

INSPECTION REPORT

RED GATES SPECIAL SCHOOL

Croydon

LEA area: Croydon

Unique reference number: 101855

Headteacher: Mrs S Beaman

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Cook
(Ofsted No: 2351)

Dates of inspection: 20 – 23 November 2000

Inspection number: 191974

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Community Special
School category:	Severe and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties and Autism
Age range of pupils:	4 - 12 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	489 Purley Way Croydon Surrey
Postcode:	CR0 4RG
Telephone number:	0208 688 1761
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr E Andrews
Date of previous inspection:	3 February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Jacque Cook (Ofsted No: 2351)	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology	What sort of school is it?
		Areas of learning for children at the foundation stage	How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			What should the school do to improve further?
David Tytler (Ofsted No: 8990)	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Kate Burton (Ofsted No: 10198)	Team inspector	English	How well is the school led and managed?
		Art	
		Modern foreign language	
		English as an additional language	
Colette Gribble (Ofsted No. 31914)	Team inspector	History	How high are standards? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
		Music	
Mary Vallis (Ofsted No: 12948)		Science	
		Geography	
		Religious education	
		Special educational needs	
David Walker (Ofsted No: 10668)		Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		Design and technology	
		Physical education	
		Equal opportunities	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Red Gates School is a mixed, day school for 70 pupils aged 4 to 12 with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties and autism. Currently there are 62 pupils on roll, 43 boys and 19 girls, of whom three are of reception age (between four and five). The term pupil will be used in the report unless specifically referring to children under five. Just over 20 per cent (13) have autism. All pupils have Statements of Special Educational Need and 19 have behaviour management plans to improve difficult behaviour. Thirty pupils are from ethnic minorities, predominately African (13.6 per cent) and Caribbean (10.2 per cent) and Indian (8.5 per cent). This reflects the ethnic minority population of Croydon. Twelve pupils have English as an additional language with the most frequent first languages of Malaysian, Urdu and Albanian. They are at the early stages of language acquisition. At the time of the inspection, four pupils were from refugee families. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is about average at 27 per cent (17). Pupils are mainly from the Croydon area although 1 pupil travels from an adjoining authority. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is very low. At the last inspection pupils attended the school from age four to age 14.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Red Gates is an effective school. Pupils make good progress, achieve well and have very positive attitudes towards their work. The quality of the teaching is high and the school is led very well and managed effectively. Value for money is good.

What the school does well

- Has effective arrangements for teaching pupils in broad ability groups in the morning and in classes by age in the afternoon, which is a major factor in ensuring that pupils have a high quality of education and therefore make good progress.
- Makes good arrangements for many pupils to experience working with pupils from mainstream schools.
- Improves pupils' behaviour by all staff consistently following the same procedures.
- Has very strong leadership from the headteacher and deputy headteacher that has improved the quality of teaching through effective monitoring of lessons and teachers' planning.
- Promotes successful teamwork between the very effective support team members, teachers and support services, such as therapists that work in the school to help pupils learn well.
- Continues to develop a very good partnership with parents, recognising the importance of learning at home as well as at school.

What could be improved

- The progress of pupils in information and communication technology.
- Pupils in Year 7 are not taught a modern foreign language adequately, which is a statutory requirement.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1997 since when it has made an overall good improvement. Individual education plans have been considerably improved. They are now based on information from Statements of Special Educational Need or from targets decided at Annual Review meetings. Targets are well written and provide clear small steps enabling very good progress to be made in the areas selected. Good progress has been made in planning the school day. The introduction of more structured personal, social and health education lessons and teaching pupils in broad ability groups in the mornings are very effective. However, the provision for modern foreign language teaching for Year 7 pupils is not adequate. Satisfactory progress has been made in meeting the third key issue concerning resources. In many respects resources are far better used than at the last inspection. A central resource room is very well organised and easy to use by all staff. A new library has been formed in its own room and it is well used. An excellent sensory garden has been built transforming the central courtyard of the school providing an additional place for pupils to widen their knowledge. The soft play

area has been refurbished. The school has been unsuccessful in its bids for additional funding to build new science and art facilities and the teaching of science without specialist facilities to older pupils remains difficult. Although some improvement has been made in the provision of information and communication technology, this continues to be an issue for this inspection. There is good improvement on the last key issue: the school brochure now contains all that is necessary and is a very helpful publication. Also the time spent on subjects is broadly correct. Overall, there is a clear improvement in the quality of leadership and management of the school, which is reflected in the above improvements. Additionally, pupils make better progress, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is more effectively developed and the partnership with parents is enhanced.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by age 5	by age 11	by age 12	Key
speaking and listening	B	B	C	very good A
Reading	C	B	C	good B
Writing	C	B	C	satisfactory C
Mathematics	C	B	B	unsatisfactory D
personal, social and health education	B	B	B	poor E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A	A	

The school has made good progress towards meeting its targets both generally and for individual pupils. Where, in the past, targets have proved too difficult they have been analysed and re-set more appropriately. Pupils are achieving well and making good progress overall. Progress is satisfactory overall for children of reception age (ages four to five) because what they learn is not as well developed as it is for the older pupils. Pupils make very good progress in music and good progress in English, mathematics and science, art, physical education, religious education and personal, social and health education. Their progress is satisfactory in all other subjects except information and communication technology where they do not do as well as they should.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to work are very good. They are pleased to come to school, enjoy their lessons and most try very hard to do what is asked of them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of pupils is good. Those with difficult behaviour make good progress in learning to behave in a more appropriate way.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is good and relationships are very good.
Attendance	Satisfactory

There are clear strengths in pupils' attitudes and values, particularly in the very positive relationships they build with the staff. Attendance is not as good as it was at the last inspection when there was very little absence at all.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	aged 5-11	aged 11-12
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	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.

Sixty-nine per cent of teaching was at least good and twenty-two per cent was very good and at times, excellent. In twenty-six per cent of lessons, teaching was satisfactory and in five per cent unsatisfactory.

The quality of teaching and learning is good in English, mathematics, science, art, physical education, religious education and personal, social and health education. The teaching of music is particularly good. The contribution of the music therapists and constant use of music in all subjects are major factors. Apart from information and communication technology, where teaching is unsatisfactory, in all other subjects teaching and learning are satisfactory. This includes the teaching and learning for the areas of learning for children aged under five. However, the teaching of communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development is good and in consequence the children acquire these skills well. Communication skills are also taught well to other pupils. Numeracy is taught effectively through many subjects and both the National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy are adapted well to meet the needs of the pupils. Individual education plans and, where appropriate, individual behaviour plans ensure the needs of individual pupils are highlighted and met. Additionally the input from support services including therapists, nurses and educational psychologists focuses on specific requirements successfully. Pupils with English as an additional language are taught well through a strong emphasis on teaching communication skills. Pupils learn well because they are interested in what they are asked to do. This is due to teachers planning lessons effectively and making learning an exciting activity. Weaknesses in teaching are few but include occasional examples of work being too easy and some time wasted.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good overall. It is appropriately based on the National Curriculum 2000 and the needs of the pupils. It is strengthened through the effective use of facilities other than in school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is good. Helpful assessments are made on which to base teaching. Arrangements are made for translations and interpreters where appropriate.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. Social and cultural development are particularly strong.

How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides very good care for its pupils. Procedures for gathering information on what pupils know and can do are good and the information is used well to set targets and assess progress. Individual education plans and individual behaviour plans are very effective in helping pupils improve their work and behaviour.
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The school works very well in partnership with parents. Achievements made at home are celebrated in school and parents are involved in setting targets for their children at the Annual Reviews. Information provided is very informative and valued by parents. The curriculum is broadened through pupils' involvement with local mainstream schools for some lessons, the use of specialist facilities within school, the contributions of the many therapists that work with pupils and the lunchtime clubs. However, the teaching of a modern foreign language for pupils in Year 7 is not adequate to meet statutory requirements. Arrangements for the health and safety of pupils are very good. There are good arrangements for ensuring children are made welcome when they arrive at the school and pupils are given good support to ensure their move to secondary school is as smooth as possible.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership, which provides a clear direction for the work of the school and promotes high quality and effective teamwork. This gives the school an outstanding capacity to continue to improve the education of the pupils.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body supports the school effectively and fulfils its responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	All staff are involved in a thorough evaluation of the school's performance and share in drawing up a comprehensive improvement plan.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used well; especially the staff, who are deployed most effectively to meet pupils' needs and promote learning.

A major strength of the leadership of the school is the successful introduction of the effective monitoring of teaching, which has improved the quality and in consequence helped pupils to make improved progress. There are sufficient, well-qualified staff including high quality support team members. Accommodation is satisfactory overall but there are inadequate facilities to teach science to older pupils. Resources are satisfactory overall. The school applies the principles of best value well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are kept well informed about how their children are getting on • The school is well led and managed • They feel comfortable in approaching the school • The school works closely with parents • The children are expected to work hard and to achieve their best 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quantity of homework • The range of out-of-school activities

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children are helped to become mature and responsible | |
|--|--|

Evidence gathered during the inspection supports the positive views of the majority of parents. However, inspectors disagreed with the negative points made by a few parents. The amount of homework set is appropriate taking into account the age and the needs of the pupils. There is a wide range of activities that take place out of school, including visits to the local community, and a number of lunchtime clubs.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. It is inappropriate to judge the standards of the pupils for whom this school caters in relation to the National Curriculum or any other national benchmarks. The report does, however, report on the achievement of the pupils and on what they know, understand and can do. Judgements about achievement take account of information in their Statements, Annual Reviews and individual education plans.
2. Overall the achievement and progress of pupils are good. This represents an improvement since the last inspection and is largely due to the improved quality of the teaching in the school. There are far more instances where pupils make very good progress and very few lessons where pupils do not make at least the progress they should. Where pupils do not make the progress they should this is usually because teachers' planning is not as good as usual.
3. There is no measurable difference between the achievement and progress of boys and girls. Most pupils with additional special educational needs, for example those with autism and those who have behaviour difficulties, make good progress in learning to manage difficulties and respond appropriately to situations. Pupils with English as a second language make similar rates of progress to their classmates because teachers emphasise the acquisition of language and improving communication skills in all lessons. All staff work hard to ensure the needs of pupils are met appropriately. Individual education plans are used very well to pinpoint necessary steps to make progress. Pupils make very good progress towards meeting the targets set out in their plans.
4. Children of reception age are taught in a separate early years class together with pupils aged six. Their progress and achievements are satisfactory overall in the areas of the foundation curriculum with the exception of communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development where their progress and achievement are good. There is a clear emphasis by all staff to focus on these areas and language particularly is taught at every opportunity. Children learn to communicate through gestures, signing and language. They listen to, and many join in, songs and stories to help them with their understanding of numbers. They begin to discriminate between shapes to improve their mathematical development. Children's creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world are widened through activities using their senses. For example, tasting food, operating switches to control lights and sounds, exploring the sensory garden and using instruments to make musical sounds. Physical development is supported through increasing the confidence of the children who relax and enjoy swimming or hydrotherapy sessions learning to float with appropriate aids. Some children become more adventurous, climbing and jumping from equipment. By the time they join Year 1, children make choices and are more aware of each other. They have strong relationships with the staff and those children with difficult behaviour become more able to conform and therefore to learn.
5. In English, pupils' standards of achievement and progress are good at Key Stages 1 (age five to seven) and 2 (age seven to 11) and satisfactory in Year 7 (age 11 to 12). There is a close correlation between standards achieved and the quality of teaching. Since the last inspection standards have improved and this can be attributed to the introduction of setting for ability and the development of the National Literacy Strategy. The school also places a high priority on the teaching of communication skills and works very closely with speech and language therapists. As a result, very good learning targets are set for all pupils in English. Highly appropriate work is planned to enable pupils to successfully achieve their targets. Teachers and support team members often provide focused support for individual pupils when working on set targets. All members of staff use strategies such as the use of signing, objects of reference (items which can be seen and often felt and heard by pupils and are used to signify specific activities or times, for example, a horn to represent the school bus, a shiny wooden tile to represent the hall floor, a tile

representing the surface of the sensory garden often accompanied by a photograph, as appropriate) and communication aids consistently and effectively in order to develop language skills. By the time they are seven, pupils respond to greetings and teacher's questions with smiles and gestures, some are able to sign or voice their response. They pay greater attention during stories especially when props are used to bring the story alive. Higher attaining pupils gain a greater vocabulary and begin to show an interest in books, turning pages and pointing to words and illustrations. By the time they are eleven, pupils increase the number of signs they recognise and use them to join in rhymes and songs enthusiastically. Higher attaining pupils make good progress in learning to read. They become familiar with the characters in the reading scheme and learn to recognise some words. They increase their knowledge of the alphabet and can say what sounds letters make. They practise writing, copying from the teacher's model, and some use the computer to write their own sentences. By the time they leave school, pupils have improved communication skills and they have gained an interest and love of books from sharing stories in the classroom and visiting the school library.

