

INSPECTION REPORT

LADY ZIA WERNHER SCHOOL

Luton

LEA area: Luton

Unique reference number: 109745

Headteacher: Judith Jackson

Reporting inspector: Dr D. Alan Dobbins
27424

Dates of inspection: 11 – 14th February 2002

Inspection number: 192777

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Type of school: | Special |
| School category: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 2 –11 years |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| School address: | Ashcroft Road Luton Bedfordshire |
| Postcode: | LU2 9AY |
| Telephone number: | 01582 728705 |
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| Appropriate authority: | Governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr R Stone |
| Date of previous inspection: | January 1997 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------|-------------------|----------------------|--|--|
| 27424 | Dr D Alan Dobbins | Registered inspector | Information and Communication Technology, Physical Education, Equal Opportunities, English as an Additional Language | The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? |
| 1329 | K Oliver | Lay inspector | | Pupils' attitudes values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with its parents? |
| 17848 | B Clark | Team inspector | English, Foundation Stage, Art | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? |
| 18892 | D Thompson | Team inspector | Mathematics, Geography, History | How well does the school care for its pupils? |
| 1358 | G Essex | Team inspector | Science, Design and Technology, Music, Religious Education | |

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REPORT CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|----------------|
| PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT | 7 - 11 |
| Information about the school | |
| How good the school is | |
| What the school does well | |
| What could be improved | |
| How the school has improved since its last inspection | |
| Standards | |
| Pupils' attitudes and values | |
| Teaching and learning | |
| Other aspects of the school | |
| How well the school is led and managed | |
| Parents' and carers' views of the school | |
| | |
| PART B: COMMENTARY | |
| HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS? | 12 - 14 |
| The school's results and pupils' achievements | |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development | |
| HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT? | 14 - 15 |
| HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS? | 15 - 17 |
| HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS? | 17 - 18 |
| HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS | 18 - 19 |
| HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED? | 19 - 20 |
| WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER? | 22 |
| | |
| PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS | 23 - 25 |
| | |
| PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES | 16 - 38 |

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Lady Zia Wernher School is part of the Local Education Authority (LEA) provision for pupils with physical disabilities and, increasingly, pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. It provides for 64 full-time pupils from age two to 11 years, 40 of whom are boys and 24 are girls. Two boys and four girls are part-time pupils at the nursery. The agreed maximum number of pupils is 70. All pupils have statements of special educational need, except for two who are being assessed for a statement. Pupils are admitted from all of the Luton area of Bedfordshire. Most travel to and from the school by minibus or taxi. Eighteen pupils (28%) are from ethnic minorities. This represents a high percentage of pupils who are learning English as an additional language. Fifteen of these are from Pakistan or Bangladesh. Urdu, Punjabi or Bengali is the first language of these 15 pupils. Twenty-one pupils (33%) of statutory school age are eligible for free school meals. This is a marginally more than seen in equivalent schools. As a consequence of their learning difficulties, the attainment of most pupils on entry to the school is below that expected for their age. Since the last inspection, the range of the learning needs of pupils has widened, as the school is admitting more pupils with the severest of learning difficulties. Also, since the last inspection, the school has been involved in a considerable building programme that will shortly be completed (March 2002). This has included refurbishment of the existing accommodation and the construction of new accommodation.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Lady Zia Wernher is a very good school. Very good leadership and management by the headteacher, good teaching and the very good relationships staff have with pupils, help pupils to quickly develop very good attitudes to their work. This results in the standards pupils are achieving and the progress they are making being good or very good. The curriculum offers a very wide range of learning opportunities and meets pupils' additional learning needs very effectively. Because of the increased funds agreed for a three year period to support changes in provision to meet the needs of pupils with the severest of learning difficulties, the cost per pupil is marginally higher than for many equivalent schools. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Is very well led and managed by the headteacher.
- The curriculum is very good. It meets statutory requirements and provides for the additional needs of pupils very well.
- The quality of teaching is very good in four lessons in ten and good overall.
- Promotes very good behaviour in part because the relationships between pupils and all staff are very good.
- Promotes good standards in almost all subjects, and very good standards in English and in pupils' personal and social development.
- The links with parents are very good.
- Uses assessment information well to recognise the progress pupils are making and to help in lesson planning.

