

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WHITEFIELD SCHOOLS AND CENTRE**

Walthamstow, London E17

LEA area: Waltham Forest

Unique reference number: 103109

Headteacher: Mr N E Chapman

Reporting inspector: Mr T Richardson  
16500

Dates of inspection: 27 – 31 March 2000

Inspection number: 188878

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:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	3 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	MacDonald Road Walthamstow London
Postcode:	E17 4AZ
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Meyer
Date of previous inspection:	June 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Responsibilities
Tom Richardson	Registered inspector	How high are standards; how well are pupils taught; how well is the school led and managed
Sandra Benjamin	Lay inspector	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; how well does the school care for its pupils; how well does the school work in partnership with parents
Jeff Plumb	Deputy lead inspector	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils
Andrew Barnett	Team inspector	Communication and Interaction School (Primary)
Glyn Essex	Team inspector	Communication and Interaction School (Secondary)
Lily Evans	Team inspector	Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties School
Margaret Filley	Team inspector	Communication and Interaction School (Secondary)
Alan Jones	Team inspector	Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties School
Chris Lewis	Team inspector	Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties School
Jennifer Taylor	Team inspector	Early Years Assessment School
Graham Todd	Team inspector	Communication and Interaction School (Primary)

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Whitefield is a foundation special school for boys and girls aged three to nineteen years. It is made up of four separate schools:

- The Early Years Assessment School for pupils aged between three and seven years, with most pupils having autism and speech and language difficulties.
- Communication and Interaction School (Primary) for pupils with speech and language difficulties and pupils with autism aged 5 to 11.
- Communication and Interaction School (Secondary). Pupils with speech and language difficulties, and pupils with autism, are taught in separate classes in Years 7 and 8. Pupils and students with autism comprise the other year groups in the school. Three of the classes are for students over the age of 16.
- Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties School. For pupils aged 3 – 19 years with a wide range of needs, including moderate, profound and multiple learning difficulties, sensory impairment, physical impairment and complex medical needs.

The school is very large compared to other special schools, with a total of 310 pupils on roll representing a wide range of social backgrounds and minority ethnic groups. The school serves a large area of London and the south east, and has pupils from more than thirty local education authorities. All pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Seventeen per cent of pupils have English as an additional language and 39 per cent of all pupils are eligible for free school meals. Ten pupils are weekly boarders in the school's residential unit. There is also a Centre for Professional Development and Information on site (which was not subject to the inspection).

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

Whitefield is a good school. The quality of teaching is good and this leads pupils to make good progress over time and achieve well. Good provision is made to meet the specialised needs of pupils and achievements in communication are particularly good. There is good leadership and very good delegation of responsibilities. Staff benefit from very good arrangements for their personal and professional development. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Provides good teaching that enables pupils to make good progress over time. There is a mutual respect between teachers and pupils which leads to particularly good teaching and learning of communication skills.
- Learning support assistants are of good quality and deployed well with effective teamwork in classrooms
- Staff aspire to high professional standards and benefit from very good personal and professional development to help them meet pupils' special needs
- There is positive incorporation of speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and music therapy to enhance development and learning
- Provides consistent management of behaviour
- Provides very good quality assessment and monitoring of progress. Teachers set good short and long term targets for individuals and plan to address these in their lessons
- Promotes good personal development and very good social development within a very good ethos
- Has good leadership that promotes successfully a very good commitment to improvement and capacity to succeed
- Implements successfully the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies
- Values and encourages parental contributions and is well thought of by parents

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

- The provision for information technology
- The curriculum, to take more account of the National Curriculum and religious education, and Early Learning Goals, and to include more accreditation to recognise the achievements of pupils
- Ensure that pupils with higher attainment are enabled to raise their levels of achievement
- The governors' evaluation of school improvement in terms of the impact on the achievement of pupils
- The accommodation, as already planned by the school

*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

Since the last inspection in June 1996, the school has made good improvement. It has reorganised pupils into four separate schools, instead of six, so that curriculum development can now focus on the specialised needs of pupils within each school. The range of training available has extended significantly so that all staff, including learning support assistants, can gain accreditation leading to National Vocational Qualifications, first and higher degrees. A large proportion of the accommodation has been replaced with very good new buildings, and further improvements are planned. The quality of teaching has improved from satisfactory to good, and this is reflected in the progress made by pupils which is also now good. Work on improving the management of behaviour has led successfully to a consistent approach in all schools. There have been refinements and improvement in the quality of leadership and there is now routine monitoring and evaluation of teaching and curriculum planning. The assessment of pupils' progress and personal development has improved, as has the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school improvement plan now has a much clearer focus on raising standards and includes challenging targets for the school to meet based on the value added to each pupil's achievements over time. The curriculum has improved, but there is still work to be done in ensuring sufficient regard is given to Early Learning Goals and to all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. There is still too little time allocated to the curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 and the governors have been slow to evaluate the impact of planned improvements on the standards achieved by pupils. However, very good work on a database is nearing completion and this is designed to enable the school to carry out such evaluation with greater ease. Inspectors are confident that the school now has a clear culture of continuing improvement and has good ability to sustain this into the future.

## STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	Early Years Assessment School	Communication and Interaction School (Primary)	Communication and Interaction School (Secondary)	Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties School	Key
Speaking and listening	B	B	B	B	very good A
Reading	C	B	B	B	good B
Writing	C	B	B	B	satisfactory C
Mathematics	B	B	B	B	unsatisfactory D
Personal, social and health education	B	B	B	B	poor E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B	B	

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

Analysis in all the schools of the work done by pupils, their records of achievement and annual review

reports shows that most pupils make good progress over time and achieve well for their degree of special educational needs. This is an improvement since the last inspection and reflects the priority the school has given to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Good progress is evident in personal and social development and pupils come to understand how to behave in public and around the school, showing tolerance and understanding of others and learning to take responsibility for their actions. Pupils with communication difficulties and autism make good progress in their speaking and listening skills through the careful emphasis teachers give to meeting their needs. Speech and language therapists work with teachers and help to ensure that the methods of communication used in class are appropriate for each pupil and that lessons focus on improving expression and understanding. As a result, some pupils make very good progress and are now able to communicate fluently having entered the school with very low levels of linguistic ability.

Pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties make good progress and extend their knowledge as well as developing their communication and social skills. Those pupils who have profound and complex learning needs make good gains in their awareness of others and sensation. Pupils with multi-sensory impairment make good progress and show through facial expression and varied forms of communication that they can make choices and understand and affect the world around them.

The school has improved the management of difficult and challenging behaviour since the last inspection. As a result, a large proportion of the pupils who have behaviour as part of their special needs make good progress and learn to stay calm so that, in turn, they gain more benefit from their lessons. Some individuals show very good progress since entering the school and their behaviour has changed from extreme violence and agitation to controlled, reasonable behaviour for most of the time. Despite the good achievements and progress made, there are some pupils with higher attainment who could be doing more. The school has only recently looked to develop the qualifications that pupils and students can attain and some students are leaving school with less recognition of their achievements than they could have. In addition, there is a lack of computers and they are not used sufficiently to assist learning or to enhance communication. This leads to pupils having lower standards in their use of computers than they should have.

## **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are very happy to attend, settle quickly to activities and work well together
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are polite and well behaved around the school. Those pupils with difficult behaviour try hard to meet the targets set in their behaviour management plans and only rarely disrupt others.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils show tolerance and understanding. The good relationships within the school community help pupils to gain confidence and improve their communication.
Attendance	Satisfactory, and improving over time.

Pupils behave well, the teamwork between teachers and classroom assistants enhances communication and a culture of mutual trust and respect is visible in the quality of relationships. Pupils and students listen attentively, line up quietly and sensibly for meals and show respect for their own property and that of others. Challenging and disruptive behaviour is handled very well by teachers, classroom assistants and other specialist staff. There is good promotion of personal development which encourages independence, autonomy and a spirit of helping one another wherever possible.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Teaching of pupils:	Early Years Assessment School	Communication and Interaction School (Primary)	Communication and Interaction School (Secondary)	Sensory Impairment and learning Difficulties School
Lessons seen overall	Good	good	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.*

In the lessons, and part lessons, seen during the inspection, teaching was good or better in 66 per cent. Very good teaching was observed in 22 per cent of lessons and teaching was at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of all observations. Five per cent of lessons were judged to have unsatisfactory teaching and learning, an improvement over the 13 per cent recorded in the last inspection. Speech and language therapists often work in partnership with teachers to plan and deliver lessons. This arrangement is very effective as teachers are enabled to carry on the work of the therapist in other lessons. The increased focus on effective communication is helping pupils to understand more about what they are required to do and is helping teachers to manage difficult behaviours with increasing success. All teachers are supported by good quality, and highly skilled, learning support assistants. They work as an effective team to support teaching and learning and often anticipate what is needed to help pupils concentrate and increase their understanding. In all schools teachers are becoming increasingly skilled at teaching communication skills. Effective use is made of a wide range of methods, including pictures, symbols, signs and speech and these are generally applied consistently, according to individual needs.

Teachers and assistants have good knowledge and understanding of the needs of their pupils and this keeps lessons focused on improving their abilities. Assessment and planning are good. Teachers assess the achievements of pupils well and use this information to plan what they will teach next. The targets set in individual education programmes are generally addressed in lessons and there is a clear cycle of assessment and target setting that contributes effectively to the good progress pupils make over time. There is an effective mix of whole class, group and individual work. Teachers ask questions that challenge pupils to think harder, and give pupils with communication difficulty time to present their replies. Routines are used well to give a structure to the day, and to help pupils to learn the names of one another, the days of the week, and the weather. In the small proportion of unsatisfactory lessons, time was wasted, the behaviour of some pupils disrupted learning for the rest and, in the post 16 provision for students with sensory impairment, there was insufficient rigour and challenge.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is satisfactory overall across all four schools and this is an improvement since the last inspection. The statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education are met in all schools except for the provision of enough information technology.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Pupils benefit from the focus on teaching communication skills in all the schools.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for pupils spiritual, moral and cultural development is good. Provision for pupils' social development is very good and every opportunity is taken to promote pupils' independence and social skills.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The detailed knowledge that all staff has of pupils' needs is very good. All staff work effectively as team members to create a safe environment where pupils feel secure and well cared for.

The school has recently organised into four schools, each with the aim of developing a distinct curriculum that is matched to the needs of the pupils. This restructuring took effect in September 1999 and each school is still in a period of adjustment in the curriculum it provides. There are good links with parents. All schools provide parents with very good quality information. The annual review information and reports are very good. The very good care, procedures and organisation of the residential unit prepares pupils and students well for the school day. The unit provides good support and care for pupils and students of differing ages, promotes their independence and supports effectively the work of the school as a 'good parent'.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The good leadership provided by the headteacher and deputies provides a clear educational direction for development and improvement. A large proportion of staff hold additional responsibilities and contribute very effectively to the management systems in each of the schools, and to the school as a whole.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body is of good quality. Governors are supportive and committed to school improvement. They fulfil their statutory duties well and play a good part in shaping the direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good monitoring and evaluation of teaching takes place in all schools. New developments are monitored and evaluated at all levels of management. The governing body has clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school but governors have yet to evaluate the success of developments through measuring the impact they have on pupils' performance.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school improvement and development plan sets good targets for improvement and is supported by very good strategic financial planning. Specific grants are used well and the school makes very effective use of the additional funding provided by the Whitefield Development Trust.