6. In mathematics pupils' achievement and progress are good. Good progress in numeracy is closely linked to the introduction of a modified National Numeracy Strategy in the school and the generally good, and sometimes very good, teaching that takes place at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Key Stages 2 and Year 7 when pupils are taught in ability groups. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Younger pupils explore shape and colour, and learn to anticipate a tower falling over. A few higher attaining pupils are able to count to five in company with the teacher or support team member. All pupils practise their skills through the singing of songs and chanting of rhymes, such as 'Five Green Bottles', which they enjoy immensely. Older pupils count to ten, recognise some numbers out of sequence and begin to write numbers. They take part in matching and sorting games. They understand that the concept of 'buying' involves passing over a token in exchange for goods in pre-money activities. They can recognise and name colours, such as red, orange, yellow and green. By the time they are twelve, higher attaining pupils can recognise most coins, count beyond 30 with confidence and back from 15. They are beginning to sort using two criteria, such as shape and colour. Lower attaining pupils will name a ball and repeat numbers after an adult. They will persevere to make a tower from large foam shapes, only to enjoy the excitement of toppling it over.
7. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in science. During Key Stage 1, pupils explore the properties of materials through using the senses effectively especially in the multi-sensory room and garden. They are beginning to understand that some toys are activated by means of switches and batteries and that plants need light and water in order to grow. By the time they are eleven, pupils are beginning to understand change. They know that heating and freezing changes materials and they are beginning to identify similarities and differences. Practical opportunities allow pupils to explore forces and friction. Visits to farms and garden centres as well as to a luminarium ensure that by the time pupils leave Red Gates they have an increasing knowledge and understanding of the real world and a willingness to explore.
8. Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress in music. This is partly through the very high quality of teaching by the music therapists and also through the way music is used in various forms throughout all subjects. Pupils learn to play a range of instruments and to make connections between their actions and the sounds they produce. They enjoy listening to music and many join in songs and rhymes enthusiastically. In art, physical education, religious education and personal, social and health education pupils make good progress and achieve well. Their progress and achievement are satisfactory in other subjects, with the exception of information and communication technology. In this subject pupils do not do as well as they should partly because they do not systematically learn the skills necessary. Also, as the equipment has just been renewed, there is a lack of software and the new technology, including use of electronic mail and the INTERNET, is not yet in place.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. High standards set at the last inspection have been largely maintained. Pupils have very positive attitudes to work and enjoy coming to school. At the start of the school day, pupils enter school with enthusiasm and smiles for the staff that greet them. They show very great regard and obvious affection for the drivers, escorts and support staff who accompany them into school. Their pleasure at being in school is very evident from the spontaneous signs of pleasure the pupils extend to staff and other pupils as they enter their classrooms. When children join the early years class, they settle in quickly and learn the routines of the classroom. Most pupils are very eager to learn and take part in most activities in a very co-operative and caring manner. For example, a pupil in Key Stage 2 helps the teacher to arrange the room ready for registration and circle time. When the pupils sing or sign their greetings to the teacher and each other, he holds the percussion instrument steady for the pupil next to him to touch. Her obvious joy and feeling of involvement is clearly evident. Although initially pupils find it difficult to pay attention, many do concentrate for relatively long periods when they are involved in activities. They become immersed in listening to stories and join in with number songs and dancing to music enthusiastically. Pupils try hard because they want to please the staff that work with them.
10. The behaviour of pupils is good overall. There are a number of pupils with very difficult behaviours but records show that they consistently improve. They respond well to the consistent approach by all who work with them and the number of incidents of inappropriate behaviour reduces. Pupils learn to do what they are asked by staff, enjoying the praise they earn for doing so. Many sign, or say, please and thank you. Pupils behave very well at lunchtimes and on visits out of school, including when they attend local mainstream schools. There have been no exclusions from the school, which remains the same as at the last inspection.
11. Pupils' personal development is good. Initially children are often not used to being in groups. At the time of the inspection, for example, one child, who had only been in the school for a short time, had made great strides and was at last sitting as part of the group for the morning greeting and the end of day sessions. Pupils become more able to sit and wait for their turn during circle time and to listen to the responses of other members of the group. They join in with activities and as pupils get older they become more able to co-operate, for example, when being moved to a standing frame or playing instruments together. They take turns, for example to stick gold and silver paper when making a collage in religious education and become animated by the emerging work from this joint activity. Many learn to share equipment, although some continue to find this difficult. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make clear choices and express preferences. They develop the confidence to try a range of situations or resources. For example, though initially unsure, a Year 1 pupil moved tinsel hanging on a frame and watched it glistening in the lights. On a daily level, some pupils show very good personal responsibility by taking registers and notes to the office. As a whole, pupils finish what they are asked to do and are pleased when it is praised during plenary sessions at the end of lessons. They celebrate the success of others in assembly when certificates are awarded. Even the youngest children in the school sit sensibly during drinks and when they eat dinner. Pupils have very good relationships with the staff, which is a major factor in their good levels of confidence and self-esteem.
12. Attendance levels have dropped since the last inspection when they were recorded at 99.15 per cent. Attendance is now satisfactory for a school of this type, 89.5 per cent in the last reporting year, although the published rate of unauthorised absence is relatively high at 2 per cent. This is, however, largely due to the school's lack of rigour in keeping records up-to-date: the information from parents and carers on why pupils have been away from school is not always transferred to the registers. Authorised absence, at 8.5 per cent, is caused by sickness and medical appointments. Punctuality is good. Pupils arrive promptly in school and lessons start and end on time. Individual pupils do sometimes miss the start of a lesson because they have had to wait for toileting facilities to be available.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

13. The quality of teaching and learning has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now good overall. There has been an increase in very good quality teaching and learning and at times they are excellent. The percentage of lessons where teaching and learning are unsatisfactory is reduced to a very small, five per cent. This is largely due to the very effective programme of monitoring what goes on in classrooms, helping staff to improve their practice. Whilst teaching and learning are good at Key Stages 1 and 2 and in Year 7, the best teaching and learning take place in classes for pupils towards the end of Key Stage 1 and during Key Stage 2. The teaching and learning of communication, language and literacy and personal social and emotional development are good for children under five but overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory for these children. This is partly because some of the methods used are not as effective with the younger children.
14. The quality of music teaching in the school maintains the very high standard set at the last inspection. Skilled music therapists work with classes, groups or individual pupils depending on their needs. They pass on their high levels of expertise to other staff and reinforce what pupils are learning in other subjects. For example, the planning for mathematics lessons forms a basis for teaching cause and effect in a music lesson to a lower attaining group of Key Stage 2 pupils. Music is used well by all teachers as a means to support pupils' learning. Singing action songs improves pupils' vocabulary, assists their communication and helps them to learn numbers and to count. Teaching and learning are good overall for English, mathematics, science, art, physical education, religious education and personal, social and health education. With one exception, in all other subjects teaching and learning are satisfactory. The exception is information and communication technology where teaching and learning are unsatisfactory at present. This is partly because of a lack of expertise of staff in using the new equipment and because the scheme of work is not in place to support teachers' planning to improve pupils' skills. There is also not a sufficient range of software available.
15. Teachers make sure the needs of all pupils are met primarily through the quality of their lesson planning. In most subjects, teachers base their lessons on longer term planning, which shows what pupils will learn next. This they then modify according to their assessments of the stage that each pupil's learning has reached. What pupils are expected to learn is clearly set out and the various levels of support are detailed. Often classes divide into groups for activities, which are very specifically planned for those pupils. Even when pupils are divided into broad ability sets in the morning for their lessons, teachers continue to tailor the work for individual pupils. For example, in a mathematics lesson teaching learning numbers and counting, there are four groups, one group uses number strips to help them play games, a second learns to count on and back, a third works on simple addition using coloured squares and the final group combines numbers using tokens. Pupils with additional special educational needs learn well when lessons are planned in this way because their specific needs are taken into account.
16. Teachers and support team members work as a very effective team and provide a common approach to make learning as easy as possible. This is a major and very successful feature of the teaching in the school. Support team members are very well briefed and confident and pupils' learning is reinforced because of the consistent approach of all the adults they work with. Staff are knowledgeable about the wide range of special educational needs of the pupils and they also make very good use of advice and information from specialist colleagues from the external agencies that work in the school. For example, physiotherapy programmes are woven into the teaching of physical education. School staff and therapists work very well together to ensure that targets on individual education plans and behaviour plans are met. Teachers have good levels of expertise in teaching pupils with autism. Whilst no one approach is followed pupils are given the security of an explained routine. For many, symbols are used to indicate the order of lessons, which are referred to throughout the day and the order changed when lessons change. Simple songs signal the beginning and end of each lesson and behaviour plans are used consistently to decrease inappropriate behaviours. The emphasis on the positive praise and encouragement, such as 'well done', 'good listening' and 'you do it' is a constant feature in the work of all staff. This is beneficial for all pupils. It makes them want to learn and builds a firm relationship between the staff and the pupils. For pupils with additional special educational needs, this relationship is particularly important to instil confidence and trust in the pupils. Staff use symbols, objects of

reference and Makaton signs well to improve pupils' communication skills and support their learning in all subjects. Teachers have good knowledge of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and modify them appropriately. Key language is identified in lesson plans to ensure pupils' vocabulary and understanding improve in all subjects. This is particularly helpful for pupils with English as a second language.

