum. For the dental hygiene topic, for example, lessons were to be followed by a visit from a dentist. In another lesson, Year 2 pupils received a visit from a local firefighter, to reinforce the message 'Don't play with matches and lighters'.
110. A good stock of learning resources is being put together. Formal checks on the effectiveness of the new scheme of work are not yet in place, but it is clear from the quality of planning and of the lessons seen that it is making a very valuable contribution to the curriculum.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

111. Pupils' achievements and progress are good, as is the quality of teaching. At the time of the previous inspection, little religious education was taught and judgements were not possible.
112. By the age of seven, pupils have an understanding of the people who help them in school. They begin to appreciate that religion is important in people's lives, through the celebration of major festivals such as Christmas and Hanukkah. During the inspection, pupils enjoyed trying Chinese food, during a well planned series of lessons about Chinese New Year. They had previously visited a Chinese supermarket and purchased ingredients and a wok. Part of the classroom was set out as a Chinese restaurant; pupils recognised Chinese music and several used chopsticks with great expertise. They developed their awareness of another culture and the importance of traditions and festivals.
113. By the age of eleven, pupils know about some of the main elements of a range of religions, such as the Sikh and Jewish faiths and have produced pictures and writing on these themes. During the inspection, a lesson on the Sikh religion gave pupils the opportunity to handle real objects, such as a Sikh sword. As a result of the teacher's effective questioning, pupils began to appreciate symbolism. They knew why combs are used; that Sikh men wear turbans and pay great attention to their hair; hence the comb as a symbol. A significant impact of religious education is the work that pupils undertake on the importance of rules and the reasons for following them, which has an important influence on their personal development and behaviour.



114. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in establishing religious education as part of the school curriculum. Interesting displays and pictures heighten the profile of the subject around the school, helping to raise pupils' awareness. Resources have been much improved and now make a significant contribution to the success of the teaching.