Each school has a head of school and they provide good quality of leadership, with a firm focus on improving teaching and learning. The whole school is ably led by the headteacher, who is also involved in a wide range of national and international initiatives regarding special education. This work is very beneficial, brings new ideas into the school and influences the strategic planning of school development so that improvements made are in line with current research and legislation. There is a strong emphasis on promoting learning for all staff and this promotes a high level of confidence and good morale. The school has a very good match of highly skilled teachers and learning support assistants to the needs of the pupils. The recent building work has improved significantly the accommodation for pupils with sensory impairment and learning difficulties. However, whilst accommodation is satisfactory overall, there is still a need to improve accommodation in the older school buildings. There are satisfactory

resources for learning in all schools but there are insufficient computers for pupils to use. The recent change in status of the school from Grant Maintained to Foundation School is being managed effectively. The procedures and practice for financial control are exemplary and the principles of best value are applied effectively in all financial transactions.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High level of care and support and the way the school meets individual needs</li> <li>• The commitment of staff to the children</li> <li>• Staff are approachable and the school has a caring happy atmosphere</li> <li>• School keeps up to date about the children and special education. Staff are trained well.</li> <li>• The progress pupils make, particularly in communication and behaviour</li> <li>• The quality of annual and other reviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More information regarding progress and the curriculum</li> <li>• More speech and language therapy</li> <li>• Parents would like to be involved more in the day to day life of school</li> <li>• The amount of homework provided</li> </ul>

Inspectors confirm all the positive views expressed by parents. They also agree that the school could provide more information about what children will be studying each term. Very effective use is made of the expertise of speech and language therapists and the school does what it can to involve parents in its day to day life. Satisfactory arrangements are made for homework and for pupils to continue at home with the work they do in school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

#### **The results and achievements of the school as a whole**

1. Analysis in all the schools of the work done by pupils, their records of achievement and annual review reports shows that most pupils make good progress over time and achieve well for their degree of special educational needs. This is an improvement since the last inspection and reflects the priority the school has given to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Good progress is evident in the personal and social development of pupils. A large number of pupils and students make good gains in confidence and self esteem. They come to understand how to behave in public and around the school, showing tolerance and understanding of others and learning to take responsibility for their actions. Pupils with communication difficulties and autism make good progress in their speaking and listening skills through the careful emphasis teachers give to meeting their needs. Speech and language therapists work with teachers and help to ensure that the methods of communication used in class are appropriate for each pupil and that lessons focus on improving expression and understanding. As a result, some pupils make very good progress and are now able to communicate fluently having entered the school with very low levels of linguistic ability.
2. Pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties make good progress and extend their knowledge as well as developing their communication and social skills. For example, some pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 can tell the hour, count to 10, draw mathematical shapes and sort objects correctly into sets. Those pupils who have profound and complex learning needs make good gains in their awareness of others and sensation. For example, in a music therapy session where pupils gave recognition of the others in the group and listened to 'their' music, turning their heads and reaching out to one another. Pupils with multi-sensory impairment make good progress and show through facial expression and varied forms of communication that they can make choices and understand and affect the world around them.
3. The school has improved the management of difficult and challenging behaviour since the last inspection. As a result, a large proportion of the pupils who have behaviour as part of their special needs make good progress and learn to stay calm so that, in turn, they gain more benefit from their lessons. Some individuals show very good progress since entering the school and their behaviour has changed from extreme violence and agitation to controlled, reasonable behaviour for most of the time. Despite the good achievements and progress made, there are some pupils with higher attainment who could be doing more. The school has only recently looked to develop the qualifications that pupils and students can attain. As a result, some students are leaving school with less recognition of their achievements than they could have. In addition, there is a lack of computers and they are not used sufficiently to assist learning or to enhance communication. This leads to pupils having lower standards in their use of computers than they should have.

#### **The results and achievements in each of the four schools**

##### ***Early Years Assessment School***

4. Children make good progress in English, particularly in relation to the targets set in their individual education programmes. Children make good, and often very good, progress in communication. They are taught to use photographs, symbols and signs to make choices in formal situations. Most children make satisfactory progress in reading. Children enjoy books and look at the pictures and sign or say what they see. Children make sound progress in writing and pencil control through a variety of early learning activities, although opportunities to record work in other subjects, such as science, are limited. Several of the older pupils write their own

names; the highest attainers are beginning to write commonly used words correctly and make good phonetic attempts at new words.

5. Children make good progress in mathematics in relation to their individual targets. A significant number of children count, sequence, match and know number names to 10. Several higher attainers recognise sets of up to five objects, fingers, spots, pieces of apple and so on, without having to count them. Most children have a vocabulary of shape and space in line with their abilities, recognising squares, triangles and circles. Higher attainers use appropriate language to compare length and size. Progress in science is satisfactory. Some children develop comprehensive knowledge in particular areas, such as animals and their habitats or machines, through their own interests. Younger children play with water and investigate different ways of pouring and the texture of bubbles. Others observe materials such as salt closely and are fascinated when it is poured to turn a wheel.
6. Progress in information and communications technology is sound as there is some skilled teaching of appropriate activities. There is good, and sometimes very good, achievement in lessons. However, the lack of equipment and clear plan of what to teach next slows pupils down in their learning. Children make sound progress in religious education. They learn to care for others and experience festivals from different cultures and religions, such as the Chinese New Year. Higher attainers can re-tell Bible stories such as Noah's Ark and sing and sign along with songs and hymns that they have learned. There are also examples of good standards in swimming, where some children show skills at a level appropriate for their age.

### **Communication and Interaction School (Primary)**

7. The school is successfully implementing the National Literacy Strategy for pupils with speech and language difficulties and autism. This is having a very positive impact on learning and is helping to raise pupils' standards of achievement. The majority of pupils are making good progress and achieving good standards when compared with their prior knowledge and understanding of English. Pupils enjoy books and join in discussions and listen carefully in a range of situations. In drama, pupils enjoy role-play and assume the roles as characters from books they read. Speech and language therapists make a significant contribution to the good progress made by pupils with autism and speech and language difficulties and engage pupils in very purposeful activities that initiate the development of communication and expressive language skills.
8. The majority of pupils achieve standards that are good in mathematics and make consistently good progress. Pupils' achievement and progress is very similar to that seen in English lessons with pupils working well towards the individual targets set for them. The good progress is much to do with the effective way in which teachers are implementing the National Numeracy Strategy, which is impacting positively on how mathematics is taught and leading the pupils to make progress at a faster rate. The language of mathematics for both pupils with autism and those with speech and language difficulties is well taught so that pupils understand concepts such as, *more than* and *less than*.
9. In science, pupils with autism make good progress. Pupils with speech and language difficulties achieve very good standards and are making very good progress. They learn that batteries, as well as mains electricity, are a source of power. They persevere with their practical investigations and most understand that a complete circuit is needed for electricity to flow. Pupils know how to care for their teeth and understand the specific functions of incisors and molars. Some classes have to share one computer between sixteen pupils and this means that pupils have to wait several weeks for their turn and therefore do not get enough hands-on experience. As a result, the progress pupils make over time in information technology is unsatisfactory. Pupils achieve good standards in religious education and make good progress over time. Pupils with autism and those with speech and language difficulties have a strong element of personal and social development in their lessons. Pupils participate in a wide range of religious and cultural celebrations and respond with calmness to sensations of relaxation, and

appreciation of sight, sound and touch.

### ***Communication and Interaction School (Secondary)***

10. Levels of attainment in the basic skills vary considerably within all key stages in the school and reflect the wide range of communication difficulties among pupils. Pupils and students make good progress over time, particularly in their communication skills, and achieve standards in English that are good for their level of special educational needs. Pupils listen carefully to stories and ask questions to further their understanding. Pupils make good progress in both their reading and independent writing skills. Improvements in speaking and listening skills continue, and by the time students are over the age of 16 they take turns to talk and listen and explain with confidence their likes and dislikes.
11. Pupils make good progress in the basic skills of mathematics through each key stage, in the handling and recognition of coins, for example, and in their ability to manage simple problems of addition and subtraction. Higher-attaining pupils present data in a variety of charts and tables. Lower-attaining pupils are improving their understanding and use of simple mathematical terms such as “plus” and “equals”.
12. Pupils show satisfactory levels of achievement in science, but progress by higher-attaining pupils in experiments and investigations is limited by lack of time for practical work. Not enough time is spent each week on science, and this also limits the progress that pupils can make. Good arrangements are made for some higher attaining pupils to attend a local secondary school so that they can study the subject along with their mainstream peers. Throughout the school, there are too few computers and this restricts the learning opportunities for pupils. As a result, their achievements are lower than they could be. Pupils use a small computer room and are often withdrawn from their lessons two at a time to work on computers either with a teacher or a learning support assistant. This means that most pupils have no more than 20 minutes each week at a computer. In religious education, pupils learn about the main features and festivals of a variety of religions and good links are made in cross-curricular work with science and personal, social and health education to promote their moral development. Pupils show good understanding of the importance of Mothers' Day and calmly reflect on what it means for them.

### ***Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties School***

13. Standards of achievement in English are good. All groups of pupils achieve well, make at least good progress in communication and listening skills, and good progress in their reading and writing. The National Literacy Strategy has been successfully introduced. This is helped by the teamwork between teachers and speech and language therapists which has a positive impact on acquisition of language and expressive skills using a total communication approach, speech, British Sign Language and picture symbols.
14. Most pupils enter school with virtually no communication skills. By the age of seven, higher attaining pupils in yellow and blue groups are understanding short instructions or simple stories, beginning to express needs such as 'more' and 'drink', and recognising and saying their own names and the names of others. By the age of eleven pupils are beginning to string words together and use verbs. Pupils in green and red groups with complex and sensory needs are beginning, by the age of seven, to give eye contact. By the age of eleven, these pupils are showing intention and making choices using switching devices, and are initiating exchanges. Students in post 16 are using clear signing to communicate their needs or are communicating effectively using a vocabulary of picture symbols.
15. The pupils' achievements in mathematics are appropriate for their wide range of severe learning, sensory and physical disabilities. The pupils with most complex needs in red and green classes are engaging in activities that develop their ability to anticipate, show preference, explore

differences and use objects for their proper function. Those pupils in blue classes, at the early stages of communication and understanding, join in number rhymes and rote counting. The pupils in yellow classes mostly function within National Curriculum Level 1 for mathematics, reading numerals beyond 10, ordering numbers, showing an understanding of addition using objects and playing number games. A few pupils are able to accomplish mathematical tasks within Level 2 such as recognising coins and combining them to provide given amounts.

16. By the age of seven, more able pupils are achieving in science within Level 1 of the National Curriculum and are able to make simple predictions about, for example, the different tastes of food. Pupils in yellow classes, by the age of eleven, are aware of the properties of materials; looking at reflections in mirrors to complete pictures and looking at concave mirrors. Pupils with sensory impairments consider life processes and living things, using sensory pictures and spring flower displays. Older pupils with additional complex needs also undertake work on the senses and investigate materials, light and sound in structured experiences appropriate to their needs.
17. Whilst there are some pupils who show good achievement in information and communications technology, they are too few and the overall standards are below what should be expected of the pupils. Most pupils are at the stage of starting to use a switch device or touch screen with an early understanding of the results of their actions. A few pupils fully appreciate the use of a switch, keyboard or mouse and are inspired to use them to gain sound or visual rewards from toys or a computer, or to support learning in other subjects. Standards achieved by pupils in religious education are satisfactory. Pupils become more aware of themselves and identify their own and others' feelings. Pupils in yellow groups are familiar with some of the stories from the life of Jesus. Throughout the school, there is evidence that all pupils know about food for special occasions, and enjoy celebrating festivals from their own and other cultures.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development in the school as a whole**

18. Children, pupils and students in each school show good attitudes to school and their learning. They are very happy to attend, settle quickly to activities and work well together. Most children, pupils and students concentrate for appropriate periods of time and stay on task. They appreciate each other's efforts and work and progress well together.
19. The behaviour of children, pupils and students in each school is good. They are polite and greet adults well. Well-established routines are enjoyed by the majority of children, pupils and students. Few instances of difficult behaviour were observed around the school. There are, however, a number of pupils who, because of their particular special needs, exhibit challenging behaviours. This challenging behaviour is managed effectively by deflection and diversion, and most lessons proceed without undue disturbance.
20. The school's clear focus on personal and professional development for all staff raises morale and contributes to the good quality of relationships that exist within each school and between all personnel. Staff are confident and this has a positive effect on all pupils. Children, pupils and students pay good attention to their class teachers and classroom assistants. There are good levels of co-operation with each other in class and pupils are happy to communicate and relate to each other.
21. The personal development of children, pupils and students is good. Those with less severe learning difficulties from an early age show tolerance and understanding towards those with more complex needs. For example, some older pupils from the Communication and Interaction School (Primary) are responsible for helping to clear away tables in the Early Years Assessment School dining room.
22. Attendance at the school overall is satisfactory. It is showing an improving and upward trend over a three year period. The proportion of unauthorised absence in the last year is below the national average. The school works closely with the Educational Welfare Officer if it has any

concerns about the attendance of pupils. The school day now begins promptly at 9.30 am and, despite the potential for delay due to traffic, most pupils are on time.

## **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development in each of the four schools**

### ***Early Years Assessment School***

23. The children and pupils in this school are very happy; parents report that they love coming to school. During the inspection, at a workshop for parents, they confirmed that they had difficulty in explaining there was no school on weekends and the bus would not be coming to collect them! Pupils develop very good listening skills and this helps to ensure that the routines in the classroom foster good attitudes to the school day and encourages others to conform to the high standards set by all staff. The behaviour of children and pupils is good. They are keen to help one another and are interested and enjoy stories for example, in a literacy lesson, reception children sat engrossed listening to the story of "We are going on a bear hunt" and taking part in the actions, brilliantly demonstrated by the class teacher. The quality of relationships between children, pupils, class teachers and volunteers is good.

### ***Communication and Interaction School (Primary)***

24. The pupils in this school have positive attitudes. They are happy to attend school and the majority work well together. For example in assembly, pupils with autism were engaged and attentive in a large group they would usually find difficult to cope with and were motivated to contribute with enthusiasm to appreciate the value of Mothers' Day. The majority of pupils behave well, the teamwork between teachers and classroom assistants enhances communication and a culture of mutual trust and respect was visible in the quality of relationships seen on the inspection. There is good emphasis on personal development and social interaction. The benefits of this emphasis was seen in pupils' interaction with younger pupils in the dining room and in the cheerful and enthusiastic way they collected the registers from the Head of School's office after lunch.