17. Some of the most effective teaching conveys enthusiasm, excitement and a sense of fun to the pupils who are immediately interested in what is going on, keen to have a go and learn, almost as a by-product, of enjoying themselves. Good examples are found in the build up given in a Key Stage 2 design and technology lesson on exploring different types of bread where excellent questioning and comments by the teacher included, 'This is really interesting', 'What have I got here?' 'This is a very special lesson'. Also, in a Key Stage 1 and 2 art lesson the reaction of the teacher as she demonstrated making prints with her feet, both to the process 'Oh! This feels really squidgy', 'Agh, it's cold and sticking to my toes' and to the finished result 'Oh look, you can see...' combined with the peals of laughter that accompanied the activity meant that the learning was easy but for some, only having one go proved more difficult. All staff use questions well both to prompt learning and also to find out what pupils know, understand and can do in order to plan the next stage of learning. Parents are right when they note that pupils are expected to work hard and do their best. In most lessons very little time is wasted and even drinks time is used to teach good social skills.
18. There are very few weaknesses in teaching and learning and no overall areas that need improving. However, in the few lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory the activities planned are not sufficiently demanding, as in a Year 7 geography lesson. Occasionally time is wasted because equipment is not ready for use or because pupils are not clear about what they are to do. In both events they become bored and do not learn as well as they should. In one instance the sensory garden was unavailable for the planned lesson because it was raining and there were no plans for alternative activities. In consequence, some pupils spent too long reading books and a pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties was not given enough attention to ensure they achieved what they should in the lesson.
19. A few parents expressed concerns about the amount of homework set for their children. Pupils have special 'mathematics tasks' on their individual education plans. They are agreed by parents and teachers and are carried out at home. These tasks support the pupils' learning in their mathematics lessons. Parents are able to request a new task should the current one be completed. Pupils are also able to take books home from the library to share with their parents. Pupils may also have additional programmes, for example physiotherapy and speech and language or signs and symbols to practice. This is an appropriate amount of homework for these pupils.

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

20. The quality and range of learning opportunities overall are good, with pupils having access to an appropriate range of relevant learning experiences. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in developing its curriculum, although the planned improvement is not yet complete. Increased teaching time has been allocated to all National Curriculum subjects and religious education, without adversely affecting the important place of personal, social and health education, including sex education for the pupils. However, there are a few weaknesses, notably in information and communication technology, throughout the school. There is no overall plan showing how pupils will build on what they learn and this slows their progress.
21. The curriculum for children at the foundation stage, although satisfactory, is too tightly planned from National Curriculum subjects, although at an appropriate level. Opportunities are missed for teaching within a wider framework, for example of knowledge and understanding of the world, to broaden the understanding of the children. The few children of this age are included in a class

largely of Year 1 pupils. For pupils aged five to 11, there is a good, broad and varied curriculum. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been introduced and modified effectively to meet the wide range of needs of the pupils. They have a marked effect in raising pupils' achievements. For pupils in Year 7, although the curriculum is of good quality in many respects it is unsatisfactory overall and does not meet statutory requirements because of the lack of adequate modern foreign language teaching. The subject is planned to be taught as a short course of a few weeks during the summer term.

22. Significant changes have had a positive effect on the progress pupils make. The school has been re-organised into three phases: class 1 (ages four to six and occasionally seven), lower school (ages seven to ten) and upper school (ages ten to 12). This particularly helps teachers to ensure work is suitable for the age of the pupil. The school has taken the opportunity to teach subjects predominately rather than topics and take into account the new National Curriculum 2000 documents. This has led to a beneficial re-planning of the schemes of work (what is to be taught throughout the school) for all subjects. Some subjects are further developed than others in this respect. Those for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are of good quality with details of many, very small, incremental steps that provide very clear opportunities for assessing pupils' progress. The school gives due attention to communication skills. A good start is made for the children and youngest pupils in the early years class. Makaton signing, symbols and objects of reference are used well to support pupils' learning.
23. The school provides an effective curriculum for pupils with additional special needs such as those with autism or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Grouping pupils by ability and need during the morning sessions for all but the early years class helps teachers to plan for each individual pupil to ensure work is suitably difficult. The emphasis on using pupils' senses to teach and the very good use of the whole school environment helps to make learning meaningful and interesting for the pupils. Excellent provision for a range of professionals at the school, including a school nurse and occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, music therapists and physiotherapists helps to ensure that specific requirements specified on Statements of Special Educational Need are met. Music therapists plan sessions that reinforce successfully what is taught in other lessons, for example elements from the mathematics scheme of work are used as a basis for some sessions. Individual education plans are of good quality. The first plan is guided very suitably by the pupils' Statement of Special Educational Need and the initial (baseline) assessments in English, mathematics and personal, social and health education. This ensures that what is taught is linked very closely indeed to what pupils need to learn. Pupils with English as an additional language have appropriate provision. Their needs are identified and planned for. Further support is planned for next term using help and advice from the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service in the borough.
24. There has been an improvement to the pupils' experiences by the introduction of a number of extra-curricular activities at lunchtime. These include gardening, dance and sports clubs and a choir. These supplement the trips and residential visits to provide a very good solution to the difficulties of pupils unable to stay after school because they are reliant on school transport. The length of the teaching day has been extended, giving additional time for a wider range of activities for all pupils.
25. The school, justifiably, prides itself on the arrangements made to ensure pupils have very good opportunities to meet and work with other pupils. Some pupils with additional special educational needs benefit from being taught in other classes or groups within the school. For example, a Year 7 pupil with autism joins another group's music therapy session. Many pupils have the opportunity to join with those in other mainstream schools, both within their own classrooms and through regularly attending lessons at mainstream schools. This is very successful and the number of pupils that participate has increased. Clear steps are taken to ensure pupils have the same or similar opportunities as each other in almost all aspects of the curriculum. However there are currently difficulties with enabling all pupils to experience horse riding. This is because the stables used do not have appropriate facilities; for example, they do not have lifts needed to hoist some pupils on the horse's back.

26. Pupils' education, particularly physical education, is broadened through the use of an impressive range of facilities in the community. A number of pupils visit a nearby club for trampolining during the lunchtimes and a variety of pools, including a hydrotherapy pool, appropriate to the age, ability and needs of the pupils are used for swimming. Links with the local community are a strength of the school. Local artists visit to work with the pupils as part of the Croydon Tramlink Project and sports coaching is provided as part of the Croydon Sports Partnership, for example in athletics and canoeing. Pupils visit Selhurst Park, Crystal Palace Football Club, for matches and they attend the Fairfield Halls for concerts. The Mozart Players are to visit to play. An impressive list of local employees and clubs supports the various promotions the school organises, for example the completed sensory garden and the shortly to be revamped, early years play area.
27. Provision is very good overall for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The high standards achieved in these areas at the time of the previous inspection are maintained. The school, both through its policies and good practices, celebrates the uniqueness of every pupil and works to meet their needs.
28. Pupils' spiritual development is good. There are planned opportunities for reflection during personal and social education and during the daily acts of collective worship. Unplanned moments are also seized upon and celebrated, such as when pupils show amazement at the revolving lights and bubble tubes in the multi-sensory room. Music frequently provides the stimulus for reflection and calm, either in lessons or during times of worship. This is often accompanied by the lighting of a candle. In one class assembly, pupils listened quietly to music as they considered how they help at home. Assemblies where all the school are present provide opportunities to celebrate group and individual achievement as well as time to think about a sick member of staff. In religious education, pupils are encouraged to think about the customs and beliefs of others. They learn about places of worship and, through the use of artefacts and role-play, experience something of the symbolism and customs of a range of faiths.
29. Provision for moral development is good. Every opportunity is taken to reinforce positive behaviour and to help pupils distinguish right from wrong. Good quality behaviour support plans and a consistency of approach by all staff lead to more acceptable behaviour. Staff set clear boundaries and pupils learn that actions have consequences. For example, a pupil who threw equipment had to pick it up before continuing with a chosen activity. Pupils are helped to make reasoned choices 'If you put your shoes back on we will be able to play chase.' All pupils are taught to take turns and to share, which is seen clearly during drinks and biscuit time. Consideration for others is taught through thinking about topical issues such as the recent floods. Care for the environment is encouraged through the recycling of tins locally and work in the sensory garden.
30. Provision for social development is very good which confirms parents' perceptions that their children are helped to become more mature and responsible. The excellent teamwork of adults in all classes provides constant reinforcement to pupils of what living in a community is all about. Everyone helps each other and more able pupils are encouraged to help the less able. Pupils take the register to the office and help give out equipment. Those with restricted movement are encouraged to reach out and hold hands. They indicate by expression their interest in one another. Individual education plans clearly identify opportunities for developing independence and social skills as does the personal, social and health education programme. Lunchtimes provide occasions for reinforcing socially acceptable behaviour and enjoying social inter-action through eating together and joining in group activities such as choir or the gardening club. There are many opportunities for pupils to work together in the classroom although few are organised in the playground at lunchtimes. They are taught to celebrate the success of others as they applaud those being awarded certificates in assembly, showing what they have achieved. Social development is also improved through providing pupils with opportunities to visit different places and learn to relate to a range of people. They visit local shops, parks and libraries as well as swimming and hydrotherapy pools, a sports club and riding stables. Many pupils also meet children of their own age from local infant and primary schools. A wealth of visits to the local area and beyond gives pupils the chance to demonstrate their improving social skills as well as contributing to them.

31. Cultural development is very good because so many interesting opportunities are provided. Very productive links with the Natural History Museum have led to two-way visits and contributed to the museum's adaptation of resources for the disabled. Pupils were fascinated by the dinosaur displays on a recent visit. During the summer, 12 pupils worked with local artists to help produce community work to celebrate the millennium, which is now on permanent display. Very good school productions involving all pupils, maximise the talents of staff as pupils sing, dance and perform works composed especially for them. In lessons and music therapy pupils experience music from around the world. Parents send tapes to school so that their children can listen to music celebrating their own cultures during the day. Parents also lend artefacts and articles of clothing to support multi-faith religious education and other subject areas. Books and displays reflect and celebrate the wide range of backgrounds both of pupils within the school and people in the local area. Adults that work with pupils provide very positive role models of harmonious working as well as first-hand information to help them appreciate their own cultural traditions.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. The health, care and safety of pupils have improved significantly since the last inspection, and the school now provides very good care for all its pupils. Arrangements for health and safety and for child protection are a priority and are of high quality. The headteacher, who has undergone appropriate training, is the named person for child protection. All adults in the school are aware of the procedures and carry them out as required.
33. Procedures for gathering information on what pupils know and can do, and for monitoring their personal development, are very good. The information is used well to set both school and individual targets, frequently resulting in a change of classroom practice to meet them. There is a very good system to assess children when they arrive in the school using pre-National Curriculum levels called 'P' or 'performance' levels. Pupils are reassessed at regular intervals to ensure they are making the progress they should. The results of the re-assessments are reported to parents, who value the care and support their children receive. More than nine out of ten parents who replied to the inspection questionnaire said that the school was helping their children to become mature and responsible. Parents and pupils value highly the very good Records of Achievement, which chart a pupil's progress through the school
34. The highly effective arrangements for health and safety begin when the pupils arrive in the morning, mostly enthusiastic and keen to get to their classrooms. Good relationships can be seen between children and all the adults involved in the transfer from coach to school, and between teachers, support team members, drivers and bus escorts. Once in school, pupils are taught in a secure and stimulating learning environment where they receive pastoral care of a high order. There are careful procedures, which include home visits, to ensure not only a smooth start to children's schooling, when initially children often attend part-time until they can manage full-time, but also a successful transfer to senior school.
35. Pupils benefit from the effective use of a good range of outside agencies, which ensures specialist help to meet specific needs. In addition, the full-time school nurse and visiting school doctor provide sensitive medical care. Governors, the senior management team and staff, including the site manager, carry out regular safety checks on the building, carrying out any remedial work as necessary. The governors have, for example, replaced windows to remove some health and safety concerns.
36. The good behaviour of pupils, many of whom can be very difficult, is underpinned by effective policies, which are applied consistently and understood by the vast majority of pupils. Good quality behaviour management plans are developed for pupils with difficult behaviour and these are very effective in helping pupils to behave in an acceptable manner. They are regularly reviewed and refined as required. All incidents are recorded, together with the action taken. No examples of oppressive behaviour were seen during the inspection. Procedures for promoting and monitoring attendance are satisfactory, although arrangements for following up unexplained absences should be more strictly followed.

37. Provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved considerably since the last inspection. This is because of the considerable improvement in the quality of the individual education plans, which are now very good. Targets are precise and well focussed. These combined with the behaviour plans help to ensure that the provision specified on Statements of Special Educational Need and at Annual Reviews is in place and monitored. Entitlement to therapy and medical care within school are ensured. One difficulty that needs attention is the length of travelling time to school for some pupils. At over an hour, this is too long.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

38. The school has developed a very good partnership with parents since the last inspection. Parents are very supportive of the school and appreciate all that it does to enable their children develop, both academically and socially. They give active help to the school, including generous donations through fund raising events organised by Friends of Red Gates School. The active co-operation of parents is particularly important in supporting their children's learning at home. There is a regular exchange of views and information through the home/school contact books, whilst the bus escorts frequently provide a first line of contact with families.
39. Parents are welcome in school. They are easily able to talk with the headteacher and staff and feel comfortable in raising concerns. There are also regular consultation evenings, such as discussions on Annual Reviews and reports on any specialist help their children have received. Parents are given all the information available on the progress their children are making and make good use of it. They play an important part in reviewing and setting targets for the future development of their children and in seeking ways to help achieve them. They receive regular high quality information through annual reports, Annual Reviews, therapists' reports, the well produced and parent friendly prospectus and governors' annual report. The school ensures that where appropriate communications are translated into a home language and interpreters made available at meetings if required.
40. The school gives useful, sensitive guidance to parents on how they can best help their children's learning at home. They have, for example, been given help in signing to improve communication with their children and given advice on how to choose books that can help develop the literacy skills of their children. As a result, parents have a good, and still improving, impact on the progress their children are making. The special certificates presented to children celebrate good work and progress at home as well as in school and are highly valued by both parent and child.
41. A few parents are concerned about homework, teaching and extra-curricular activities. Evidence gathered during the inspection, however, showed that the amount of homework was appropriate, with a growing number of children taking books home from the library. Inspectors also found that the range of out-of-school activities was satisfactory.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

42. The leadership of the school is very good. There have been changes in senior staff since the last inspection resulting in significant improvement. The new headteacher is most effective at leading by example. She has a clear vision, is hard working and knowledgeable and focused on improving the school by raising standards. Her consultative style, that includes all staff in decision making and planning for development, fosters high quality teamwork where everyone is determined to do their best for the pupils. The aims and values of the school are very well met and underpinned by a commitment to equality of opportunity that results in steps being taken to meet the needs of every pupil. Since the last inspection a number of changes have been skilfully introduced that have brought about major improvement. For example, setting pupils by ability for core subjects was a difficult decision but due to its well-planned development is now resulting in noticeable pupil progress. The school's commitment to improvement and its capacity to succeed

is outstanding. All members of staff are actively engaged in identifying areas for development and taking steps to move forward.

43. Management of the school is good. The headteacher and newly appointed deputy work well as a team to ensure the smooth daily running of the school. The deputy accepts responsibility for some important aspects of school life, for example the curriculum, the timetable and staff deployment, liaison with outside agencies and newly qualified staff. She manages these aspects very effectively, holding regular meetings with staff to ensure planned targets are being met. The head of upper school and head of lower school have developed skills in managing relatively large teams of staff, for example chairing meetings of about thirty people successfully. They meet regularly as part of the senior management team and are the first point of call should staff need assistance. Overall, subject leaders are effective and take their roles very seriously. They are responsive to new initiatives in their subject areas, for example, National Literacy and Numeracy and the National Curriculum 2000 and pass information and expertise on to colleagues. The administrative support are well organised, making a positive contribution to the smooth day-to-day running of the school. The school improvement plan is written following detailed staff discussion resulting in shared ownership and very clear understanding of how responsibility for initiatives is assigned. Timescales and success criteria are well defined and developments are now being linked to financial planning. Priorities are appropriate and include issues from the previous inspection. For example, the improvement of pupils' progress in information and communication technology has a clear action plan. A number of elements have been completed as planned; further steps are due to be taken. Suitable action has been taken or is planned on all other issues with the exception of modern foreign languages. The quality of leadership and management found by inspectors confirms the views expressed by parents.
44. The school is very good at monitoring its performance in order to improve. All teachers, except those who have recently qualified, have a monitoring role for the subjects they lead and regularly have time to go into the classrooms of others. They enjoy this aspect of their work and find the comments of colleagues helpful and informative. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors also have clearly defined monitoring roles and this rigorous approach has brought about improvements in the standard of teaching since the last inspection.
45. The appraisal and induction of staff is also very good. Responsibility is appropriately delegated to members of the senior management team. Regular meetings occur helping staff to reflect on their successes, identify training needs and plan for the future. Targets and training identified at these meetings are incorporated into the school improvement plan. New staff are welcomed to the school and given very good support by senior managers thereby enabling them to develop skills to do their jobs well. The school is also very good at providing training placements for a range of school and college students.
46. The governing body are active and supportive of the work of the school. They are well informed through their regular meetings, monitoring role and links with curriculum subject leaders. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are justly proud of the achievements that have been made since the last inspection. They are becoming increasingly involved in the strategic planning and financial management of the school. However, they are a little reluctant to accept more responsibility. Governors fulfil their statutory requirements well, apart from ensuring a modern foreign language is taught satisfactorily to pupils in Year 7.
47. Overall the school makes satisfactory use of its financial resources. Its approach to financial planning and budgetary control has been cautious in the past. In addition the school experienced difficulties in recruiting suitable senior staff and as a result a significant underspend accrued. Recently, major projects have been funded for example, the sensory garden, refurbishment of the soft play and sensory rooms and replacement windows. The underspend has been reduced and, as confidence grows, the headteacher is developing skills to be more tactical by setting a five-year strategic plan, which has budget implications. The links between financial planning and the school improvement plan have improved and funding is used in a more flexible way to bring about change. For example subject leaders must now bid for resources and justify

their spending plans for the areas they manage linking these to outcomes for the pupils. New technologies are being used satisfactorily and further training is planned to develop this further. The school's administration officer produces good quality financial information for budget holders and is very efficient. The school has good procedures for ensuring value for money and spends specific grants wisely. When purchases are made a range of quotes is obtained and the school is successful in getting outside help. For example the local hospital assisted in the development of the multi-sensory room. This year, for the first time, the school has received specific funding to support pupils with English as an additional language. The headteacher has used appropriately the small amount involved to purchase the services of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service to use their expertise to supplement the school's provision.

48. On the whole, the number, qualifications and experience of the teaching staff are well matched to the needs of the pupils and the demands of the curriculum. However two teachers are newly qualified and quite rightly are yet to assume subject responsibilities, so the deputy headteacher is acting as temporary subject leader for a number of areas. In other respects the school is very well staffed. There are many support team members including some specifically employed to meet the very complex needs of some pupils. The school also enlists additional support from mid-day supervisors in order to meet the wide range of pupils' needs. Support team members are very well qualified and experienced. Many are nursery nurses and are eager to develop their expertise further. A support team member is linked to each subject to work alongside the subject leader. This has led to resources being particularly well cared for. They are catalogued, stored tidily and are easily accessible by all staff. The full-time school nurse is a very valuable member of the staff team and ensures the well being of the school's most vulnerable pupils. In addition, two part-time music therapists are employed and they make a great contribution to pupils' learning. The school is particularly well served by a team of visiting professionals including speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and educational psychologists. The degree of harmony between the school and these visitors is quite exceptional and results in high quality treatment and learning plans for pupils.
49. The school has satisfactory accommodation, overall. Considerable weaknesses were identified at the last inspection. The school has worked hard and been creative in order to make the best possible use of the accommodation that is available. Many areas have been improved. For example, there is now adequate storage space for tables and chairs in the hall, although overall storage is at a premium, a lovely library and sensory garden and exciting soft play and sensory rooms. The school now offers pupils an attractive learning environment. However there remains no designated space for science and art. Some classrooms are small for the number of pupils and staff that use them and there is limited space for small group work. There are insufficient areas where pupils can be taken if they are disturbing others. Additionally, the toilet facilities, particularly those for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, are not sufficient. At times, particularly first thing in the morning, some pupils have to wait for toileting facilities to be available, which leads to them missing parts of the second session. There are appropriately divided playgrounds for different age groups of pupils with some exciting equipment. A play area for young pupils is shortly to be redesigned. The site manager works hard to keep the building clean and undertakes minor maintenance work saving the school additional expense. The school uses the locality very well for example five different swimming pools are used so that the needs of pupils can be met. Overall learning resources are satisfactory. There are very good resources for music. However resources for information and communication technology, modern foreign languages and geography are unsatisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50. In order to raise standards further, the headteacher, senior management team, staff and governing body should:
- Improve pupils' progress in information and communication technology by:

- Writing a scheme of work to guide teachers' planning so staff will know what the next stage of learning is for each pupil;
- Improving the range of software to support subjects;
- Continue with monitoring and subsequent adjustments to ensure all pupils have adequate time for the subject;
- Complete current action plan and ensure staff have sufficient knowledge to make good use of the new technology, which will shortly become available.

(Paragraphs: 8, 14, 20, 43, 49, 66, 74, 96, 100)

- Fulfil statutory requirements to teach a modern foreign language to pupils in Year 7.
(Paragraphs: 21, 46, 49, 101)

51. The governors, in drawing up their action plan, may wish to consider the following minor weaknesses identified in the report:

- Improve the monitoring of unauthorised absence (Paragraphs: 12, 36)
- Continue to press for improved facilities for teaching science, and increased toilet facilities (Paragraphs: 12, 49)
- There are insufficient resources for the teaching of geography (Paragraph: 49,90)
- Improve the curriculum for the under fives through planning from the foundation curriculum (Paragraphs: 21, 60)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	82
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	39

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	19	47	26	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	62
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	17

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	12

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.5

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2

Pupils are assessed using 'P' scales. The requirement for attainment tasks and tests has been disapplied for each pupil at the appropriate time.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	6
Black – African heritage	8
Black – other	6
Indian	5
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	32
Any other minority ethnic group	3

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: YR – Y7

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.3
Average class size	8.8

Education support staff: YR – Y7

Total number of education support staff	25
Total aggregate hours worked per week	734

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	892868
Total expenditure	900653
Expenditure per pupil	14073
Balance brought forward from previous year	145543
Balance carried forward to next year	137758

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	62
Number of questionnaires returned	29

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	79	18	0	0	4
My child is making good progress in school.	43	46	4	0	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	32	4	0	14
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	29	25	0	11
The teaching is good.	67	30	4	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	71	29	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	25	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	37	4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	75	21	0	4	0
The school is well led and managed.	75	25	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	36	0	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	36	7	0	14