What could be improved

In the context of the school's many strengths, no major points for improvement can be identified. However, the governing body and the headteacher may wish to:

- continue to increase the skills of staff in using augmentative communication systems and expand the range and quantity of augmentative resources.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection (January, 1997). All of the Key Issues for Action identified then have been met in full.

- The procedures for meeting the aims set at annual reviews are very good.
- The planning documents for mathematics at Key Stage 2 allow equality of access to the subject for all pupils.
- Registers are appropriately taken.
- All staff know the child protection reporting procedure.

In other areas, pupils are learning more successfully because the quality of teaching has improved. As a consequence, they are achieving better standards and making better progress in most of the subjects. The capacity of the governing body and the headteacher and senior managers for continued improvement is very good.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets.

| Progress in: | By Year 2 | By Year 6 | Key | |
|--|-----------|-----------|----------------|---|
| Speaking and listening | A | A | Very good | A |
| Reading | A | A | Good | B |
| Writing | A | A | Satisfactory | C |
| Mathematics | B | B | Unsatisfactory | D |
| Personal, social and health education | A | A | Poor | E |
| Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs* | B | B | | |

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

The school's statutory targets are appropriate. Pupils' individual targets, set at their annual review, represent good challenges for their work for the next year. Individual educational plans provide good help in the planning of many lessons and in promoting the very good gains pupils are making in their personal and social development. The standards achieved in each of the areas of English are very good. In mathematics, they are good. When they leave Lady Zia, the highest attaining pupils are sufficiently literate and numerate to use their skills and knowledge to help them when they are learning other subjects, and in real life situations. Pupils are making good progress in all the other subjects, except physical education in which progress is satisfactory. The good procedures for evaluating the progress made by different groups of pupils show there to be no difference in the progress towards the learning targets of boys and girls, the highest and lowest attaining pupils or for those learning English as an additional language. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve good standards and are making good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Very good. Pupils quickly realise that school is a place in which they must work hard at their learning. They enjoy achieving success in their lessons, not only for themselves but also to please their teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs). |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Very good. Pupils are kind and courteous. In lessons, they behave very well. At break and lunch times, they socialise very well with each other. They take turns in the playground and chat constantly over lunch. Only rarely is there a need for teachers to remind pupils of their responsibility as learners. |
| Personal development and relationships | Very good. Teachers, LSAs, lunchtime supervisors, the premises staff and the administrative staff have developed very good relationships with pupils. As a result pupils are friendly and confident and work hard to please. |
| Attendance | Satisfactory. It is in line with the national average for equivalent schools. |

The ethos is positive, supportive and caring, with the expectation that pupils will work hard at their learning. The very good relationship which all staff have with pupils helps foster pupils' very good attitudes to their work and to their behaviour. Pupils are happy and enthusiastic learners. They work very hard in their lessons and take pride in doing their best or when they explain their work to a visitor. All staff are very good role models.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | Nursery and Reception | Years 1 - 2 | Years 3 - 6 |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Quality of teaching | Good | Good | Good |

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

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. In four lessons in ten it is very good or better. Teaching in English is very good and has benefited from the implementation of the principles of the National Strategy for Literacy. In mathematics, science and personal, social and health education it is good. The contribution of the LSAs to the good and better quality of teaching is considerable. They are generous in number, well trained and deployed well by their teachers. In many lessons there are as many adults as there are pupils, which makes for very intensive learning experiences and promotes good or better progress. Planning is very good and is helped by relevant targets in pupils' IEPs. Most subjects are well resourced with equipment that matches well with the specific needs of pupils. The good work of the multilingual support assistant and, especially, the occupational and physiotherapists, help support and prepare pupils with additional needs for their learning, so that they can work hard and make the same good progress as others.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Very good. It includes a wide range of learning experiences. All statutory requirements are met. Equality of access is enabled through the very good use of multi-sensory strategies, signing and symbols and of adapted devices such as switches and roller-balls to allow the use of computers. The very good programme of extra-curricular activities extends the curriculum for many pupils. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language | Very good. Pupils learning English as an additional language are making equivalent progress against their learning targets, to those whose first language is English. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Very good. Assemblies are very well used to promote spiritual awareness. The very good procedures for promoting moral and social development are well supported by the very good relationships staff have with pupils. The provision for cultural development benefits from the very good use that is made of pupils' own experiences. Knowledge of their first culture and religious practices is well used in informing others. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | Very well. Pupils are safe and secure at school. Child protection procedures are known to all staff. Assessment information is very well used to guide lesson planning and to judge achievement against targets in IEPs. Both provide good help in promoting progress in pupils' personal, social and academic development. Provision, as it is outlined in pupils' statements of educational need is met in full. |