### ***Communication and Interaction School (Secondary)***

25. Pupils and students in this school have good attitudes to their learning. They listen attentively to teachers, classroom assistants and one another. They maintain their concentration and persevere well to complete tasks. The behaviour of pupils and students is good. They line up quietly and sensibly for meals and are conscientious in following individual eating targets aimed at improving social behaviour at mealtimes. Most pupils and students show respect for their own property and that of others. The monitoring of behaviour shows clear improvement in pupils over time. There are strong relationships and social routines. Pupils and students pay good attention to staff and are confident that adults will listen to what they have to say. They communicate well with each other in class for example in circle time the more able pupils listen with interest to what other students have to say about their day. The personal development of pupils and students is good. The more able bodied students show tolerance and understanding and support to those with more severe physical difficulties. An example of this was seen with post-16 students and the local Pool and Track facility where students were encouraging one another to have a go and applauding each other after each jump.

### ***Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties School***

26. The majority of children, pupils and students are enthusiastic and keen to come to school. When they arrive at school, they are happy and looking forward to their day. Pupils, despite their difficulties, try hard and work to the best of their ability. The behaviour of children, students and pupils is good. Challenging and disruptive behaviour is handled very well by teachers, classroom assistants and other specialist staff. There are good relationships, the classroom assistants are deployed well and there is a strong emphasis on team work. Mutual regard exists between all staff and pupils. There is good promotion of personal development which encourages independence, autonomy and a spirit of helping one another wherever possible.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

### How well are pupils or students taught in the school as a whole

27. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teaching and learning is judged to be good throughout the whole school. In the lessons, and part lessons, seen during the inspection, teaching was good or better in 66 per cent. Very good teaching was observed in 22 per cent of lessons and teaching was at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of all observations. Five per cent of lessons were judged to have unsatisfactory teaching and learning, an improvement over the 13 per cent recorded in the last inspection. The school has introduced systems for senior managers to observe teachers and comment on their work. These are effective and have contributed to this improvement in quality.
28. There are additional features that add to the good quality of teaching. Speech and language therapists often work in partnership with teachers to plan and deliver lessons. This arrangement is very effective as teachers are enabled to carry on the work of the therapist in other lessons. This results in pupils having increased specialist support for their communication than they would otherwise have in individual therapy sessions. Also, the increased focus on effective communication is helping pupils to understand more about what they are required to do and is helping teachers to manage difficult behaviours with increasing success. The school is fortunate to employ a talented and enthusiastic music therapist. The teaching provided is consistently excellent and is deployed effectively so that as many pupils as possible receive benefit. Through sensitive stimuli and response, pupils with complex educational needs are learning effectively to take turns, anticipate interaction and develop the foundations of communication and expression of their feelings. All teachers are supported by good quality, and highly skilled, learning support assistants. They work as an effective team to support teaching and learning and often anticipate what is needed to help pupils concentrate and increase their understanding. Assistants often develop such a good rapport with their teacher that, as one inspector noted, 'it is like watching the teacher work in three places at the same time'. Learning support assistants also help with assessing how well pupils are doing in both their academic and personal development and come to have a very good knowledge of the needs of every individual in the class.
29. The management of behaviour has improved since the last inspection and is now consistently good throughout all schools. A measure of this success is seen in the use of 'time-out' rooms. During the last inspection, these were used frequently but are now nearly all used for other purposes, and the number of incidents requiring their use has declined to almost zero. In lessons, teachers and assistants anticipate where pupils may become frustrated or anxious and offer positive diversions and clear communication that helps to keep behaviour calm and enables learning to continue. In all schools teachers are becoming increasingly skilled at teaching communication skills. Effective use is made of a wide range of methods, including pictures, symbols, signs and speech and these are generally applied consistently, according to individual needs. The effect of this is seen in the higher than expected achievement of pupils in their speaking, listening and communication skills. For example, by the age of eleven, pupils with complex and sensory needs are encouraged to show their intention and make choices using switching devices, and students post 16 use signing and picture symbols to communicate their needs.
30. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the needs of their pupils and this keeps lessons focused on improving their abilities. For example, in a lesson with Year 8 pupils with sensory impairment, the teacher presented activities so that pupils could respond through indicating a choice, reaching and touching or reading Braille. This led to pupils demonstrating enthusiastic involvement and extending their concentration. There is good teaching of basic skills and opportunities to promote reading, writing and numeracy are taken well. For example, in a lesson for students with communication and interaction needs, the teacher took the opportunity to provide real objects, with prices attached, that students had seen on their previous visit to a shop, and used these to teach the concepts of 'higher' and 'lower', along with

basic calculation of money.

31. Assessment and planning are good. Teachers assess the achievements of pupils well and use this information to plan what they will teach next. The targets set in individual education programmes are generally addressed in lessons and there is a clear cycle of assessment and target setting that contributes effectively to the good progress pupils make over time. For example, in a numeracy lesson for Year 5 pupils with speech and language difficulties, the teacher used her knowledge of the pupils to set different tasks. One pupil was building numbers to 1000, another was breaking numbers into hundreds, tens and units, while another was adding and subtracting. Pupils were encouraged to check their own answers, and those of their classmates and the teacher made note of how much they had learnt, so that this information could be used to start the next lesson. Throughout all schools, teachers use a good range of methods in their lessons. There is an effective mix of whole class, group and individual work. Teachers ask questions that challenge pupils to think harder, and give pupils with communication difficulty time to present their replies. Routines are used well to give a structure to the day, and to help pupils to learn, for example, the names of one another, the days of the week, and the weather. For example, in a lesson with Reception age children, the 'Hello' routine emphasised names and that everyone was included. This led into a deliberately noisy activity that encouraged children to vocalise more before a turn-taking game and songs that encouraged interaction and listening. In a music lesson for primary aged pupils with autism, the whole lesson follows the same routine each week, but with new learning points introduced every time. This helped the pupils to be familiar and feel secure with the format of the lesson and led them to concentrate on the 'new' item and extend their learning.
32. In the small proportion of unsatisfactory lessons, time was wasted, the behaviour of some pupils disrupted learning for the rest and, in the post 16 provision for students with sensory impairment, there was insufficient rigour and challenge.

### **How well are pupils or students taught in each of the four schools**

#### ***Early Years Assessment School***

33. Teaching was judged to be at least good in 65 per cent of lessons and was satisfactory in all others. Particular strengths are the very good teaching of communication skills aided by consistent and good use of photographs, symbols and signs. Learning support assistants are skilled in this work and know how to use everyday objects and events to encourage the children to extend their communication. Teachers also choose activities that are well matched to the needs of the children. In one lesson, the teacher chose computer programmes that led one child to learn to use the shift key for the first time and another to learn how to click and drag with the mouse. At the same time, a third child was extending phonic skills and learnt to spell 'this' by adding 'is' to 'th'. Positive management is successful in keeping children on task and helping them to improve their behaviour. Stories are told well, the best lessons have a brisk pace and gain excitement, and swimming is taught particularly well so that all children gain confidence in the water. The satisfactory teaching could be improved by providing more challenge for those children who have higher levels of attainment and by teachers planning to include the targets from individual education programmes in all lessons.

#### ***Communication and Interaction School (Primary)***

34. Teaching was at least good in 83 per cent of all lessons and satisfactory in all but 4 per cent of the remainder. The teaching of pupils with speech and language difficulties is more consistent in quality than that provided for pupils with autism. In all classes, the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies are being implemented appropriately. This has had an impact on planning and teaching styles so that the teaching of English and mathematics is judged to be good throughout the school. Thirty per cent of all lessons seen were very good, and one was excellent. In the best lessons, teachers word their questions carefully so that pupils understand and the classroom team demonstrate their very good relationships with the pupils so that behaviour is managed very well and pupils are happy to be learning. Teachers lead these

lessons at a good pace. For example, in one lesson, pupils were led by the teacher's enthusiasm and pace into acting out the story with a level of excitement that extended their communication and enabled all the group to remember the exact sequence of events. Appropriate arrangements are made for homework and this provides an effective extension of the work done in class, as well as helping parents to know what their children are doing at school. Despite the high level of good teaching, there is still room for improvement in providing more challenge for higher attaining pupils with autism and making better use of time during the day so that break times and snack times do not become over long. Teachers are limited in their ability to teach information and communications technology by the lack of computers and the sharing of rooms does lead to some lessons being disturbed by the work of another class. In the unsatisfactory lessons, the tasks set were too easy and not enough emphasis was given to what pupils were meant to be learning.

### ***Communication and Interaction School (Secondary)***

35. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 93 per cent of all lessons observed. Teachers show a good knowledge of their pupils' needs and teach communication skills effectively. The good relationships and management of pupils are continuing to result in a steady improvement in behaviour. Also, the strong leadership of the head of school, and the monitoring of teachers at work in their classrooms has led to an improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Sixty two per cent of all lessons seen were judged to be good, or very good. In the best lessons, communication is clear, and pupils with autism know what to do and make good progress in their interaction skills. For example, in a physical education lesson, very effective use was made of symbols for pupils to jump, run, slow down etc so that they extended their physical skills and also made progress in looking at each other and following instructions to put away equipment. In an English lesson for Year 9 pupils, the teacher had prepared newspaper articles well and selected the vocabulary for pupils to learn. The high expectations set for this, along with the lively pace of the lesson, led the pupils to make very good progress in understanding current affairs and in acquiring more detailed vocabulary relevant to describe them. Improvements can still be made in the quality of teaching, particularly in how time and computers are used. Break times are often extended with additional times for a drink and a snack and this reduces the amount of time for teaching other subjects. Also, there are insufficient computers for teachers to use in lessons and this means that pupils often go out of class, two at a time, with learning support assistants to work on computers, but missing out on what the others are doing. The small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was principally due to low expectations and inconsistent management of individual behaviour so that lessons became disrupted and other pupils became anxious.

### ***Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties School***

36. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of all lessons observed. In 16 per cent of lessons, teaching was very good or excellent, and in an additional 43 per cent of lessons, teaching was judged to be good. The main strengths are in the teamwork between teachers, learning support assistants and other professionals, such as speech and language therapists. Also, the cycle of assessment and planning to meet individual needs in lessons is good and enhanced by re-assessment of how well pupils have done. The good use of different styles of communication matched to pupils' needs; and the enthusiasm and stimulating approach from staff that brings out the best in pupils, nurtures their learning and promotes their social development. In the best lessons, teachers plan well and make sure all pupils are involved in learning. For example, in a science lesson for pupils with learning difficulties, the pupils predicted, then tasted a wide range of foods. The teacher's questions were well chosen, and presented to each child at a level appropriate to their development. The teacher was also included in the food tasting and the response was that pupils were captivated and inspired to remember new vocabulary and ideas about their sense of taste. In another lesson on the same theme, the needs of each pupil were effectively addressed through good signing, the use of large pictures and symbols, with careful help given so that pupils learnt to use the correct shape for each sign. There is room for improvement in ensuring that all teachers have expectations that

are sufficiently high for their pupils and provide sufficient challenge to extend the knowledge of pupils with the potential for higher attainment. Most of the unsatisfactory teaching was in the provision for students post-16. Some of the usual teachers were absent during the inspection but the teaching observed was lacking in stimulation, students were left unattended for too long, extended break times had no teaching purpose and learning support assistants were doing more to involve the students than their teachers.

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

### **How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students in the school as a whole?**

37. The curriculum meets pupils' individual special educational needs well and there are now good procedures in place for planning the curriculum in each school. Much has been done since the last inspection, and all schools now have an established good quality curriculum framework that enables senior managers to determine what is taught in each class. The schools were reorganised from September 1999 from six separate schools, to four. The aim of this change was to establish a curriculum in each school that more closely reflected the learning needs of the pupils. The curriculum provided at the time of the inspection was in transition, with staff adjusting to the new identity of each school. The breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum are satisfactory overall across all four schools and this is an improvement since the last inspection. The statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education are met in all schools except for the provision of enough information technology (IT). Insufficient use is made of computers and other electronic aids to develop pupils communication skills and subject co-ordinators do not build in sufficient opportunities to develop IT skills in their schemes of work. Good use is made of pupils' targets to inform planning to meet their learning and behavioural needs in all schools. Satisfactory provision is made for extra-curricular activities, given the constraints on after school activities by transport arrangements. All schools provide a good curriculum for personal, social and health education that includes sex education and drugs awareness. Pupils and students of secondary age have appropriate careers education and guidance and benefit from the satisfactory arrangements made for work experience.
38. The 24-hour curriculum for the ten pupils in residential care promotes their social and independent skills well. Pupils in residential care are encouraged to do things for themselves and take responsibility for washing their own clothes and, under careful supervision, helping to prepare the evening meal. Links and relationships with other schools and colleges are very good and significantly enhance the knowledge and understanding of working with a wide range of complex special educational needs. There are very good national and international links and this is a significant strength of the school. Within the school there is expertise in working with many learning and associated behavioural needs gathered from all over the world. This expertise is brought effectively into each school and shared with staff for the benefit of pupils. A large number of staff are active in researching the best way to meet the needs of their pupils and share the knowledge they gain effectively with colleagues.