Other issues raised by parents

None

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

AREAS HAVE LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

52. At the time of the inspection, there were three children of reception age. Last year there were a similar number. Children are taught in an early years class which also has pupils in Year 1 and one pupil from Year 2. Their levels of attainment when they join the school are often very low. Children's achievements and progress towards meeting the Early Learning Goals are satisfactory overall. Their progress is often good in communication, language and literacy and in personal, social and emotional development. They make very good progress towards meeting their targets on their individual education plans. This is because the targets are very clear and firmly based on initial assessments made when children join the school and each child's specific individual needs. The steps taken to meet the targets are effective and the teaching is very focused and of high quality.
53. Children's good progress in developing **communication, language and literacy** is largely due to the emphasis based on the teaching of language and communication. This is particularly helpful for children from ethnic minority families where English may not be the first language. Children learn to respond to adults and to other children. Lower attaining children respond to sounds and begin to focus on toys. Some vocalise for example, when excited or when music has stopped. Many children develop a repertoire of Makaton signs, which are used extensively, for example to illustrate stories and songs. They also learn the meaning of objects of reference, such as a bell for music and an armband for swimming. All children enjoy listening to stories. They smile and look, for example, at the objects that make noises or have rough or smooth textures during sensory story sessions. The 'splish splash' of water that accompanies 'Going on a Lion Hunt' is greatly appreciated. Higher attaining children will sit with an adult and share a book or look at books independently. They name some objects on pictures. One child 'writes' his address with crayons.
54. Satisfactory progress is made in children's **mathematical development**. They learn the difference between the touch of different objects and begin to understand that an object still exists when not in view. Children explore shapes and colours. Those with autism often concentrate for short periods but will print using shapes and sometimes accurately choose a correct numeral from the choice of two. All children enjoy number songs and some clearly anticipate the next chorus. One higher attaining child collects the book 'Nick Nack Paddy Whack' and sits turning the pages, singing the song with the appropriate actions. He consistently counts by rote accurately to five in his song. Children use a cause and effect program on the computer, with assistance. During registration time they are helped to count the number in class, a developing skill for higher attaining children.
55. Children make satisfactory progress in improving their **knowledge and understanding of the world**. They examine textures, listen to sounds and experience smells in a range of situations, for example, the sensory garden, which helps them to make sense of the world. They enjoy looking at their reflections in mirrors and tasting food. All children express preferences for different foods. One pulled a face at marmite while another liked chocolate. They become aware of parts of their bodies, making imprints of feet and enjoying the foot spa and foot massage. They learn about water through water play and the feel of substances such as sand, and play dough. In the multi-sensory room they watch moving lights and become able to operate switches, for example to turn the bubble tube on. Children learn about the 'special' places in the school including the soft play room, sensory garden, library and multi-sensory room, developing an awareness of place and purpose. During Harvest Festival children visit the local church.
56. Children's **creative development** is satisfactory. It is developed more effectively in music than in creative play or art. In music lessons children listen attentively. They enjoy playing the 'Rainbow' song and using a range of instruments. Most, with guidance can play fast and slow and loud and quiet and enjoy learning new songs. Children use different colour paints to make

pictures or print and experience a narrow range of media including foam, collage, clay and dough. They stick and paste stars, some with hand-on-hand assistance. During play sessions, lower attaining children will watch moving shapes and colours on objects and explore farm animals. One child with autism played happily with farm animals for some time. Another child cuddled a doll he called "baby" but was not keen to be involved in pretending to bath baby.

57. Children make satisfactory progress in **physical development**. Many improve their ability to climb, slide, rock and jump in physical education lessons. Higher attaining children bounce on the trampette confidently holding on to bar. They throw balls and ride in a toy car when outside in the playground. Their co-ordination is sufficiently developed to enable them to use the larger climbing frame. A child with autism is beginning to develop rolling skills using the cone with help from a support team member. Children enjoy playing on the rocking horse, some with good levels of balance and they move about the soft play area with enthusiasm. Lower attaining children react excitedly to the parachute floating down on them. They become able to relax in the swimming pool with appropriate equipment, for example, arm bands and floats. Other children develop their confidence in the water. They learn to float with armbands and gain swimming certificates in recognition of their efforts.
58. Children do well in **personal, social and emotional development** because they are taught effectively and consistently. There are clear improvements in difficult behaviour. Tantrums become less frequent and children gradually join in with group activities. This is largely because staff all follow the same procedures set out in behaviour management plans that are written for specific children. All children show a growing awareness of their bodies and the environment. Lower attaining children move their heads and watch, touch and handle objects. They respond more to other children. They learn to make clear choices when offered alternatives. Social skills are developed well. Children learn that lunch stays on the table and that drinks are taken with a group. Some feed themselves. Although sharing is often hard, this develops over time. Children will often play alongside others using the same equipment and take turns to be greeted when the class are together or when playing a musical instrument.
59. Teaching and learning of children at the foundation stage are satisfactory, although communication, literacy and language and personal, social and emotional development are taught well and children learn effectively. This is due to the expertise of the staff in signing and teaching language. Also, the staff, through their effective links with the support services, such as the therapists, educational psychologists, doctors and nurses, have a very clear understanding of the needs and abilities of the children in terms of their personal, social and emotional development. Teachers and support team members work very well together as a team and children are praised and encouraged which gives them the confidence to try more difficult things and to persist. Activities are planned to interest the children, for example to make silver tinsel covered stars for Christmas decorations. Occasionally time is wasted because activities are not sufficiently well planned or explained and it is difficult to involve children. Although staff try hard to establish a calm but purposeful atmosphere, there are times when noise levels are too high, which is distressing for some pupils. Currently, there are no suitable spaces where noisy children or pupils can be easily taken to enable them to calm down and the remainder of the class to work comfortably.
60. The early years curriculum is not planned as a whole, rather as a collection of subjects with schemes of work developed by different groups. In consequence some coherence is lost. Children are taught together during the day apart from specialist sessions, but the stepping-stones of the Early Learning Goals are not used when planning lessons. The current curriculum is at a pilot stage and is planned to be evaluated and changes made where necessary. The teacher responsible for the early years class is experienced and ensures resources are kept tidily and accessibly. There is an appropriate range of resources, which include some good examples, particularly of books and pictures that celebrate pupils' cultural backgrounds. The classroom is spacious but opportunities are missed to make the best use of the space and to make it more exciting. The early years provision was not reported on at the last inspection.

ENGLISH

61. Pupils do well in English and consistently achieve targets set for them. Standards have improved since the last inspection and this can be attributed to the successful way the school has implemented the National Literacy Strategy. During Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils are making good progress. Progress is satisfactory in Year 7, where the standard of teaching is not quite so high.
62. By the time they are seven pupils listen well to stories and join in rhymes and refrains, some by using signs or communicators. Pupils particularly enjoy story sacks that include objects they can touch or listen to. This helps them to understand the story. Many pupils increase the number of signs they know and lower attaining pupils reach out to touch objects with greater determination, showing their pleasure with smiles. Many pupils learn to make choices, for example choosing from a selection of photographs and then going on to match these to the correct objects. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to read, turning pages, predicting what might happen next and remembering some words. All pupils are developing early writing skills by making marks, some by moving their fingers through sand or paint others using crayons and large chalks on paper and black boards.
63. By the time they are eleven, higher attaining pupils are learning to communicate their ideas and needs effectively. They know the characters in the reading scheme and increase their ability to recognise words and symbols. They learn the letters of the alphabet and the sounds the letters make. They particularly enjoy books they have made about their own likes and talk about the photographs of themselves. They copy their name and familiar words under the teacher's model. Lower attaining pupils and some of those with autism learn to give eye contact and return greetings. All pupils learn to respond to signs and many enthusiastically join with adults in familiar songs and routines during circle time.
64. Throughout Year 7, lower attaining pupils show their familiarity with objects of reference by handling them before going onto activities. They continue to enjoy stories and consolidate their communication skills through gestures, signs and symbols. Higher attaining pupils choose books from the library and a few can read the early books in the reading scheme. These pupils make progress in writing, initially writing over the teachers' models and later neatly copying sentences. By the time they leave school pupils consolidate what they have learnt previously and are well prepared for the next stage.
65. The overall quality of teaching and learning in Key Stages 1 and 2 is good and is satisfactory in Year 7. The most striking and successful aspect of teaching throughout the school is the quality of teamwork in classrooms. All adults enthusiastically encourage pupils to participate fully. For example at the beginning of English lessons staff are seated strategically around the circle so they can help pupils to respond appropriately and join in singing and signing. Teachers know the pupils well and have a good understanding of language development. They use this knowledge to assess the pupils' progress accurately and plan the next learning steps carefully. This detailed planning enables all staff to work well with individuals or small groups so that they achieve targets on their individual education plans. Support team members make a significant contribution to the successful learning of pupils in English. For example, in one lesson a small group went to the library with support team members to develop language skills. On returning to the classroom for the plenary session one pupil was able to demonstrate her new found ability to "describe things" by giving enough information for other members of the class to correctly guess what she had in her 'feely' bag.
66. Pupils' behaviour is dealt with effectively. Ways of working with pupils are agreed on behaviour plans and adopted consistently by all staff. In this way pupils become clear about how they are expected to behave and gradually improve. Support is rightly sought from external agencies for example speech and language therapists and educational psychologists. The quality of collaboration between the school and these agencies is noteworthy and results in the detailed learning programmes that are helping pupils to progress. Teachers are very good at selecting methods that will engage pupils' interest and organising groups of pupils and staff that work well. For example, a higher attaining pupil who has very disturbed behaviour is being encouraged to learn to read. For a short while the teacher and two support team members sit with the pupil

encouraging his full cooperation and helping him to be successful. Whilst this is happening the rest of the class enjoy stories in the library with other support team members. Teachers maintain good records of pupils' progress in English and write informative reports for parents. Some teachers are using information and communication technology effectively, notably using software that produces symbols alongside text, but there is scope to develop this further. Where teaching is less successful and on the rare occasions when teaching is unsatisfactory, the choice of activities and resources is sometimes inappropriate and some pupils are left with little to do for too long. There are incidents where activities are not given a clear purpose. For example, pupils are asked to 'write', make lines on paper, without a reason for doing so.

67. The setting of pupils for ability in English has been introduced since the last inspection and this is proving beneficial in improving progress and raising standards. Pupils confidently change groups, mixing well with others and enjoying opportunities to work hard. The school is successful at developing pupils' communication skills in all areas of the curriculum. Music in particular contributes well to the development of language where the therapists expertly encourage pupils to listen and take turns. Every member of staff uses signing, symbols and objects of reference really well as a means of improving understanding. The English subject leader has provided valuable training for staff and parents on the use of signing. She supports colleagues well, for example by assisting with planning and when going into other classrooms to monitor the progress of pupils and the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy.
68. The development of the school library has had a major impact on increasing interest in reading and fostering a love of stories and rhymes. There is a good range of books including some with symbols and photographs that have been made by members of staff. There are some lovely story sacks and boxes. Some of these have been purchased but members of staff make many. These provide pupils with sensory experiences as the story unfolds heightening their understanding and enjoyment. Pupils are now able to borrow books from the library to take home and parents are thus able to contribute to their children's progress in reading.