The school links very well with parents. They are kept fully informed of the academic and personal progress their child is making. Many take a full part in decisions about pupils' new targets for learning at termly and annual reviews. Parents provide very good support for the work of the school, through acting as volunteers at the school, helping during visits to the local community and by taking part in the activities of the Parents and Friends Association. The curriculum appropriately focuses on literacy, numeracy and the development of personal and social skills, but includes very good opportunities to study all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The extra-curricular programme is considerably bigger than that found in most equivalent schools. The school's computer programme for recording and evaluating the progress pupils are making in their work is beginning to provide very good help in lesson planning and in judging the effectiveness of the work of the school against other schools.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Very good. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the work of the school, and the energy and commitment to translate that into action. She manages the school very well. In this she is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher and the good way in which subject co-ordinators lead the development of their subjects. Since the last inspection, the school has been very well led and managed during a time of considerable change |
| How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities | Very well. Governors are committed to the success of the school and are wholehearted in their support for the work of the headteacher and the senior managers. They gain a very good knowledge of the quality of the school's work through good procedures for receiving reports and their regular visits. The governing body fully meet its statutory responsibilities and its role as 'critical friend'. Since the last inspection, governors have provided very valuable help and advice in decisions on finance and planning that relate to the new building and in meeting the changing needs of pupils. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Very good. The procedures for assessing the work of pupils and for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning provide very good information that is well used in further developing provision. Procedures for judging the cost effectiveness of decisions are beginning to operate well. |
| The strategic use of resources | Excellent. The headteacher is expert at raising additional money. The Parents and Friends Association and commercial, public and private institutions in the Luton area donate considerable monies. The record of using nationally available monies to improve provision is excellent. All grants and donations are being used very effectively. Priorities for spending are clearly identified through the management plan and the targets for staff development. LSAs are very effectively deployed throughout the school and in the lessons. |

The school is well staffed. The good number of teachers, their wide range of specialist qualifications, the generous number of LSAs and the good support of the nurses and therapists allow all aspects of the National Curriculum and religious education to be presented in full, and the additional needs of pupils to be met. Currently, the accommodation overall is good, but will be significantly enhanced by the many very good and excellent facilities when the new building is useable. Teaching space in the small hall compromises what can be attempted in lessons in physical education. The headteacher's ability to translate her vision into day-to-day reality benefits all who work in the school. Good monitoring procedures ensure that the school's money is spent 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"> • Their children like going to school. • The very good quality of teaching and the highly effective way in which the school is led and managed. • The ease with which they can approach the school for information, advice and guidance. • The way in which their children are becoming more mature and responsible. • The progress their child is making in the subjects and in improving behaviour. | |

Inspectors agree with all of the positive views expressed by parents. One parent raised an issue about provision that was better directed to the local authority.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. It is inappropriate to judge the attainment of pupils for whom this school caters against national expectations or averages. The report does, however, give examples of what pupils know, understand and can do. Judgements about progress and references to attainment and achievement take account of information contained in pupils' statements and annual reviews.

2. Overall, the standards pupils achieve are good. Since the last inspection, better quality teaching has promoted better learning and a consequent improvement in the standards pupils are achieving in most subjects. Pupils in the Foundation Stage (FS) are achieving good standards in each of the early learning goals.