## **PROVISION FOR PUPILS' SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

39. The provision for pupils spiritual, moral and cultural development is good. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
40. The use of circle time makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development as they are provided with precious moments of quiet time for reflection. Often a visual stimulus such as a lit candle is used effectively for this purpose. The school assemblies are used to celebrate the successes of all pupils and to recognise that all are a gift from God. These lovely assemblies are carefully planned to be special occasions and to involve all pupils with opportunities to experience awe and wonder as they are exposed to colourful and stimulating displays. Music therapy sessions with pupils with autism are good and contribute successfully to these pupils

spiritual development. Religious education, art and drama experiences also contribute significantly to pupils' spiritual development.

41. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. All staff provide good role models and all pupils, including those with the most challenging behaviours related to their special educational needs, are taught the difference between right and wrong. During the inspection a pupil with complex needs was given a short period of safe 'time out' when she crossed an acceptable boundary of behaviour and this was seen to be understood as a just sanction. In religious education and personal, social and health education lessons, pupils are taught rules. Through games they also develop an understanding of the importance of rules and how to accept decisions. Current affairs that address moral issues in the world are discussed with higher achievers in the Communication and Interaction School (Secondary).
42. The provision for social development is very good and is a strength of the school. Every opportunity is taken to promote pupils' independence and social skills. Pupils are given a wide range of jobs to develop their sense of responsibility. Structured eating times contribute to pupils independence skills in feeding themselves and to good table manners. Through fund raising for charity, pupils begin to gain an understanding of citizenship at a level appropriate to them. The 24-hour curriculum contributes successfully to the development of pupils' independence skills. Pupils' in residential care are well prepared for adult life.
43. The provision for cultural, including inter-cultural and multi-cultural development is good. Good use is made of museums and art galleries to support the curriculum. The African and Chinese weeks contributed very significantly to pupils independence and enjoyment of African art and Chinese music. The school functions as a harmonious community and pupils are taught to respect the values and beliefs of all minority ethnic groups represented.

#### **How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students in each of the four schools?**

##### ***Early Years Assessment School***

44. The curriculum currently provided promotes pupils' communication and social skills well in this school. However, there is room for improvement in a number of important areas that would add significantly to the experiences provided for children. Insufficient attention is paid to the use of the Early Learning Goals in planning the activities for the under fives. Consequently the play experiences that are provided are not always sufficiently structured so that children continue to build on their skills. Curriculum provision for ICT is a weakness in this school and has a negative impact on the quality of provision for and standards achieved. Individual targets planned to develop pupils specific needs are met well in lessons set aside to focus on them but insufficient use is made of these targets to plan the delivery of other lessons.

##### ***Communication and Interaction School (Primary)***

45. All National Curriculum subjects and religious education are taught and pupils benefit from the good learning experiences provided. There is an appropriate emphasis on the national literacy hour and the national numeracy strategy. These initiatives have a good impact on pupils learning of communication and basic numeracy skills. There are good targets in most subjects to meet the individual needs of pupils. However, there is too much slippage in the amount of taught time due to the excessive number of breaks and snack times and inspectors judge that not all of these are necessary. They take away valuable time for the delivery of the National Curriculum and religious education. The curriculum for pupils with autism is relevant and appropriate to their needs but high achieving pupils are sometimes not provided with sufficiently demanding work. Pupils with speech and language difficulties benefit from the input of the speech and language

therapists who plan and teach lessons and help teachers to provide a curriculum specifically designed to meet specialist linguistic needs. In common with other schools, insufficient use is made of ICT to support the teaching of subjects across the curriculum.

### ***Communication and Interaction School (Secondary)***

46. The curriculum meets statutory requirements in Key Stage 3 and includes the study of French. Statutory requirements are also met in Key Stage 4, where the curriculum is relevant with suitable vocationally directed courses. The post-16 curriculum has breadth, balance and relevance with a good variety of college links and courses. Provision for sex and drugs education is satisfactory. The opportunities for work experience are good. Provision for careers education and guidance and transition planning for pupils to consider the choices for their education after the age of sixteen, are good. Integration experiences with a local secondary school make a very significant contribution to pupils' good learning. For example, some pupils who have the potential to study science and design and technology at levels appropriate for their age attend a local secondary school and study the subjects weekly with their mainstream peers. Extra-curricular arrangements are good, opportunities include a mathematics club and a gardening club. Good use is made of off-site resources for recreational activities such as ice-skating and horse riding. However, as in the primary school, taught time slips due to an excessive amount of snack time. Many of the communication and social skills developed through snack time could be equally as well promoted through other subjects. Due to the excessive amount of time allocated to breaks and snack times there is insufficient time for science and pupils' development of important investigation skills suffers as a result. Schemes of work are not yet fully developed in all subjects and the programmes of study for physical education are not fully delivered. There is insufficient provision for developing ICT skills and this is a weakness. In addition, there are too few opportunities for the achievements of pupils and students to be rewarded with nationally recognised qualifications.

### ***Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties School***

47. There is sufficient breadth and balance in the curriculum except for post-16 students who do not have a separate and distinct curriculum. There is a strong and appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' communication, mobility and social skills through the curriculum provided in this school. Whilst this in itself is good, insufficient attention is paid to planning to ensure these important life skills are developed through the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. In this school, attention is paid to the Early Learning Goals in planning for the under fives. The curriculum provision for post-16 students however, is unsatisfactory as they receive the same diet they experienced in Key Stage 4. These students are not sufficiently equipped for the next step in their adult lives and have insufficient opportunity to gain nationally recognised qualifications appropriate to their needs.

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

### **In the school as a whole:**

48. The detailed knowledge that all staff have of the pupils' individual needs is very good and a strength of the school. All staff work effectively as team members to create a safe environment where pupils feel secure and well cared for. Pupils and their families receive good quality educational and personal support and guidance. This promotes good learning for all pupils as they move through the different schools or classes in their school.
49. The staff handbook places appropriate emphasis on issues relating to the care, support and guidance of children, pupils and students. There are very good whole school procedures for child protection, accidents, fire routines and first aid. There is good provision for the medical care of pupils and medical nursing staff has an appropriate base in the administrative part of the school. There is a very effective whole school policy for behaviour which embraces the concept of attitudes and personal development. This policy is implemented and monitored consistently

and very well across all schools and is having a positive effect on behaviour, so that learning is improving as a result. There are good systems for monitoring attendance and the school and its family support unit liaises effectively with the Educational Welfare Officers from all of the Local Education Authorities placing children in the school.

50. There are very good procedures for assessing pupils' academic performance. The very good practice in early assessment through initial conferences is maintained throughout each phase of education in all schools. This is then used effectively to set targets for each individual that are closely matched and relevant to their needs. Teachers keep careful records that show the progress pupils make and use this information effectively to set new targets that make sure pupils build on their previous learning. Each pupil and student has a record of achievement. These documents are very good and value the progress children, pupils and students make.
51. Targets set for pupils in their individual education plans are clear and reflect the expected learning and behaviour outcomes. There are good links in all schools with a wide range of other professionals, including music and speech and language therapists. The use of home-school diaries in all schools enables staff to see how pupils progress and how their personal development has improved over time at school and also at home.

### ***Residential Unit***

52. Ten pupils are resident in Drive House, near to the school. Most of these pupils are in the Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties School. They board weekly and are provided with an interesting range of activities in the evenings, as well as engaging in homework and a normal range of 'family' activities. The very good care, procedures and organisation of the residential unit prepares pupils and students well for the school day. It promotes good development of social skills and the personal and social development work of the school is reinforced in the unit. Pupils and students are encouraged to practise their skills in dressing, washing their clothes and choosing what they eat. Inspectors judged the accommodation to be of good quality, well organised, very clean and orderly. Communication systems used in school, such as symbols and signing, are also used effectively in the unit. This helps to add to the calm and encouraging atmosphere provided. The residential unit provides good support and care for pupils, students of differing ages, promotes their independence and supports effectively the work of the school as a 'good parent'.

### **In each of the four schools:**

#### ***Early Years Assessment School***

53. The school starts the assessment process for collecting detailed knowledge on children and pupils to be used for monitoring their academic performance, personal development and attendance. There is good provision for addressing behaviour, autism and communication difficulties. The individual programmes for assessing pupils' attainments and progress are very effective. The individual education plans are of good quality and include clear targets. The use of video to record children and pupils' progress with 'TEACCH' (a teaching and learning style for children with autism) helps teachers to track their development and provide parents with good visual evidence of progress. The school also ensures that children and pupils who are not in school due to illness are supported effectively at home with regular contact by their class teacher.

#### ***Communication and Interaction School (Primary)***

54. The detailed knowledge that staff have of pupils is passed effectively on to their teachers in this school from the Early Years Assessment School. The whole school behaviour policy is used in an individual way to focus on the needs of each pupil. The teamwork approach practised by all

staff gives pupils good support. Teachers and classroom assistants use formal and informal assessment to monitor pupils' progress during lessons. Should a pupil demonstrate challenging behaviour and have to be removed from a lesson, there are good supportive mechanisms for integrating pupils back into the classroom when they have successfully calmed down. The individual education plans are of very good quality and set clear targets which focus on the individual needs of pupils. The head of school has whole school responsibility for child protection issues. She is appropriately qualified and makes very good provision for providing all staff in the schools with training at induction on awareness of child protection issues and the school's procedures. The home-school diaries are used well by teachers and provide parents with a good daily record of progress and areas of support, either in behaviour or health and welfare.

### ***Communication and Interaction School (Secondary)***

55. The strength of the other schools to ensure that programmes of work, planned through individual education plans are detailed and provide specific educational targets for pupils and students are also present in this school. The close attention to personal and welfare needs of pupils are similarly maintained. All staff know the pupils and students well and continue to consistently monitor pupils' progress. The school continues to build on the record of achievement of pupils and the ethos of valuing all progress that pupils and students make is effective. Pupils' personal and academic development is effectively promoted. The school makes very good arrangements to help pupils and their families consider what to study and how to plan for education after the age of sixteen. This includes appropriate and relevant advice regarding work experience and vocational education. The procedures for integration to mainstream schools are good and pupils' learning benefits from being involved in mainstream lessons for subjects such as science and design and technology.
56. The monitoring of behaviour and implementation of individual behaviour programmes promotes the dignity of individuals. The individual education plans are of good quality and set clear attainable targets to ensure pupils make good progress. The school has very good planning for personal, social and health education and the scheme of work ensures that their personal and social development is enhanced through specific skills such as shopping and cooking. The home-school diaries are used as appropriate to record pupils' achievements and to communicate with parents. Pupils who can, are encouraged to verbally report their achievements and progress to their parents/carers.

### ***Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties School***

57. The school provides good attention to the personal and welfare needs of pupils. There are good links between all staff, speech and language therapists, physiotherapist and music therapist to ensure that children, pupils and students are well-supported in lessons and around the school. The monitoring of behaviour and implementation of individual behaviour programmes promotes the dignity of individuals. Relevant targets are set for children, pupils and students in their individual education plans. These are assessed and monitored effectively on a daily and long-term basis. Good quality home-school diaries are used daily by class teachers. Children, pupils and students with specific medical needs have additional daily logs sent home. Records of achievements are very good and value all progress that students and pupils make. The use of photographs in this school to record the progress made is of good quality and is interesting to the pupils. This also helps to involve parents and promote good attitudes to learning.

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

58. There is strong support from parents for the close working relationships of the school, governing body and parents. Parent governors are actively involved and are striving to ensure that all opportunities are explored to promote effective links with parents. The questionnaire circulated

to parents before the inspection showed that most parents are pleased with the quality of teaching and leadership in the school that leads to their children making progress in communication and behaviour. The school values and encourages contributions from parents and does what it can to involve them as partners in the education of their children. Pupils attend the school from more than thirty local education authorities. Distance and travel arrangements make it difficult for many parents to come to school. However, the school arranges meetings and functions at differing times of day and has appointed staff specifically to maintain liaison with families and visit them, should the need arise. A number of parents disagreed with the amount of homework set for their children. Inspectors judged this to be satisfactory and that suitable arrangements are made for most pupils to continue at home with the work they do in school. Teachers and parents work effectively together to provide consistent experiences at school and at home that help pupils extend their communication skills and improve their behaviour. This involvement of parents has a good impact on the standards of achievement in the school.