MATHEMATICS

69. Overall, standards of achievement and progress are good. During Key Stage 1 they are satisfactory, but improve to good by the end of the key stage and they are good at Key Stage 2 and Year 7. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection. Good progress in numeracy is closely linked to the introduction of a modified numeracy framework across the school. This works particularly well at Key Stage 2 and Year 7 when pupils are grouped by ability for numeracy sessions.
70. By age seven, higher attaining pupils count to seven and can recognise a number between zero and five. They can choose the correct photograph of themselves from two and sometimes name the other one. Others match common shapes such as triangle and circle. Lower attaining pupils begin to recognise object permanence and associate objects with details in an often-repeated story or song. Lower attaining pupils explore shapes by feeling and holding them, focusing for a short time on that object. The Sherborne music and movement is used effectively to encourage body awareness and link this with early number awareness. For the last year of Key Stage 1 and throughout Key Stage 2, and Year 7, pupils are taught in groups of similar ability for numeracy sessions. This works extremely well and promotes good progress
71. During Key Stage 2 and in Year 7, higher attaining pupils extend their knowledge and understanding of money. Many pupils learn to count and recognise numbers to ten, sort by shape, colour and size and sort and match coins. By the time they leave school, higher attaining pupils, order coins and recognise and often name common shapes such as triangle, square and circle. They identify numbers and count to more than 30 and back to zero from 15. Pupils understand one/two more than/less than and begin written addition sums. They know the days of the week and months of the year. Those pupils with autism understand in, through and under in concrete terms and some pupils can match these from symbols. A few also understand in front,

behind and beside. Lower attaining pupils continue to widen their experiences of shape, texture and colour and reinforce their understanding of cause and effect. They enjoy number songs and anticipate activities when shown objects of reference.

72. Numeracy is used well in other subjects. Staff count at every available opportunity, in counting songs, counting the number of pupils present and counting the choices to be made in design and technology. Pupils count beats and match sound in music. They learn to sequence the days of the week. In science, geography, physical education and English pupils reinforce their understanding of the vocabulary describing place, for example, in front, behind, by, and under. Pupils explore shape in the soft play room and the sensory garden.
73. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good across the school. Teaching and learning are satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good overall at Key Stages 2 and Year 7. In a few lessons, teaching and learning are very good at Key Stage 2. The greatest strength of mathematics teaching is the consistent use of the range of methods and activities introduced as part of the Numeracy Strategy, and the very good team work between teachers and support team members. Classroom management and organisation are good as pupils are moved quickly and quietly between activities. They know what they have to do because instructions are clear. In particular, the mental starter excites and makes pupils want to learn as they compete to demonstrate their knowledge. They answer questions set by the teacher or count to the highest number, knowing they will all get a turn. Relationships between pupils and all adults are good with support team members making a very positive contribution; they know the pupils very well, and often pre-empt difficult situations arising. This avoids confrontations or problems in class providing a working atmosphere, which encourages pupils to do their best. The grouping of pupils by ability is also helping to raise standards of achievement in the subject, as it enables the teachers to target the objectives of the lesson more closely to the needs of the pupils. These aspects are having a very positive effect. Activities are usually linked to pupils' targets set in their individual education plans. Pupils are skilfully managed, resources confidently used, and changes of activities timed effectively, resulting in pupils who are keen to learn and participate fully in their lessons.
74. The subject leader for mathematics has worked successfully since the last inspection to ensure that the mathematics policy and scheme of work are updated in line with the National Numeracy Strategy and adapted so that it is appropriate for the pupils. The headteacher and subject leader have begun to improve the teaching through observing mathematics lessons and subsequent discussions with staff. An assessment made when pupils join the school enables targets to be set for each pupil. This forms a baseline from which pupils' progress is tracked as they move through the school. As a result, teachers know pupils' skills and abilities well, and use assessment information successfully to plan the next steps. An important part of the pupil's individual education plan is the mathematics homework target. This is a small task, agreed with the parent to be frequently undertaken at home to support the work at school. For example, counting the stairs as their children go up and down. Resources have improved since the last inspection and are satisfactory overall across the school. However, although information and communication technology is used in many lessons to give variety and consolidate learning, the range of software is too narrow.

SCIENCE

75. Pupils' progress is good throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 and satisfactory for the small number of pupils in Year 7. This is because the curriculum for the oldest pupils is limited through the lack of adequate facilities, which makes it difficult for them to maintain the progress made by younger pupils. Nevertheless pupils' progress in science is improved since the last inspection. This is largely due to the improvements in teaching, which ensures that pupils with additional special educational needs make progress in line with their peers.
76. During Key Stage 1, pupils learn to use all of their senses. They are bathed in light and sound in the multi-sensory room; they touch and smell the plants in the sensory garden and explore the

texture and taste of foods in the classroom. Enjoying the swirling water of a foot spa after helping to turn it on is a calming and therapeutic experience as well as a good opportunity to learn about the properties of water. Pupils become aware of the effect of forces through feeling the strength of the wind when flying kites on Box Hill and the push required to enjoy the swing in the playground. Throughout Key Stage 2 pupils continue to learn through all their senses. This is especially important for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and autism. Pupils investigate forces by kicking balls and cylinders to make them roll. They watch balloons and aeroplanes moving through the air and push boats through the water tray. Planting hyacinth bulbs and cress seeds helps the understanding of plant growth and compiling a height chart focuses on human growth. By the time they leave school, pupils in Year 7 are beginning to understand that some toys need batteries and that appliances must be plugged in before they will operate. They know the difference between dead and living materials because only nasturtiums grew when planted alongside stones. Higher attaining pupils remember words like hot and cold, hard, soft and dissolve to describe the changes made by making jelly. Opportunities for independent work and for simple recording are insufficient for these pupils.

77. Teaching and learning are good overall, and none is unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning are good at Key Stages 1 and 2 and satisfactory for Year 7 pupils. The youngest pupils show confidence as they experience new situations. One pupil laughed aloud as he walked on tin foil. The quiet voices of support team members, who contribute significantly to all teaching and learning, help pupils remain calm and settled as they smell joss sticks and watch the curling smoke in the beams of light from the projector in the multi-sensory room. Indian music, sent in by a parent, plays quietly in the background sensitively linking home with school. Good teaching in Key Stage 2 allows for very good choice and increasing independence. Pupils respond well to praise as they show preferences for different food. Motor skills develop as glue is put on the back of symbols, which are then added to a simple graph. Teachers make good use of food as a stimulus for learning because of its sensory appeal. They also make good use of the simple resources and utensils available to them and insist on hand washing before and after tasting or cooking. The accommodation is unsatisfactory for such activities, however, with the same tables used for all classroom purposes. It is also unsatisfactory for the more detailed scientific enquiry that is needed by older pupils.
78. There is a temporary subject leader for science at present. This is a satisfactory arrangement in the short term and the present subject leader is efficient. A good scheme of work has been drawn up which focuses more clearly on the concepts and skills needed for science. Some teaching has been monitored and lesson plans are regularly reviewed which has led to an improvement in teaching. Money has been very well spent on the multi-sensory room and other resources are sufficient. The gardening club supports environmental science, as do visits out to the pet shop and local parks. The subject contributes strongly to supporting spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Thirty pupils, some with profound and multiple learning difficulties, visited the luminarium at Fairfield Hall and pupils have experienced an astrodome in school. Staff from the National History Museum fascinated the pupils with the snakeskins they brought to school and were excellent hosts when they entertained pupils that visited the dinosaur exhibition.

ART

79. Few art lessons were observed during the week of the inspection. Judgements are also based on scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with staff and pupils. Overall achievements and progress in art are good. Achievements and progress are very good for pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 and the beginning of Key Stage 2 due to the expertise seen in the teaching. During Year 7, pupils' progress is not as good as it should be because pupils have limited opportunities to study the work of famous artists.
80. By the time they are seven, pupils manipulate clay and play dough to make models and create collage pictures using a range of textured materials. Higher attaining pupils increase their ability

to choose and place pieces of fabric, greatly enjoying the tactile experiences of sticky glue. Lower attaining pupils learn to tolerate messy activities and with support look with concentration at and explore shiny materials. By the time they are eleven, pupils experience different techniques, for example marbling and weaving. Higher attaining pupils increase their skills in using tools such as scissors and brushes. Their power of observation improves as they use a mirror to draw and paint self-portraits, some pupils using the computer to do this. Lower attaining pupils with help join in class activities like making puppets and a puppet theatre. During Year 7, pupils paint to music producing colourful pictures. Higher attaining pupils use implements to create patterns by dragging them through paint. Lower attaining pupils tolerate having their faces painted. By the time they leave school, pupils increase their ability to work with a variety of materials and tools.

81. In the few lessons observed the quality of teaching and learning was good overall. It was good at Key Stages 1 and 2 overall and unsatisfactory for pupils in Year 7. These lessons indicate that careful planning is an important element of the most effective teaching. Really good use is made of support team members to help pupils realise their creative ideas. They explain what they pupils will do and demonstrate techniques. For example, in a lesson on the theme 'shades of light and dark', the teacher drew a house using white chalk on black paper. The pupils were then invited to add to her drawing. They made choices between larger or smaller sticks of chalk and learnt to use them in different ways to create effects. Skilled teachers build anticipation and excitement for activities and ensure class organisation and deployment of staff enable pupils to succeed. This ensures pupils are interested and, importantly, they succeed in the activity. For example, during a lesson on foot painting the enthusiasm of staff resulted in very good response from pupils as they proudly made white footprints on black paper. Unsatisfactory teaching and learning reflect a lack of subject expertise where pupils are given insufficient guidance. Opportunities to talk about materials are missed and at times, pupils wander aimlessly from activities producing very little.
82. In addition to their art lessons, pupils benefit from very good opportunities to work with artists in residence. Recently pupils have made decorative banners by printing with leaves and they have modelled plaques and cats from clay. This work and photographs of pupils working with the artists are beautifully displayed around the school so that pupils are reminded about their experiences and can take pride in their achievements.
83. The curriculum for art is still developing and at present there are few opportunities for pupils to study the work of famous artists. The subject leader is working hard to support colleagues, assisting with their lesson planning. Resources are relatively good and are well catalogued by the subject leader and specialist support team member. They increase the range of resources by trips to a local warehouse that stores unwanted materials from local businesses. There has been improvement since the last inspection, almost all teaching is now at least satisfactory and the work with artists in residence has been most beneficial.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

84. Overall, standards of achievement and pupils' progress are satisfactory in design and technology. During Key Stages 1 and 2 achievement and progress are satisfactory and occasionally they are good at Key Stage 2. Although no lessons were observed for pupils in Year 7, teachers' records and the displays of pupils' work indicate that achievement and progress are similar to the earlier key stages.
85. During Key Stage 1, pupils are encouraged to think about design. They are able to make a choice between gold and silver and can use glue to stick. There is an improving ability to examine an object, looking at its texture. Lower attaining pupils often need hand-over-hand help from support team members. By the age of seven, most pupils will touch and manipulate materials. Through tasting a range of foods, they express what they like and dislike. Pupils use their skills to make items, for example, a mother's day card. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils continue to be

encouraged to make choices. For example, choosing between different breads and types of sandwich fillings. Pupils are helped to spread butter and preserves and cut the slice into quarters. They taste each one in turn and give a simple evaluation of preference. Pupils are shown what household appliances can do such as microwaves and toasters when preparing food. By the time they are eleven, higher attaining pupils are able to follow simple instructions and many have made improvements in their co-ordination, for example to colour within an outline. They can use scissors, but most find folding difficult. They enjoy trying to fly their aeroplanes and make simple evaluations of how well their aeroplane performed. Lower attaining pupils experience the wind, using fans, hair dryer and bubbles in the multi-sensory room. They are increasingly tolerant of new experiences, tasting different foods and wanting to join in with activities. By the age of twelve, although many pupils continue to need assistance to use some techniques effectively, they are as independent as possible. They demonstrate how they made glove puppets. They show how they obtained the outline of their hand as a pattern for design and then carefully stitched the two together. They are proud of the display of puppets and point out their choice of decoration.