59. All schools provide parents with very good quality information. In particular, the annual review information and reports are of very good quality and provide parents with a realistic and detailed view of what their child has achieved throughout the last year. All schools try to ensure that interpretation services are available for the reports and the annual review meeting for parents with English as an additional language. Each school does what it can to ensure that parents are, and feel, included in the process of target setting for their children, pupils and students. Good use is made of the home-school diaries. This process begins in the Early years Assessment School, where parents are encouraged to take part in the education of their children and have a useful daily record in the home-school diaries of what their child has done and what they are working on in class. Parents write useful information in these books for teachers and the participation of families is valued and encouraged. The effective use of these diaries continues in all other schools and teachers and assistants do their best to make sure that meaningful information is provided for all parents as much as possible. However, there is no guidance provided for teachers to help them make sure that parents with English as an additional language are able to interpret messages and information in the home-school diaries.
60. All schools have close links with the family support team and have a designated worker for each school. The family support team is based in an area close to the parents' room and staff have worked hard to create a warm and friendly atmosphere. They organise workshops for parents for each school and act as a resource centre for parents with a range of leaflets, workshops and relevant information. This is good quality provision that plays a vital role in ensuring that there is a good contribution and involvement of parents in their children's learning in school. A number of parents expressed regret to inspectors that this service has been reduced, and that there are fewer home visits than previously. Inspectors agree that this reduction is of concern for some families. However, the increased focus on providing workshops and meetings for parents is enabling more families to be involved and is attracting increasing numbers of parents. This good quality provision, along with the day-to-day contact between parents and teachers in each of the schools, is effective and plays a significant part in the achievement of pupils. Parents are enabled successfully to gain knowledge about how to help their child and work towards meeting their targets at home as well as at school.
61. Good informal links are maintained with all families and recent procedures are aimed at making these links formal. All schools have begun the process of consulting with parents on home-school agreements and this has yet to be completed. Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they have any concerns and regular contact by telephone is made to parents by class teachers and family support team staff.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

62. The school benefits from good quality leadership and management. There is a strong emphasis on promoting learning for all staff, and communicating effectively between all tiers of management. This leads to staff having a high level of confidence in their skills and good morale. Each school has a head of school and they provide good quality of leadership, with a firm focus

on improving teaching and learning. The whole school is ably led by the headteacher, who is also involved in a wide range of national and international initiatives regarding special education. This work is very beneficial, brings new ideas into the school and influences the strategic planning of school development so that improvements made are in line with current research and legislation. The recent change in status of the school from Grant Maintained to Foundation School is being managed effectively. One initiative from the reorganisation that accompanied this change is the appointment of a deputy headteacher to be responsible for quality assurance of teaching, learning and the curriculum in all of the schools.

63. Since the last inspection, the school has made good improvement. It has reorganised pupils into four separate schools, instead of six, with a clearer purpose in each one so that curriculum development can now focus on the specialised needs within each school. The range of training available has extended significantly so that all staff, including learning support assistants, can gain accreditation leading to National Vocational Qualifications, first and higher degrees. A large proportion of the accommodation has been replaced with very good new buildings, and further improvements are planned. The quality of teaching has improved from satisfactory to good, and this is reflected in the progress made by pupils which is also now good. Work on improving the management of behaviour has led successfully to a consistent approach in all schools. There have been refinements and improvement in the quality of leadership and there is now routine monitoring and evaluation of teaching and curriculum planning. The assessment of pupils' progress and personal development has improved, as has the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school improvement plan now has a much clearer focus on raising standards and includes challenging targets for the school to meet based on the value added to each pupil's achievements over time. The curriculum has improved, but there is still work to be done in ensuring sufficient regard is given to Early Learning Goals and to all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. There is still too little time allocated to the curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 and the school has been slow to evaluate the impact of planned improvements on the standards achieved by pupils. However, very good work on a database is nearing completion and this is designed to enable the school to carry out such evaluation with greater ease. Inspectors are confident that the school now has a clear culture of continuing improvement and has good ability to sustain this into the future.
64. The good leadership provided by the headteacher and deputy sets a clear educational direction for development and improvement. There is a clear statement of good and realistic aims in the school prospectus and every one of these is evident in all the work of the school. One aim, *to actively involve staff ... in decision making and planning*, is realised through very good delegation of responsibilities. A large proportion of staff hold additional responsibilities and contribute very effectively to the management systems in each of the schools, and to the school as a whole. As a result, the school is smoothly run and new developments are implemented, monitored and evaluated at all levels of management.
65. The governing body is of good quality, and governors are supportive and committed to school improvement. They fulfil their statutory duties well and play a good part in shaping the direction of the school. Through their good meeting and committee structure, and the informative reports from the headteacher, the governing body has clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors keep a critical and friendly watch over financial planning and school improvement and are, rightly, proud of their school. However, they have yet to evaluate the success of developments through measuring the impact they have on pupils' performance.
66. The school has a very good match of highly skilled teachers and learning support assistants to the needs of the pupils. Good monitoring and evaluation of teaching takes place in all schools and this is having a positive effect, as the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Effective appraisal for all staff has been introduced, although teachers' appraisal is currently 'on-hold' pending the decisions of national teaching unions. Despite this, the school maintains a very good system of personal discussions between staff and line managers that identifies priorities for personal and professional development, that generally results in the provision of appropriate training. The school is preparing appropriately to implement performance

management, in line with current government initiatives. The school receives enormous benefit from running a nationally renowned centre for professional development. This enables staff to gain qualifications, to teach courses for other professionals, to undertake research and gives access to an impressive bank of information regarding special educational needs. This constant link with professional development and new initiatives makes a significant contribution to the confidence, professionalism and morale of staff. New teachers and non-teaching staff receive very good induction into the school and all are encouraged to further their own development. As a result, the school has a very high proportion of staff with additional qualifications in special education, and a significant number of teachers are appointed to promoted posts in other schools.

67. The school improvement and development plan is a good quality document. It is clear and priorities are set following careful consultation with staff and governors. Good targets for improvement are set in the plan and previous plans show that most intended developments take place on time each year. The plan is supported by very good strategic financial planning, which has a firm base in educational improvement. Specific grants are used well and the school makes very effective use of the additional funding provided by the Whitefield Development Trust. This has most recently provided an adventure playground of very good quality that is already very popular with pupils. The school office functions well and day-to-day administration is efficient and unobtrusive. Administrative staff go out of their way to know and understand the needs of the pupils and there are good relationships between office staff, pupils and parents. The procedures and practice for financial control are exemplary. The most recent auditors' report found no weaknesses to be addressed and the principles of best value are applied effectively in all financial transactions.
68. The recent building work has improved significantly the accommodation for pupils with sensory impairment and learning difficulties. However, whilst accommodation is satisfactory overall, there is still a need to address the following:  
Early Years Assessment School – most of the rooms are too small for young children to have ready access to all the areas for structured play usually found in classrooms for this age group;  
Communication and Interaction School (Primary) – a number of classes share a room with another class. This leads to distraction and makes it more difficult than it should for pupils to listen to their teacher;  
Communication and Interaction School (Secondary) – two classes are taught in a mobile classroom that has no covered way for protection from inclement weather;  
Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties School – students post 16 are in accommodation that has yet to meet the high standard of that provided for pupils up to the end of Key Stage 4.
69. The school has a strategic plan to carry out these improvements, as and when finances will allow.
70. There are satisfactory resources for learning in all schools and this is supported by the access to a good quality bank of resources in the professional development centre. However, the climate for the introduction and use of new technology is poor and this is reflected in the low position of ICT in the curriculum which, in this respect, places Whitefield a long way behind many other special schools.

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

71. In order to consolidate and extend the good work of the school, governors, senior managers and staff should now:
- (1) Improve the provision and training for information technology (paragraphs 70, 80-81, 94-96, 110, 124-126) through:
- Accelerating the implementation of the plans already made within the current school

- improvement and development plan
- (2) Continue to improve the curriculum (paragraphs 37, 44-47) through:
    - Making sure all schools more fully include the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education in the planning and delivery of their curriculum.
    - Ensuring the curriculum for children under five in the Early Years Assessment School is based on the recommended Early Learning Goals
    - Ensuring time is used efficiently for teaching and learning in Communication and Interaction Schools (Primary and Secondary)
    - Including more opportunities for pupils and students to gain nationally recognised accreditation for their achievements
    - Ensuring students post-16 in the Sensory Impairment and Learning Difficulties School follow a curriculum that is challenging and suitably matched to their age
  - (3) Ensure that pupils with higher attainment are enabled to raise their levels of achievement (paragraphs 3, 33-36) by:
    - Analysing existing assessment information to identify these pupils
    - Making sure individual education programmes for these pupils are suitably challenging
    - Helping teachers to raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - (4) Enable governors to evaluate school improvement in terms of the impact on the achievement of pupils (paragraphs 63, 65) by:
    - Recording and compiling regular assessment information that shows the progress each pupil makes over time
    - Providing governors with analysis of this data to see the effect school improvement has on standards of achievement
  - (5) Improve the accommodation (paragraph 68) by continuing to implement existing plans

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	164
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	40

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	20	44	29	5	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	310
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	122

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	54

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	21

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.6

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7

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

### Pupils and students' achievements

Within school, all pupils have opportunities to be awarded:

- Certificates for Behaviour;
- Certificates for Achievement; and
- Records of Achievement.

There are also opportunities for pupils and students to gain:

- Course Certificates from Waltham Forest College;

- Sailing Awards from the local Watersports Centre;
- Horseriding Certificates;
- ASDAN awards;
- London Gymnastics Federation, Special Gymnastics Award; and
- Halliwick Swimming Certificates, for water confidence.

The school is preparing to enter a small number of pupils for GNVQ or GCSE awards in the near future.

#### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	24
Black – African heritage	27
Black – other	2
Indian	7
Pakistani	32
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	5
White	148
Any other minority ethnic group	35

#### **Exclusions in the last school year**

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

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

#### **Teachers and classes**

##### **Qualified teachers and classes: N – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	65.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	4.7
Average class size	6

##### **Education support staff: N – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	95
Total aggregate hours worked per week	3016

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Financial information**

Financial year	1998-99
	£
Total income	4287757
Total expenditure	5004269*
Expenditure per pupil	13675
Balance brought forward from previous year	96634
Balance carried forward to next year	48220

\* Includes specific grant for new buildings

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	310
Number of questionnaires returned	135

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	73	26	1	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	50	38	2	3	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	48	2	0	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	33	13	10	10
The teaching is good.	69	25	1	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	67	21	9	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	71	23	1	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	43	2	2	3
The school works closely with parents.	64	28	5	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	60	30	1	2	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	39	4	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	54	33	2	3	6

### Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents gave positive support for all questions except homework where 23 per cent disagree. Additional comments were made on 26 replies. Positive comments gave praise for the high level of care and support provided by committed staff. Parents were pleased with the progress their children made and at the positive impact of home and school relationships. Pleasure was also expressed at the progress in communication and at the success of the school in managing challenging behaviour. Some negative comments were made, but were by too few parents to be representative.

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN EACH OF THE SCHOOLS**

### **EARLY YEARS ASSESSMENT SCHOOL**

#### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is for pupils aged between three and seven years. At the time of the inspection, there were 43 pupils on roll, in five classes. The school caters for a wide range of special educational needs with most pupils having speech and language difficulties and autism.

#### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

- There is very good teaching of communication, personal and social skills and individual programmes, and consequently children make at least good progress.
- There is a very positive ethos characterised by affection, fun, very good relationships and high expectations of behaviour.
- The learning environment is well managed through excellent team work and good use of available space and resources.
- Family participation is valued and encouraged.
- It is well managed with a clear educational direction for improvement. Communications between staff are very effective.

#### **WHAT THE SCHOOL COULD DO TO IMPROVE**

- Ensure that teachers base their lesson plans on the Early Learning Goals and National Curriculum Programmes of Study as well as on the learning targets for each individual.
- Improve the use of IT to support other subjects, to help pupils with their special educational needs and to teach the full statutory IT curriculum.
- Improve accommodation so that classrooms are big enough to have a suitable range of play experiences readily available.

#### **SUBJECTS OF THE CURRICULUM**

##### **ENGLISH**

72. Children make good progress, particularly in relation to the targets set in their individual education programmes. They make good, and often very good, progress in communication. Parents report several children using much more language after just a few weeks of starting school. Children are taught to use photographs, symbols and signs to make choices in formal situations, such as snack time when deciding whether to have apple or banana, and are helped to learn the routines and discipline of school activities through symbols for tasks and lessons. Children with autism make very good progress in interacting with other children and adults, and a few children use age-appropriate social language. A significant number of children use language to ask questions and to direct other people. A major contributory factor is the way that school staff and therapists work together and set up play situations with very clear learning goals. These are highly motivating and rich in language, and are helped by staff taking opportunities to ask questions when they genuinely want to know the answers.
73. Most children make satisfactory progress in reading. The best progress is made when parents work together with the school. Children enjoy books and often share their favourites with adults. They look at the pictures and sign or say what they see, and some can tell familiar stories as they go through the book. Good routines, such as the 'hello' and 'goodbye' sessions, teach the names of people in the class, weather words, days and months. Literacy sessions are developing appropriate skills effectively incorporating children's' own interests. For example, when asked to think of 'r' words one pupil says 'Ralph Schumacher'!