86. Teaching and learning in design and technology are satisfactory. Evidence from teachers' planning and the lessons seen indicates that teachers have sufficient knowledge of the subject and plan carefully to ensure that all pupils can learn at a level suitable to their needs. Activities are presented in a way that is appropriate to the age of the pupils. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their ideas, which enhances their speaking and listening skills. They also have opportunities to practise numeracy skills, by weighing ingredients during food studies, for example. Teachers manage behaviour well, mainly by the expectation that pupils will do their best. Pupils, in turn, are aware of behaviour that is acceptable in the classroom and try hard to follow classroom routines. Good attention is paid to the additional special educational needs of some pupils. For example, in one lesson the teacher ensured that a pupil with a hearing impairment could hear the jingle of the wind chimes that had been made. Pupils respond well to the positive and caring attitudes of staff and the interesting resources used. Their behaviour is often good. Teachers and support team members skilfully encourage pupils with difficult behaviour to complete their work. Individual behaviour plans are followed well. At all ages, pupils learn to listen to instructions and follow them carefully, which enables lessons to move on at a good pace and promotes learning. Pupils try hard, and maintain a good work rate, even when they find the tasks difficult. All pupils help clear away carefully after the session and they share materials sensibly. For example, a pupil moved a sparkling mobile for a classmate unable to move it herself and another cut a piece of bread into four when someone else had spread jam on it. Praise and encouragement are used effectively to give confidence, so pupils are willing to do things for themselves. They are very pleased with their results. Support team members are deployed well to promote the pupils' learning. They help to establish a calm working environment in which skills can be practised and good work celebrated.
87. The curriculum provides relevant experiences for all pupils and there is an appropriate variety of resources. The management of the subject is satisfactory and there has been some improvement since the previous inspection. In particular there are better facilities for pupils in Year 7 to participate in work with resistant materials, although storage remains inadequate. The scheme of work, which is being revised in the light of Curriculum 2000, is not yet fully developed to show how pupils learn and make progress from one key stage to the next. More detail is necessary to ensure the knowledge and skills to be assessed are clearly identified.

GEOGRAPHY

88. Geography is taught in half termly cycles, alternating with history, or through a topic-based approach incorporating history. It was possible to observe only a small number of lessons. Judgements are therefore based on these lessons, teachers' planning, evaluation files, documentation and discussions with staff. This indicates that pupils' progress and achievements are satisfactory overall.
89. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils can find their way around the school, usually with the assistance of adults. They learn where particular activities take place and investigate areas including the tunnels in the soft play room and the equipment in the sensory garden and the playgrounds. They show enthusiasm for walks in the local area, especially when these include showing their friends where they live and visiting them in their homes. During Key Stage 2 and Year 7, pupils follow a colour trail around the school and a path around a local super store. They travel further afield to experience a range of transport, for example, at Gatwick airport where they are happy to use a lift, monorail and travelator. By the time they leave school, pupils have helped make maps and have explored the culture of another, very different country. Many are becoming aware of features of the landscape and their purpose. For example on a visit to the Bluebell Railway Line some pupils were able to identify bridges, trees and tunnels.
90. Teaching and learning are good in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory during Key Stage 2. They are unsatisfactory for pupils in Year 7. During Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers provide pupils with good practical and multi-sensory experiences, which match their needs and abilities. Good account is taken of the additional special needs of many pupils. This is particularly successful for the youngest pupils and where information and communication technology are well used. Pupils visit the sensory garden and the playground using the digital cameras and tape recorder, beginning to understand a broad range of sounds, textures and sights. Teachers use music and role-play to reinforce learning as pupils move through Key Stage 2. For example, following listening to the book 'Kofi and his Magic', pupils make a wish as they sit on a chair designed to look like the gold covered throne of an Ashanti king. This helps them to learn about their chosen area of West Africa. To reinforce differences between the climate found there and the climate they are used to, they smell and taste pineapple learning about what it needs to grow. Learning about a distant country is a difficult concept for the pupils as many of them are still becoming familiar with their own locality. Pupils in Year 7 do not do as well as they should, partly through a lack of resources for geography. They do benefit from multi-sensory teaching and a good variety of activities. However, not all activities are appropriate for their age, such as threading beads on to string. There are insufficient resources, for example, videos and sensory maps to reinforce pupils' learning in geography.
91. The co-ordination of geography is satisfactory. The curriculum is well supported by a good range of visits in the local area and as far away as France. The school surroundings are particularly well used as a stimulus for learning. The subject leader monitors teachers' plans on a regular basis but has not had time to monitor teaching. The subject has been a recent focus for governors' observations, however. The new scheme of work is in its early stage of implementation and as yet does not identify where the specific skills, knowledge and understanding of geography will be taught or how they will be recorded. Although there has been some improvement since the last inspection it is not sufficient to improve pupils' standards.

HISTORY

92. As at the last inspection, it was only possible to see two lessons of history during the inspection. However, judgements based on these lessons, discussions with staff, teachers' planning and records and pupils' work, indicate that satisfactory achievements and progress are made by most pupils.

93. During Key Stage 1, pupils begin to learn about the passage of time in terms of what lessons they have in school and when. They talk about what happens today and yesterday and tomorrow. By the time most pupils are seven, they can recognise photographs of themselves as babies and compare the changes in their physical characteristics as time passes. In Key Stage 2, pupils study the family and explore family trees. Grandparents and elderly friends and relatives are used as good sources of evidence of how things used to be. Pupils develop an understanding of how they change overtime through watching a video of a previous school play and attempting to recognise themselves and others. It is clear that pupils are involved to a satisfactory level in 'making' history. For example, a video camera is used to record events such as pupils getting off the bus. A digital camera was used to take photographs to compile 'A week at Red Gates School', which is a primary source for understanding the passage of time. Year 7 pupils become involved in making 'time boxes' and store artefacts for the future following discussions about the making of history. This process has also involved other pupils in school from Key Stages 1 and 2.
94. There is insufficient evidence on which to base an overall judgement on the quality of teaching and learning. In one of the two lessons seen the teaching and learning were very good and in the other they were unsatisfactory. Where teaching is very good, the lesson is very well planned to build on what pupils know and understand. Teachers and support staff question pupils skilfully, using signing to support communication effectively. Resources are selected carefully. Pupils are interested and excited when they watch a video of themselves when younger. Photographs are also used to very good effect in terms of establishing chronology and encouraging pupils to mark the passage of time. Unsatisfactory teaching lacks sufficient structure to activities, which are not explained well to the pupils. In consequence it is difficult to capture and maintain their interest and some tend to wander from activity to activity.
95. The co-ordination of history is developing satisfactorily in the school. The policy is currently being updated in the light of the National Curriculum 2000. Satisfactory efforts are being made to involve all staff in a collective effort to improve the standards of teaching, which is an improvement on the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

96. Evidence from lessons where information technology was seen in use, teachers' planning, discussion with staff and pupils' records indicate that pupils' achievements and progress in information and communication technology are currently unsatisfactory overall. Improving pupils' standards in this subject is a major target for the school and many steps of an action plan have already been completed. However, pupils' rate of progress is slowed because skills are not systematically taught and the range of software available is narrow. Many pupils are making sound progress in familiarising themselves with operating the new computer equipment installed at the beginning of this term.
97. During Key Stage 1, pupils watch lights and focus on light sources in the multi-sensory room. Many explore equipment and learn to use switches, for example to operate a bubble tube or to turn equipment such as the tape recorder, on and off. Higher attaining pupils quickly learn to operate a touch screen and some begin to use a mouse. They use simple programs, often with assistance, for example, making faces on a screen. By the time they are seven, a few are able to use a sequence of switches to form part of a story. Many use a touch screen, although they do not always connect their actions with what is happening on the screen. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils continue to increase their response to the lights and images in the multi-sensory room and there is a growing awareness of the effect of their actions. Pupils, some with hand-on-hand help, locate items on a screen. They enjoy such programs as Henry's Party and 'Dressing Teddy' and a few use switches to activate 'The Amazing One Bear Band' independently. Higher attaining pupils learn to use the keyboard to locate letters of their name and begin to write and print out simple sentences using symbols. During Year 7, several pupils use the computer confidently, finding letters and writing stories using symbols. They select the program they want using the icons and when they have finished they shut the machine down correctly. Pupils' work

in mathematics is helped through number games. Lower attaining pupils reinforce their understanding of cause and effect. For example, a pupil, with some assistance, presses red or yellow buttons to draw digger lorries on a screen. Throughout the key stages, many pupils with autism enjoy using computers and have a range of skills. Some randomly use cause and effect programs to change colours and patterns on the screen. Others are able to use a mouse very accurately and can change programs once loaded.

98. At present information and communication technology is not used sufficiently well to support curriculum areas. An analysis of time used for the subject overall and by each pupil recorded by staff has highlighted variations and steps are being taken to improve the provision. The most frequent use of information and communication technology is in mathematics. Good use is beginning to be made of equipment, such as a digital camera and video cameras to record locations in geography. Assisted by staff, some older pupils are encouraged to use this equipment and to make connections between their use and the photographs and video sequences produced. Programmable communication aids are used often during the first lesson of the day but infrequently at other times.
99. The quality of teaching and learning of information and communication technology is unsatisfactory. There is a lack of expertise in using the new equipment. The INTERNET is available in the library but it is not much used. However further training is planned. Support team members are briefed well by teachers and work satisfactorily with pupils particularly on a one-to-one basis. Thus the level of support offered is appropriate. Care is taken to ensure pupils' additional special educational needs are met, for example, time was spent enabling a visually impaired pupil, to adequately view and operate a touch screen. Time is lost when equipment is not readily available or when adjustable computer tables are at incorrect heights. This takes up staff time and pupils' concentration and interest wander. The lack of a scheme of work is a contributory factor to pupil's slow progress. Teachers do not have a framework to help them plan to teach pupils the necessary skills. However, effective use is made to teach pupils how to make choices.
100. Since the last inspection, there has been a significant investment in updating the computers, which is already helping pupils to learn. Prior to this equipment was increasingly unreliable and limited in capability. Although overall, standards have dropped, the implementation of the action plan indicates the capacity to improve this subject is good. The subject leader fulfils her role satisfactorily. For example, she is taking steps to identify appropriate software for the new machines, monitors teachers' planning regularly and has undertaken relevant training.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

101. During the week of the inspection it was not possible to see modern foreign languages being taught. Work is planned for Year 7 pupils in the summer term. The subject is not currently a high priority for the school and there is no budget allocation for resources. The school is aware that it is failing to meet statutory requirements and this remains an issue from the previous inspection.

MUSIC

102. Pupils' progress and achievement in music at all key stages are very good. There is some excellent teaching and learning at Key Stage 2 and extra-curricular music provision is also of very high quality. Music is integrated into a range of other curriculum areas to a very high level and is a key element in improving communication skills and increasing pupils' confidence and self-esteem. The start and end of every day in most classes involves music as a means of effective communication. This includes greetings and registration in song and pupils' performing in circle

time. Pupils use bells as objects of reference and musical cues in a number of subjects. The subject continues to be a strength of the school, as at the last inspection but has raised pupils' achievements further. Music contributes very well to pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the school.