74. Children make sound progress in writing and pencil control through a variety of early learning activities, although opportunities to record work in other subjects, such as science, are limited. Several of the older pupils write their own names; the highest attainers are beginning to write short commonly used words correctly and make good phonetic attempts at new words.
75. Teaching is good and children benefit from the expertise and teamwork of teachers, speech and language therapists and learning support assistants. The teaching of communication skills is very good. For example, in a lesson planned well by the speech and language therapist, the children enjoyed joining in the songs and were skilfully led to take turns and anticipate when they could join in with conversation. In another session, learning support assistants varied the questions for each child receiving a snack and prompted one child to say 'biscuit please' for the first time. Adults manage behaviour very well and make sure that children are positively involved throughout lessons. Literacy lessons have recently been introduced and these sessions are an appropriate reflection of the format of the new national framework. Teachers' planning is good. However, there are times when lessons are planned specifically to address individual learning targets and the opportunities to include them in other subjects are missed.

## **MATHEMATICS**

76. Children make good progress in relation to their individual targets in mathematics. A significant number of children count, sequence, match and know number names to 10. Adults take frequent opportunities throughout the day to reinforce these skills. Several higher attainers recognise sets of up to five objects, fingers, spots, pieces of apple and so on, without having to count them. A few children are beginning to add and take away, but little emphasis is placed on this in class sessions, such as snack time, when other number concepts of counting are developed. Most children have a vocabulary of shape and space in line with their abilities, recognising squares, triangles and circles. Higher attainers use appropriate language to compare length and size. They use a computer program clicking on the 'shorter' pencil and then discussing who is the tallest person in the class, and speculating about where another absent child fits in. Some children are just beginning to do some data handling, recording the results of a skittle game with some support.
77. Teaching is good. In particular, individual work for children in their TEACCH sessions is well planned and enables pupils independently to achieve success in, for example, sequencing colours and sorting shapes. Activities are well chosen and classes organised effectively so that children can get straight on with their work as they arrive in the morning. New vocabulary is introduced appropriately and children soon learn to use the correct terms in response. For example, when comparing who is tallest or which animals are slowest. Numeracy sessions have recently been introduced. There are some good group sessions, but practice does not yet reflect the challenge, pace or structure of the national framework, and the school is not yet providing sufficiently regular timetabled class numeracy lessons.

## **SCIENCE**

78. Progress in science is satisfactory. Some children develop comprehensive knowledge in particular areas, such as animals and their habitats or machines, through their own interests. A new scheme of work has been introduced. This provides a broad programme of work covering appropriate topics. Younger children play with water and investigate different ways of pouring and the texture of bubbles. Others observe salt closely and are fascinated when it is poured to turn a wheel. They explore the relative textures of salt and sand and experiment to see if they can move grains by blowing through a straw.
79. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers are providing interesting activities and giving pupils good opportunities to explore and observe. There are not, however, sufficiently clear learning objectives that identify what children of differing abilities will learn, and activities are not always developed sufficiently. This is partly due to the amount of time available and partly due to teachers' confidence with the subject, in relation to children with such diverse needs. For

example a short session introduced the younger children to the concept of 'stretchiness'. The introduction was very skilled with humour, wonderful acting and gesture. This resulted in children trying out the stretch of tights, springs and rubber gloves, several organising themselves in pairs consolidating very good learning and social skills. They were not then asked to compare or test for materials that did or did not stretch or record what they had done, so opportunities to teach further experimental skills and consolidate the concepts were lost.

### **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)**

80. Progress in IT is sound as there is some skilled teaching of appropriate activities. There is good, and sometimes very good, achievement in lessons. Progress does not yet reflect the quality of teaching because experiences are too infrequent to maintain this progress over time, and there is not yet any scheme that helps teachers to build on skills as children move through the school. Children enjoy their time using computers and work hard. Because there was no touch screen available one boy had to learn to click and drag to operate his number program. He quickly grasped this new skill through excellent prompting by the teacher and in a few minutes was doing this unaided. Another group used the computer to produce a block graph of their favourite foods, able to understand and interpret the graph correctly, but opportunities to develop skills were limited by having to share one machine between several children.
81. Teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory overall, but with clear skill demonstrated by some teachers. For example, in one lesson, the teacher used a Big Mack well so everyone took part and the teacher also organised different switches to be used that enabled every child to have access to the activities. In another lesson, skilled prompting from the teacher encouraged one child to use the mouse successfully to click and drag and extended another child to improve his keyboard spelling skills. However, the lack of equipment and clear plan of what to teach next slows pupils down in their learning.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE)**

82. Children make sound progress in RE. They learn to care for others through imitating excellent adult role models. For instance in an RE lesson they talk about looking after babies, taking turns to holding a baby doll gently, rocking and feeding it. When a very young child was ill and miserable, several older children stroked his hair and offered him toys, clearly concerned about him. They experience festivals from different cultures and religions, such as Chinese New Year, with ribbon dancers and food provided by the mother of one of the children. Higher attainers can re-tell Bible stories such as Noah's Ark and sing and sign along with songs and hymns that they have learnt. Assemblies give collective opportunities to reflect, and children share in giving thanks, celebrating good things in life and thinking about each other.
83. Teaching is good overall. Teachers introduce key vocabulary effectively and give clear messages through demonstration and tone of voice so all children make good progress in behaving more gently. The methods used in one lesson helped the children to make very good progress. Here, the teacher read the story, showed pictures, asked questions and discussed childrens' responses, adding songs so that children have every opportunity to learn. In this lesson, the warmth of praise led children to feel proud and happy and able to remember everything they had done. The school is currently developing a programme of work in line with the locally agreed syllabus giving particular and methodical attention to the needs of early years children.

### **PERSONAL AND SOCIAL EDUCATION**

84. All children make good progress, particularly in the first few months of starting school. Children often come with a number of distressing and challenging behaviours. These were only fleetingly seen during the inspection and did not disrupt learning for others. Behaviour is consistently very well managed so that children learn to participate happily in positive activities and develop pride in their independence and abilities to organise themselves for work. This is particularly well done in the TEACCH sessions first thing in the morning when many children arrive bursting to start work, getting straight down to very well organised tasks. They learn to sit quietly in group

sessions and conform to the rhythms and routines of school. All opportunities are taken throughout the day, in lessons, at playtimes, snack and lunch times to develop appropriate language, self-help and social skills. Sometimes this is through formal programmes and individual targets, but more often through informal, low-key, friendly, skilful reminders and help. Children also begin to teach each other too, such as when two children played in the home corner and one was shown and prompted by the other in no uncertain terms to hold a knife and fork and eat nicely. He got a kind stroke and 'good boy' when the performance was judged to be satisfactory!

## **OTHER SUBJECTS**

85. A good deal of time is spent in structured play activities. This is very useful and helps children develop many skills, such as imaginative play with small world toys in the home corner or design and manipulative skills with things like construction sets, scissors and play dough. They also have lots of active outdoor play with large wheeled toys and weekly sessions on the adventure playground. There is very good teaching during these play sessions, often by skilled and experienced support assistants, but there is insufficient systematic building of skills or recognition of how play can help children to learn about the subjects of the curriculum.
  
86. Swimming makes a very positive contribution, where some children attain skills in line with those expected for their age through good access to the school's own swimming pool and skilled teaching. Music lessons from the resident music therapist are excellent, providing a remarkable quality of experience. This is used to develop a range of important skills that help children in relation to their special needs as well as preparing children for a regular music curriculum. Lessons develop communication and imaginative skills and also flexibility in responding to changing demands – moving quickly from calm ordered participation to excitement, noise and movement and back again in the space of a few minutes.

## COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION SCHOOL (PRIMARY)

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is for pupils with speech and language difficulties and pupils with autism. It comprises 12 classes and has 80 pupils aged seven to eleven currently on roll. The school was re-organised in September 1999 and places pupils with autism in different classes from pupils with speech and language difficulties. The school aims, over time, to integrate classes together with regard to the pupils' communication and interaction needs rather than their 'disability'.

### WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- teaching is consistently good, lessons are planned well and there is a good focus on individual needs;
- teachers are starting to implement the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies well;
- the learning support assistants provide very good support and all members of staff work very well as a team;
- the communication between staff and pupils in speech and language and autistic classes is good;
- behaviour management is good;
- mutual trust and respect exists between adults and children that motivates pupils to communicate; and
- the leadership of the school is good;

### WHAT THE SCHOOL COULD DO TO IMPROVE

- provide better access to IT by introducing more hardware, software and peripheral devices to aid communication in the classroom;
- provide a more demanding curriculum for pupils with autism;
- make better use of taught time in some classes and ensure that all staff share good teaching practice, including their expertise in adapting and modifying the curriculum for both higher and lower attaining pupils;
- improve the quality of the accommodation throughout the primary school.

### SUBJECTS OF THE CURRICULUM

#### ENGLISH

87. Inspection evidence shows that the school is successfully implementing the National Literacy Strategy for pupils with speech and language difficulties and autism. This is having a very positive impact on learning and is helping to raise pupils' standards of achievement. The majority of pupils are making good progress and achieving good standards when compared with their prior knowledge and understanding of English. Pupils enjoy books and join in discussions and listen carefully in a range of situations; for example, when teachers tell stories creatively to capture the imagination of pupils with autism. This encourages them to confidently share their ideas for a story in front of the class. In a speech and language class, pupils studying a story about a dragon extended their expressive language by using different adjectives such as *fierce*, *enormous* and *angry* to describe the creatures. Higher attaining pupils are able to construct and write good sentences using their newly acquired knowledge. In an outstanding drama lesson, pupils thoroughly enjoyed the role-play when asked to assume roles as characters from a story called *Big Sister Rosie* they had been reading. Speech therapists make a significant contribution to the good progress made by pupils with autism and speech and language difficulties and during *Playland* they engaged pupils in very purposeful activities that initiated the development of communication and expressive language skills. During the inspection, there were many examples of pupils with autism and speech and language difficulties developing their speaking and listening skills; for example, in assemblies and circle time where they were given ample opportunities to express their feelings about working together and caring for one another.

88. The quality of teaching in English is consistently good. Features of the best teaching are:
- lessons are planned with clear learning objectives that are based on good quality assessments of pupils' individual needs;
  - teachers give a clear focus on developing pupils' communication skills;
  - the effective implementation of targets in pupils' individual education plans; and
  - the good management and high expectations, which enable effective use of time and challenge pupils to improve the quality of their spoken and written language.
89. The majority of pupils make good improvement from their well below average skills on starting school. The curriculum is adapted and modified very well to address the individual needs of pupils with speech and language difficulties but it is not always as well defined or as challenging for pupils with autism. The speech and language therapists work with skill to teach whole groups of pupils with speech and language difficulty. This is most effective, as teachers and assistants are able to continue the therapist's approach in other lessons and pupils benefit from increased emphasis on their speech and language development. However, this good practice has not yet been extended fully to pupils with autism whose input is limited to the sessions when they are withdrawn from class for individual sessions with the therapist.

## **MATHEMATICS**

90. The majority of pupils with autism and speech and language difficulties achieve good standards and make consistently good progress. Pupils' achievement and progress is very similar to that seen in English lessons with pupils working well towards the individual targets set for them. The good progress is much to do with the effective way in which teachers are implementing the National Numeracy Strategy, which is impacting positively on how mathematics is taught and leading the pupils to make progress at a faster rate. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and gradually improve their knowledge and understanding of mathematics and acquire new skills as they move through the school. In a mental mathematics lesson, pupils with autism count in sequence to 20 and enjoy singing musical rhymes to reinforce learning. In another class, older pupils with autism count confidently to 30 and are able to mentally add and subtract small numbers from the total. However, at times, the work for some higher attaining pupils with autism is not always challenging enough and when this happens they become frustrated and their behaviour deteriorates. Pupils with speech and language difficulties count confidently to 100 and the higher-attainers place numbers in the correct sequence on a number line. Older pupils set their work out correctly when adding hundreds, tens and units and understand the concept of carrying. In another lesson they use units of measure to draw two-dimensional shapes. The language of mathematics for both pupils with autism and those with speech and language difficulties is well taught; for example, *more than* and *less than*. Most classrooms have good displays to support the work done in mathematics.
91. The teaching of mathematics is good overall. In the majority of lessons, teachers' expectations are high and pupils are challenged to do their best. Most respond by listening attentively, concentrating and showing interest in their work. Teachers' planning is good with learning objectives being clearly identified and linked to well-structured tasks. Mental arithmetic is particularly well taught. A strong feature of the teaching is the probing questioning and good assessments of individual needs. Work is adapted and modified effectively for pupils with speech and language difficulties, but this is not always carried out to the same standard for pupils with autism. Most teachers manage their pupils well but there are a few occasions when better use could be made of the taught time that is available as some lessons are cut short to provide pupils with a drink and a biscuit.