103. During Key Stage 1, pupils learn action songs. Most gradually join in with the actions and where possible, the words. They play a range of tuned and untuned instruments and learn about beat and tempo, playing fast, slowly, loudly and quietly. By the time they are seven, pupils enjoy performing music and most are singing in tune, some with expression. They know how to play a number of instruments including shakers, bells, cymbals and drums. Throughout Key Stage 2 and in Year 7, pupils continue to widen the range of songs they are able to perform and increase their control and understanding of the instruments they play. For example, they learn new verses to a song from the musical 'Cats', and provide accompaniment using a wide range of musical instruments to imitate the different moods and characteristics of the song. Pupils with additional special educational needs also make very good progress. For example, in a music and movement lesson pupils are delighted in being 'rolled' into a soft, supportive mat and stretching and bending, with support, accompanied by soft guitar music and song. It is evident that the pupils listen to the music, which helps them in the physical activity. Pupils are able to recognise favourite songs and use percussion instruments very well to accompany these. There is a very high standard of performance achieved by higher attaining pupils in the choir practices during lunchtime clubs. Pupils in one session showed excellent understanding of rhythm, pitch and synchronisation. A new piece for the Christmas concert was attempted. A Key Stage 2 pupil made a valiant attempt to 'read' the unfamiliar music to 'Remember the feeling of Christmas Time'
104. Teaching and learning of music are very good. Teachers and music therapists frequently collaborate to teach new skills. In consequence the level of technical expertise is very high. Very suitable methods are used to involve all pupils in particular those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. For example in one lesson the feelings of the music were explored using a water spray to represent rain and cold, a hair dryer, which was directed towards pupils' faces for warmth and silk and scratchy materials were passed around for tactile effects. It is noticeable that although a teacher will wait for a response from a pupil, for example, to play an instrument, this does not slow the pace of the lesson. Instead pupils feel their contribution is valued and one or two demonstrate a developing sense of humour smiling at the teacher while they wait for them! Pupils are interested in music and enjoy what they are asked to do, for example, stopping and starting playing a drum as a signal to the piano to be played. They enjoy the rewards of choosing songs and instruments as 'treats' and this is a key factor in the improved attitudes and behaviours of pupils in music lessons. Notably, during Year 7, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and autism participate in music sessions to a very good level. They are well used to the routine of the lessons and get pleasure from expressing themselves by making sounds.
105. Pupils from Key Stage 2 go to a local mainstream school each week to join the pupils for a music lesson taken by the music therapist from Red Gates School. This is a very successful session. They take turns with the mainstream school pupils to play instruments and stop when asked. After joining in with a song about their favourite foods they respond to the question 'Which are your favourite foods?' and note they all have similar tastes.
106. There is a very good range of musical resources, which are managed very efficiently by the highly skilled and experienced music therapists. The subject is co-ordinated and led very well in the school. There is a very high level of planning and organisation of music teaching and a detailed music policy outlining provision, monitoring and evaluation. Lessons are very effectively based on curriculum requirements and very good teamwork. Music therapy programmes and activities are developed for individual pupils and very small groups. The very good records show how pupils make progress during their lessons.

PERSONAL SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

107. Pupils are taught the basics of personal, social and health education in all lessons. At all key stages; pupils' achievements and progress are good. They gain a good knowledge and understanding of a healthy lifestyle and learn how to make and maintain positive relationships. The value of all aspects of good citizenship and life skills are first introduced in the early years class teaching and follows through Key Stages 1 and 2 and Year 7. This represents very good improvement since the last inspection when progress was satisfactory.
108. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils show that they understand the benefits of greeting people positively with a smile and a welcome, signed or spoken. They learn about the importance of families and learn how to behave in an appropriate way. All pupils have targets on their individual education plans for personal social and health education and they make very good progress towards meeting them. They also have targets set for during the lunchtime, which may refer to improving their capacity to eat or drink independently or to play co-operatively. By Key Stage 2 and Year 7, pupils have specific lessons on subjects such as fire safety and keeping healthy. A fire officer has visited and pupils know about and understand the need for precautions in dealing with fire. Most pupils have a good regard for each other and show warmth and care to others mirroring the good examples of praise and respect given by staff. Pupils who have difficulties in relating well or who sometimes demonstrate inappropriate behaviour, improve their behaviour considerably through the application of their behaviour plans.
109. Teaching and learning of personal social and health education are good. Lessons are planned and organised well to ensure that all pupils are included and taught at appropriate levels. The effect of teaching and how well pupils learn is evaluated regularly and this forms the basis for the pupils' next stage and targets are set. Assessment of pupils' development is effective using the 'P' (performance) levels that follow a baseline assessment on entry to school.
110. The co-ordination and monitoring of personal, social and health education in the school is very good. All staff are involved in promoting the school's updated policy. This includes mid-day supervisors who are familiar with the targets set for the pupils at this time. The school is continuing to develop the key elements of personal, social and health education, which were highlighted, in the last inspection. Teaching in all subjects and in all key stages now also includes personal, social and health education as part of a whole school development. For example, the need for positive attitudes and good relationships alongside a healthy lifestyle are intrinsic to the school's philosophy and are set out in the school's policy.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

111. Pupils' achievements and progress in physical education are good overall at all key stages, which is a marked improvement since the last inspection. Achievement and progress in swimming is sometimes very good. Sherborne music and movement and collaborative work with therapists continue to support pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties very well. Most pupils' progress is improved through the setting of pupils by ability in the mornings.
112. During Key Stage 1, pupils learn to be aware of their bodies. They learn to move and stretch limbs. Pupils with more profound difficulties benefit from a programme of stretching as part of an individual personal exercise programme, following the recommendations of the physiotherapist. Many pupils improve their co-ordination and increase the control of what they do, for example following the instructions of the teacher rather than running indiscriminately around a space. By the age of seven, the higher attaining pupils move ribbons to music independently, choose a variety of different movements, big and small and are learning to follow instructions. Two pupils confidently bounce on trampette without holding support bar, but others need the support of the bar to give them confidence. Lower attaining pupils lie on the trampoline while the support team member gives some bounce and show pleasure in the activity. Autistic pupils move round activities but often keep returning to the activity of preference. Throughout Key Stage 2, and Year 7, pupils continue to improve their skills. They become more confident using equipment, for example in the soft play room where they move from one level to another or enjoy the freedom of

the ball pool. Higher attaining pupils improve their skills in moving ribbons to music. They additionally copy a sequence of movements and use hoops and a parachute to vary the repertoire.

113. Pupils' confidence in the water improves as they move through the school and by the time they leave, all pupils show good levels of confidence. The lower attaining pupils require individual support in the pool, but will float on their front and back with help from their support team member. They use their arms with help. Some will move their legs independently. The higher attaining pupils can 'swim' several metres unaided by their support team member, but all wear armbands. They receive certificates to mark the progress they make. In music and movement sessions, music therapists and physiotherapists work in collaboration. The pupils show some understanding of the different activities that they need to undergo. For example, hearty laughter and clear looking around occurs when they are rolled onto their fronts. They lift their heads when requested and watch bubbles falling from above them. They obviously enjoy these activities with one indicating clearly that he did not want the session to end.
114. Teaching and learning in physical education are good, overall. This is an improvement on the last inspection. In swimming sessions, which are often taken by an instructor, pupils learn very well and they enjoy the activity as their excellent attitudes and behaviour show. Physical education lessons are well planned, managed and organised, so that no time is wasted. The best teaching is linked to clear learning outcomes. Very good teamwork between staff helps pupils to learn well. For example, when pupils are practising a sequence of movements dancing with ribbons to music staff are quick to guide or direct pupils some working with a particular pupil others helping as needed. High levels of support staff working effectively together enable pupils with autism and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties to participate fully in lessons in appropriate ways. Lessons are generally presented enthusiastically and all staff have high expectations of the pupils, so that the pupils are keen to learn, and well behaved, work hard, listen well to instructions and show good levels of independence. This can be seen in the way pupils move between different apparatus and experiment becoming increasingly confident. Good use is made of certificates to help pupils fully celebrate their sporting successes.
115. The subject leader has successfully managed the improvements since the last inspection. There are clear plans for further development and a vision for the future. Co-ordination of the teaching of physical education is good. Schemes of work are being revised and developed on a term-by-term basis to link with the National Curriculum 2000. Learning resources have improved since the last inspection, as have storage facilities although it is still necessary for some equipment to remain on view in the hall. Very good use is made of the excellent variety of swimming pools in the surrounding area to provide appropriate facilities for the range of age and ability of the pupils. There is a good range of activities, such as dance and trampolining, provided at lunchtime to extend the pupils' physical activities. Residential trips and competitive sporting events also make an important contribution to pupils' physical, social and moral development, as does the good use made by the pupils of the recently refurbished soft playroom.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

116. It was possible only to see a small number of lessons in religious education. Judgements are therefore based on these lessons, photographic evidence, displays, evaluation files, discussions with staff and scrutiny of documents. This shows that the locally Agreed Syllabus is being followed and statutory requirements are met. Since the last inspection standards have improved from satisfactory to good reflecting an improvement in the quality of teaching.
117. Pupils at all key stages achieve well and make good progress. During Key Stage1, they enjoy holding objects special to themselves and others and help to prepare for festivals such as Easter and Diwali. Younger pupils learn about the birth of Jesus through history lessons in preparation for learning about celebrating Christmas. During Key Stage 2, pupils think about friendships with one pupil heard saying 'hold hands with friends.' They know that certain objects are special to different groups of people and must be handled with care. Some higher attaining pupils are aware

that people of different faiths worship in a range of ways. One pupil told of how he worshipped God in his church whilst others recalled Allah and knew of the mosque. Higher attaining pupils in Year 7 respond to the concepts of giving, helping and kindness, identifying the thought for the week from symbols. Characters in the Nativity story are named and differences between a church and synagogue observed. Lower attaining pupils join in celebrating festivals. They explore artefacts and some are aware of the need to handle items with care.

118. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers use role-play particularly well and select resources carefully from the good range available. These are supplemented by artefacts, music and food sent in by parents of pupils representing a range of faiths. This brings the subject alive and captures the interest of the pupils. In a session where teaching was particularly good, for example, pupils learnt about Hindu worship. A calm atmosphere encouraged pupils to take off their shoes quietly and watch carefully as one pupil put flowers and a candle on a special table. Then 'holy' water was put on their hands as they imitated the teacher's actions. Learning about the synagogue is aided by the playing of relevant music as pupils try on prayer shawls and look at photographs. To help pupils begin to understand that symbols are used in many faiths, they begin by making a collage of the cross. Although teachers acknowledge that they need more subject knowledge, careful lesson preparation and very good understanding of how pupils learn best help to overcome their hesitancy.
119. Religious education teaching is being satisfactorily co-ordinated by a member of staff on a temporary basis. Teachers' lesson plans are monitored and class worship attended. In this way she ensures that teaching is mainly Christian based and the wide range of backgrounds and faiths within the school community is appropriately celebrated. Harvest festivals around the world are celebrated at the local church but no visits to other places of worship have been made. A number of festivals such as Diwali and Hannukah are celebrated within school, as are Easter and Christmas, with religious education and assembly themes being well linked. The subject contributes well to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.