## **SCIENCE**

92. Only one lesson of science was observed for pupils with autism. However, the inspection of pupils' work and conversations with teachers shows that these pupils are making good

progress. Pupils with speech and language difficulties achieve very good standards and are making very good progress. They have very good attitudes to learning and are motivated by the investigative work; for example, younger pupils enjoy looking at all different kinds of electrical items such as a torch, radio and clock. They learn that batteries, as well as mains electricity, are a source of power. They persevere with their practical investigations, attaching wires to batteries and bulbs to make a circuit and by the end of the lesson most understand that a complete circuit is needed for electricity to flow. Other pupils follow up previous work about healthy and unhealthy foods and learn that calcium in milk is good for teeth. Pupils also learn how to care for their teeth and that their front and back teeth have specific functions; for example, the incisors for cutting and the molars for chewing food. They carry out experiments with different fruit to demonstrate this whilst others learn the art of brushing their teeth.

93. The teaching in science is mostly very good. Lessons are carefully planned with clear learning objectives and good resources. The pupils are stimulated by the investigative work; this makes the lessons enjoyable and exciting for them. Very good provision is made for prediction, fair testing and recording and the work fully meets the National Curriculum requirements. Teachers and speech therapists work very closely together and take every opportunity in science lessons to develop pupils' language and communication skills and skilfully introduce new words. Work for both pupils with autism and those with speech and language difficulties is enhanced by the high quality of the learning support assistants who work effectively with small groups of pupils.

### **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)**

94. Opportunities to see IT used in the classroom during the inspection were very limited due to the inadequate number of computers. Teachers plan to use IT to reinforce language, literacy and mathematical skills, however, some classes have to share one computer between sixteen pupils and this means that pupils have to wait several weeks for their turn and therefore do not get enough hands-on experience. As a result, the progress pupils make over time is unsatisfactory. Too few opportunities exist for pupils to use computers for literacy, numeracy and general research across the curriculum. Pupils with autism have insufficient access to computers to aid their communication and ability to interact with others.
95. Where IT is taught, opportunities for skills development are missed; such as allowing all pupils to enter data and text for themselves and to learn how to use access equipment, for example, concept keyboards. In classes for pupils with autism, pupils are individually withdrawn and supported by learning support assistants and, whilst there is access to a 'touch screen', there is a general lack of confidence in the application of this subject. Teachers' planning is repetitive, and based more on the activities pupils should do rather than evaluating what they already know and systematically building their skills from that point. Within the speech and language classes there is more access to computers and other additional media equipment such as video and tape recorders, which are well used, particularly in support of language. The use and application of such equipment is hindered by the need to share, although staff worked well to make the best of these opportunities. There is evidence of some effective use of software, such as in mathematics where a spreadsheet was used effectively to reinforce an investigation into height, but the lack of computers limits such opportunities for pupils.
96. The school does have an information technology policy, but this is not yet effective in achieving its aims. The school has recognised the need to develop this area of the curriculum, but has yet to fully appreciate the potential benefits and impact of peripheral devices, such as digital cameras, scanning, control boxes, and symbol writing software, across the range of subjects. There is an immediate need to extend and develop broader access to a comprehensive range of equipment and software in all areas with an appropriate programme of professional development for staff.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE)**

97. Pupils achieve good standards in religious education and make good progress over time. They benefit from a rich range of learning opportunities including the themes of beliefs and values, an

appreciation of self and others, and developing a spiritual awareness of the deeper dimensions of life. Pupils with autism and those with speech and language difficulties have formal RE taught with a strong element of personal and social development. This is supported positively by the role of collective worship and group 'greetings' which endorse a strong sense of self-awareness and appreciation of those around us. Pupils participate in a wide range of religious and cultural celebrations and produce some interesting display work on the Chinese Year of the Dragon. Pupils with autism demonstrated a dramatic response to a lesson, which heightened their 'spiritual' awareness of their senses through being conducted in a darkened room with calming music and lighted candles. The pupils' response was one of calmness, a shared sense of relaxation, and appreciation of sight, sound and touch.

98. The quality of teaching across the school is consistently good or better, reinforcing and actively seeking to enhance the appreciation of self and others through very good use of circle time and relationship building strategies. Skilful teaching places emphasis on mutual respect, which is evident in the ethos of each class with consistent use and encouragement of good manners, praise and very good role modelling. Speech and language pupils were able, for example, to explore the richness of 'Spring' through the simple but very effective use of flowers and blossom. Pupils held them and described and discussed their feelings about the experience. Clear progress was evident when more descriptive language emerged from the pupils as their confidence grew. Bible stories are introduced when appropriate, and linked to pupils own experiences in a meaningful way. Teachers use assemblies well to bring themes alive, such as Mother's Day which was presented to pupils with autism with an effective use of colourful display, role play and music.
99. The school's policy on RE reflects a commitment to delivering the subject, in accordance with the agreed syllabus, at a level appropriate to the development and individual learning needs of the pupils. The school succeeds in achieving these aims. The subject is well coordinated, with staff skilful at applying their knowledge of pupils' needs and that of the subject into a meaningful and appropriate context. The role of staff in modelling positive relationships and mutual respect in all aspects of their work in the classroom is a key feature in reinforcing the religious and moral principles of the subject.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS**

100. The full range of other National Curriculum subjects is taught in the school. These subjects are well planned and effectively taught within the context of an individual learning needs approach. The overall standards of achievement are good, relative to pupils' prior attainment, and some pupils make very good progress against the targets set in their individual programmes. On one occasion, pupils with autism participated fully in an interactive music lesson, recognising and responding to symbols for different types of sound at a level above that expected for their degree of autism.
101. The quality of teaching is consistently good, particularly in history, geography, music and physical education. Themes are linked creatively across subject boundaries, with personal, social and health education being a key strength across all areas of the curriculum. An example of effective teaching was illustrated in a swimming lesson where the individual needs of pupils with autism were well supported and skills extended through high expectations, which had a significant impact on their progress. In history and geography with speech and language pupils, well-planned and paced lessons developed the understanding of 'Ourselves', extending pupils' appreciation of who they are and how they change over time. Here, excellent use of language was used to challenge and extend pupils' repertoire. Pupils were excited about being able to contribute and develop new expressive language such as the 'baby is refreshed' as a way of describing a child after changing a nappy.
102. Very good teaching in design and technology involved pupils baking a banana cake where the skill of the teacher enabled all pupils to be fully involved in the process, with a good focus on basic skills including the hygiene of washing hands, reading a recipe, weighing, mixing and baking. Good use of challenge through open questions encouraged pupils to anticipate the next

step and find appropriate resources. During this lesson, pupils' eyes lit up in anticipation as the next step unfolded. Pupils enjoy their lessons in all subjects and experience a rich variety of learning opportunities. There are occasions when some pupils could have their skills and understanding further extended by more challenging activities, such as in art where pupils, rather than just painting, could have investigated different ways of using a brush and applying paint.

103. The leadership and management of all subjects is effective and well supported across the school although greater emphasis could be made of celebrating pupils' achievements through sharing good practice in display.

## **COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION SCHOOL (SECONDARY)**

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school was organised into its current format in September 1999. Pupils with speech and language difficulties, and pupils with autism, are taught in separate classes in Years 7 and 8. Pupils and students with autism comprise the other year groups in the school. There are 67 pupils and students on roll in eleven classes. Three of the classes are for students over the age of 16. The school aims to deliver a curriculum that is matched to the communication and interaction needs of the pupils and students.

## **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

- Provides good teaching of communication skills so that pupils learn well and make good progress over time
- Provides good quality collaborative teaching with speech and language therapists
- Staff use very good strategies that are effective in managing difficult behaviour
- Provides very good monitoring of pupils' personal development
- Makes good use of off-site facilities to enrich the curriculum
- Encourages very good relationships that help pupils to communicate
- Teachers' planning is clear and effective
- Has good leadership that provides a clear sense of educational direction

## **WHAT THE SCHOOL COULD DO TO IMPROVE**

- Adjust the balance of the curriculum so that each subject has the recommended allocation of time each week
- Increase the amount of taught time by reducing the time taken for breaks, drinks and snacks
- Make more use of information technology
- Monitor the curriculum to make sure all of the above are provided

## **SUBJECTS OF THE CURRICULUM**

### **ENGLISH**

104. Levels of attainment in the basic skills vary considerably within all key stages in the school and reflect the wide range of communication difficulties among pupils. Pupils and students make good progress over time, particularly in their communication skills, and achieve standards that are good for their level of special educational needs. Pupils in Year 7 listen carefully to stories and ask questions to further their understanding. In Year 11, pupils use dictionaries to classify words by their meaning and teachers expect that pupils will learn to use words such as 'juggernaut' to define more clearly the kind of lorry they refer to. In one lesson, a Year 7 group of pupils with speech and language difficulties were reading from "The Railway Children" with good levels of understanding of the story and its main characters. These pupils are making good progress in both their reading and independent writing skills. In other groups in Key Stage 3, good progress was being made by pupils with more severe communication difficulties in the way they responded to simple verbal instructions. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils in a mixed Year 9 and Year 11 class were making very good gains in their understanding of newspaper articles which they were reading with their teacher. Improvements in speaking and listening skills continue to be apparent among Post-16 pupils. In one class, for example, students were discussing their day with the rest of the class, taking turns to talk and listen and explaining with confidence what they did or did not enjoy.
105. The quality of teaching is good. Throughout both key stages, the input of a speech and language therapist, both to planning with teachers and to classroom teaching, brings significant gains to pupils' progress in their speaking and listening skills. This is due to the therapist working in class with the teacher, so that the teacher is able to continue the work in other lessons. As a result, pupils have a greater emphasis on improving their linguistic skills than if they had just a weekly one to one session with the therapist. Teachers manage difficult behaviour very well and specific plans to help individual pupils are applied consistently. Lessons are well prepared and teachers endeavour to help pupils meet the targets set for their

communication development within lessons. The subject has good leadership and there is a clear educational direction for sustained improvement.

## **MATHEMATICS**

106. In mathematics, pupils make good progress in the basic skills through each key stage, in the handling and recognition of coins, for example, and in their ability to manage simple problems of addition and subtraction. By the end of Key Stage 3, the good progress of higher-attaining pupils is seen in their presentation of data in a variety of charts and tables and in the work they have done on recognising and naming different shapes. Lower-attaining pupils are improving their understanding and use of simple mathematical terms such as “plus” and “equals”. Progress by some Post-16 students in the handling of money, however, particularly in their understanding of the relative costs of different items and of the giving of change on their shopping-trips, is less than it could be because of the low expectations of what they can do independently.
107. The quality of teaching is good and this enables pupils to demonstrate good learning. For example, in one lesson, the teacher’s good planning enabled learning support assistants to know exactly what to do and group activities took place at a good pace. Each activity was clearly linked to the targets set for each pupil and the result was that each pupil made good progress in recognising numbers to 50 and in matching shapes by their characteristics. In another lesson, the teacher asked a student to prepare a salad and used this most effectively to teach the concepts of ‘half, more and less’. Teaching is monitored effectively and recent initiatives to include aspects of the National Numeracy Strategy in lessons are beginning to be seen in lessons.

## **SCIENCE**

108. In science, pupils show satisfactory levels of achievement but progress by higher-attaining pupils in experiments and investigations is limited by lack of time for practical work. Not enough time is spent each week on science, and this limits the progress that pupils can make. Good arrangements are made for some higher attaining pupils to attend a local secondary school so that they can study the subject along with their mainstream peers. In the one science lesson observed, pupils in Year 8 extended their communication skills as well as their scientific concepts by studying a good variety of musical instruments. They listened to similarities and differences in pitch, practised their spelling of each instrument and considered how each one produced its sound.
109. Teaching is satisfactory and teachers show a good knowledge of the subject and how to include the development of basic skills, such as reading, learning vocabulary and spelling, within science lessons. However, the curriculum is not planned effectively and, in addition to the lack of time allocated to the subject, there is insufficient balance and not all the Programmes of Study of the National Curriculum are covered as well as they should be.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)**

110. Throughout the school, there are too few computers and this restricts the learning opportunities for pupils. As a result, their achievements are lower than they could be. Pupils use a small computer room and are often withdrawn from their lessons two at a time to work on computers either with a teacher or a learning support assistant. This means that most pupils have no more than 20 minutes each week at a computer. This is not enough for pupils to realise how to use computers to help with their communication needs, or to improve their skills in learning to use word processors, spreadsheets or databases. In English, mathematics and science, there is insufficient use of information and communications technology to support and extend pupils’ learning. There are appropriate plans to extend the use of computers in the school but these are being implemented too slowly.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE)**

111. In religious education, pupils are learning about the main features and festivals of a variety of religions and good links are made in cross-curricular work with science and personal, social and health education to promote their moral development. Insufficient RE was observed to judge standards and teaching. However, in one assembly, the importance of Mothers' Day was conveyed well, with effective links to the role of the Church, and pupils showed good understanding and were able to calmly reflect on what it meant for them.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS**

112. Good gains in other subjects are apparent from the records of pupils' progress, particularly in the specialist vocabulary which they have mastered in subjects such as geography and history. Very good achievement is made in French by Key Stage 3 pupils with speech and language disorders. Year 8 pupils engage in dialogue with levels of confidence and fluency which show very good gains in their language-learning skills. In art, pupils practice their social skills and concentration as well as developing their artistic ability satisfactorily. In design and technology at a local school, the three pupils who attended showed standards in line with those expected nationally for their age and clearly benefit by seeing what others are expected to do. Physical education lessons are well paced and structured so that pupils improve their physical skills, and also learn to cooperate with one another. Effective use is made of a local sports hall to provide additional facilities and, through these, pupils show satisfactory standards in athletics. A large proportion of time is spent on personal and social education. Some of this time is used well to help develop pupils' social awareness, concentration and interaction skills. For example, in circle time at the end of the day, when pupils are asked to recall what they have done and how they enjoyed each activity. This leads to pupils showing increased confidence in talking to others and addressing a whole group. However, there are occasions when too much time is taken for drinks and snacks that could be used for teaching and learning other subjects.

# **SENSORY IMPAIRMENT AND LEARNING DIFFICULTIES SCHOOL**

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school caters for 122 pupils aged from three to nineteen. Pupils have a wide range of special educational needs, which include moderate, profound and multiple learning difficulties, sensory impairment, physical impairment and complex medical needs. The school was formed in 1998 and is housed in an attractive and well appointed new building, with the exception of post 16 pupils who work from a base located elsewhere in the school grounds.

Pupils are placed in four groups according to their needs:

- Red - pupils with complex needs and profound and multiple learning difficulties. Over half of the pupils also have sensory impairment and all are physically impaired.
- Blue – pupils with severe learning difficulties. Almost half have physical impairments and over a third of the pupils have sensory impairment.
- Yellow - pupils with severe to moderate learning difficulties. Significant numbers of pupils also have additional language impairment and challenging behaviour.
- Green - pupils of secondary school age with significant sensory impairments. Half are severely physically impaired and some have severely challenging behaviour

There are 23 classes. Eight pupils in the school are residential. The majority of pupils are in Key Stages 1 or 2, and most transfer into other special schools when they reach the age of eleven. Pupils of secondary age with significant sensory impairments continue their education in green classes.

## **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

- Teachers assess pupils well, monitor their progress effectively, set good long and short term specific targets, and plan to address these in lessons. Teachers set clear objectives in lessons and use these to assess, again, how well pupils have done.
- Teachers develop pupils' communication skills well
- Positively incorporates speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and music therapy to enhance the pupils' development and learning
- Deploys learning support assistants very well which enables pupils to benefit from high quality care and good access to learning opportunities
- Promotes mutual regard and respect between pupils and staff
- Has good leadership, delegation and consultation that leads to effective teamwork from staff

## **WHAT THE SCHOOL COULD DO TO IMPROVE**

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning for students post 16
- Make more use of Early Learning Goals, National Curriculum subjects and religious education, and post 16 accreditation to further develop the curriculum and create increased learning opportunities across the school
- Provide more resources for information technology and use them to support curriculum areas, stimulate sensory awareness, enhance communication and increase opportunity of access.

## **SUBJECTS OF THE CURRICULUM**

### **ENGLISH**

113. Standards in English are good. All groups of pupils achieve well, make at least good progress in communication and listening skills, and good progress in their reading and writing. The National Literacy Strategy has been successfully introduced. This is helped by the teamwork between teachers and speech and language therapists. They develop literacy skills through a 'big book' activity called 'Playland', a structured but fun approach involving role play, which has a positive impact on acquisition of language and expressive skills using a total communication approach, speech, British Sign Language and picture symbols.

114. Most pupils enter school with virtually no communication skills. By the age of seven, higher attaining pupils in yellow and blue groups are understanding short instructions or simple stories, beginning to express needs such as 'more' and 'drink', and recognising and saying their own names and the names of others. By the age of nine, they are ordering food in a café and using 'please' and 'thank you', and at eleven are beginning to string words together and use verbs. Pupils who have joined the school from mainstream schools are usually more fluent speakers; by eleven they are telling their news in a few sentences, writing it with support and reading it back, whilst others talk in simple sentences about what they have done. There are times when the language skills of pupils who enter the school from mainstream education with behaviour difficulties are not sufficiently challenged. This is because they are mixed with pupils with less developed skills and this slows their progress down.
115. By the age of seven, pupils in red groups with complex and sensory needs are beginning to give eye contact and to change their behaviours in response to sound stimuli by stilling or changing their expression. When these pupils transfer to green groups around the age of eleven, they are showing intention and making choices using switching devices, and are initiating exchanges. Students in post 16 are using clear signing to communicate their needs or are communicating using a vocabulary of picture symbols. In the lessons seen involving IT, pupils are highly motivated by this communication medium.
116. All teaching in English is at least satisfactory and often good or very good. All teachers have a good knowledge of individuals' learning goals. In the most successful lessons, teachers plan clear learning intentions that are related to pupils' targets. Evaluation follows these lessons, and is used effectively to plan the next lesson, ensuring that pupils make good progress. Good pace, short, well planned activities, and skilful teamwork with speech and language therapists and learning support assistants, assists the teacher and enables the pupils to sustain concentration and make progress in their learning. In classes with pupils with complex educational and sensory needs, good teaching is characterised by stimulating and interesting the pupils so that they change their behaviours, show anticipation of fun and indicate intentions, sometimes using electronic switching. On the occasions where teaching is less successful, the pace is too slow, and higher attaining, and sometimes sensory impaired pupils are insufficiently challenged. There are examples of good practice in the use of alternative means of writing, and developing pupils' communication books using symbols, but this practice is not consistent through the school. The use of signing for pupils with expressive communication difficulties is effective. There are examples of literacy across the curriculum in writing in technology, science and history. There is evidence that through art, pupils develop their hand control skills.
117. There is an adequate number of books but for older pupils, texts are not always age appropriate. There is a shortfall in 'real objects' and artefacts to compliment stories and secure pupils' understanding. The newly appointed coordinator has identified appropriately a number of areas for the development of literacy, including the library area, the range of texts for teaching literacy, and the widespread use of communication books.

## **MATHEMATICS**

118. The pupils' achievements in mathematics are appropriate for their wide range of severe learning, sensory and physical disabilities. The pupils with most complex needs in red and green classes are engaging in activities that develop their ability to anticipate, show preference, explore differences and use objects for their proper function. Those pupils in blue classes at the early stages of communication and understanding, join in number rhymes and rote counting, are prepared to count with inaccuracies, and with help can sort by size, shape or colour. The pupils in yellow classes mostly function within National Curriculum Level 1 for mathematics, reading numerals beyond 10, ordering numbers, showing an understanding of addition using objects and playing number games. A few pupils are able to accomplish mathematical tasks within Level 2 such as recognising coins and combining them to provide given amounts.
119. The quality of teaching of mathematics is mostly good, although there are some instances of a

lack of pace and challenge that reduce the opportunity to increase numeracy skills. The pupils make good progress and are most involved in mathematics when: objectives are very clear; good use is made of real objects, such as in shopping activities; and there is skilled communication input. Teaching is also at its best when teachers combine the use of visual and tactile resources that are well matched to the needs of the pupils with sensory impairments, and extend their involvement through providing access to IT. The learning support assistants work effectively as a strong team with teachers and this contributes to the progress pupils make through the positive interaction, good management of behaviour and good understanding of individual needs.

120. Thorough assessment, monitoring and setting of numeracy targets are well established. Pupils are interested in the subject and this has been enhanced by the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. Teachers have increased their enthusiasm and are providing more challenge for pupils in their lessons. However, although some effective use is made of computers, they are under-used to help improve numeracy skills.

## **SCIENCE**

121. Pupils under the age of 5 in red classes begin to differentiate between people and objects. They develop understanding the properties of materials through, for example, water play. They also experiment with simple cause and effect relationships using light in the specialist sensory room. They function at an early development stage. By the age of seven, more able pupils are achieving within Level 1 of the National Curriculum and are able to make simple predictions about, for example, the different tastes of food. Pupils in yellow classes, by the age of eleven, are aware of the properties of materials; looking at reflections in mirrors to complete pictures and looking at concave mirrors. They also gain an understanding of their senses; considering the taste of different foods and the changes which cooking brings about. Pupils with sensory impairments consider life processes and living things, using sensory pictures and spring flower displays. Older pupils with additional complex needs also undertake work on the senses and investigate materials, light and sound in structured experiences appropriate to their needs.
122. Teaching is good and is characterised by a thorough knowledge of individual pupils' needs and by careful planning which matches learning objectives closely to these. Teachers work well with learning support assistants and therapists in promoting pupils' learning; increasing their understanding of the world around them through well planned sensory experiences. Good teaching offers greater opportunity for shared cooperative or collaborative work over individual work. Less successful teaching does not set sufficiently clear learning objectives for pupils and time is not well managed.
123. The school adopts termly themes in science which cover all attainment targets. During the inspection, the theme was The Senses. There is good specialist knowledge as the science coordinator was initially a specialist science teacher in a mainstream school. The science policy document is currently being revised and is in draft form. Teachers work with minimal equipment and there has recently been an audit to determine the additional resources that will be required. There is little evidence of the use of computers in science. The quality of displays, outlining practical scientific investigations, is high throughout the main building. However, this quality is not sustained in the post 16 provision.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)**

124. Whilst there are some pupils who show good achievement, they are too few and the overall standards in information technology are below what should be expected of the pupils. Most pupils are at the stage of starting to use a switch device or touch screen with an early understanding of the results of their actions. A few pupils fully appreciate the use of a switch, keyboard or mouse and are inspired to use them to gain sound or visual rewards from toys or a computer, or to support learning in other subjects. There is insufficient achievement in the use of a variety of IT devices, a lack in the exploration of IT systems and control technology in

everyday life, and limited achievement in using IT to generate and communicate ideas in different forms.

125. When IT skills are taught, the quality of teaching is often good. At times the pace slips and an activity goes on too long, but most often IT is valued by teachers and is used well to promote learning and physical and sensory skills. Good knowledge and understanding of IT and the pupils' needs leads to considerable intellectual and physical effort, and to an understanding of cause and effect. Good planning, and establishing a stimulating learning environment using IT, provides a good foundation for the use of communication aids amongst pupils with physical and sensory impairment. Positive relationships and challenge inspire the pupils to work at a good pace, and effective use of IT is promoting numeracy skills. However, there are too few lessons and too few computers for pupils to make sustained progress at the appropriate level. During the few IT lessons the pupils are often enthusiastic and interested, and benefit from the activities set by teachers as they help them to improve their touch screen skills, and tracking and matching activities.
126. The key factor is the lack of resources. There is a limited range of switches and everyday devices that produce different outcomes or help the pupils access their environment. There is a poor range and number of computers and associated software and hardware. This reduces opportunities to gain IT skills, limits communicating in different ways, and lessens access to other areas of the curriculum. A very recently acquired computer is inspiring both teachers and pupils, but sharing it with five other classes prevents the depth of learning and achievement the pupils deserve.

#### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE)**

127. Standards achieved by pupils are satisfactory. The school follows the Redbridge Agreed Syllabus. Pupils become more aware of themselves and identify their own and others' feelings. Pupils in yellow groups are familiar with some of the stories from the life of Jesus. They are encouraged to think about people who help them, such as their own mother, and to think of ways of saying 'thank you'. They establish an understanding of right and wrong, and treat other children and adults with respect. In one group, two children were observed to offer help to another who was unsteady in walking. Throughout the school, there is evidence that all pupils know about food for special occasions, and enjoy celebrating festivals from their own and other cultures. There are colourful wall displays of pupils' work on Chinese New Year, and St. Patrick's Day, which is also celebrated at assembly with traditional Irish dance performed by the children.

#### **OTHER SUBJECTS**

128. Most of the other subjects are taught within the topic chosen for each term. Teachers plan their lessons with due regard to individual learning needs and to the subject content they want pupils to learn. However, there are times when there is too little emphasis on the subject and opportunities to extend knowledge and understanding at the same time as meet individual targets are missed.
129. Good standards are achieved in physical education by pupils with complex needs when taking account of their physical and sensory disabilities. Teachers set clear objectives that are linked effectively to physiotherapy programmes. They provide a sensitive approach with persistent encouragement and guidance, and effective planning. This helps to elicit physical responses, and promotes gains in confidence by the pupils. This is demonstrated in the improving performances in hydrotherapy/swimming where pupils increase their ability to move around in different ways.
130. In art and design and technology lessons, opportunities are well taken to promote practical skills. Clearly presented ideas and a range of activities challenge the pupils to extend their ability to use simple techniques and tools and have greater control over the materials used. There is outstanding teaching in music therapy lessons for the pupils with the greatest needs. Highly skilled teaching involves the pupils in the dynamics of music and extends their

awareness and enjoyment. The excellent choice of instruments to create atmosphere, high quality approach and sensitivity promote superb concentration and communication skills

131. The provision and teaching for post 16 students is unsatisfactory. Learning support assistants work hard to stimulate and interact with students but too much of the education provided is uninspiring and insufficiently challenging to promote progress.