3. In all aspects of English pupils are making very good progress. In speaking and listening, the very good relationships between pupils and their teachers and LSAs encourage them to talk freely and to listen attentively. By the age of seven years, most pupils are able to communicate well, using the communication system best suited to their needs. Pupils with the greatest difficulties have learned to make choices through communicating 'yes' and 'no'. Those with few difficulties speak freely and confidently. By the time they are 11 years of age, the most fluent speakers greet visitors politely and answer simple questions accurately and promptly. Those with the greatest difficulties rely on signing and symbols but are good at answering questions in their lessons and in communicating their wishes. The highest attaining pupils leave school speaking and listening and reading at Level 3 of the National Curriculum assessment procedures. They read with fluency and good intonation and have a very good understanding of their reading. They have sufficient skill to be able to read for pleasure, to gain information from reference books or through computers, either using CD ROMS, such as Encarta, or the Internet. The lowest attaining pupils continue to read hesitantly. They use a limited sight vocabulary and mainly phonic cues. They continue to require close support when they tackle new texts. By the age of seven years, the best writers accurately trace letters. By the time they are 11 years they attain at Level 2 of the National Curriculum procedures. They write neatly with good regard to the conventions of punctuation. The result is well-presented writing relevant to the task, for example simple descriptions and narrative, or an advertisement prepared for inclusion in the local paper. They make very good use of word processing programs to draft and re-draft their work to a high order.

4. Pupils are making good progress in mathematics. By the time they are 11 years of age, the best mathematicians reach Level 3 in each of the attainment targets. They have a good understanding of mathematics and its use in the real world. For example, they tell time well, use money well and can plan an evening of television watching or a journey by bus or train using the relevant timetables. The lowest attaining pupils are beginning to use and apply mathematics to everyday problems of time, weight and distance, but their inability to add and subtract with speed and accuracy limits their use of mathematics as a tool. The mental arithmetic sessions, that are regular features of lessons, help pupils develop a good mathematical vocabulary, including in three-dimensional mathematics 'pentagon', 'hexagon', 'surface area' and 'face'.

5. The National Curriculum levels attained by the best pupils in English and mathematics are good enough for them to use their skills, knowledge and understanding in the subjects to

help them learn other subjects or in real life situations. In English and mathematics, over their time at school, pupils are well prepared for work at the secondary level.

6. Pupils make good progress over all the attainment targets in science. By the time they are 11 years of age, the highest attaining pupils have a good vocabulary of scientific terms, which they use well in explaining their learning, for example in sound, light, electricity, forces and motion and living things. They attain at Level 3 of the National Curriculum. Teachers regularly provide pupils with opportunities to find out for themselves. As a consequence they are good at recognising the characteristics of a fair experiment, organising the collection of information, analysing this information before presenting it well, often in visual form, with the use of a computer.

7. In the other subjects, pupils are achieving good standards and are making good progress over the full range of the Programmes of Study, except in physical education where they achieve satisfactory standards and are making satisfactory progress. In art, the best artists are approaching Level 4 of the National Curriculum, which is typically the level found for pupils in mainstream primary schools.

8. Procedures for evaluating the achievement of different groups of pupils are good. For example, close attention is given to the standards the small number of girls (35% of pupils) achieve to ensure that they do not differ from those of boys. Also, a good effort is made to compare the standards achieved by pupils with the severest of learning difficulties with those of pupils who attain at much higher levels. The very good evaluation of 'P' levels for the pupils with the severest of difficulties, and of the levels of the National Curriculum for the highest attaining pupils, show little difference when achievement is set against pupils' own targets. Similarly, pupils who are learning English as an additional language (24% of pupils) achieve at equivalent levels when judged against their targets.

9. Since the last inspection the standards pupils achieve in English and mathematics and the progress they are making have improved. The good standards achieved in science last time have been maintained. The last inspection failed to make judgements on the standards pupils were achieving or the progress they were making in art, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, physical education and religious education. Given improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, the attitudes of pupils to their work, the co-ordination of subjects and the better planning documents seen in this inspection, the judgment on improvement in the standards pupils are attaining and the progress they are making in each of these subjects is inferred to be good.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils enjoy coming to school. For them it is a happy and secure place in which they are able to learn and develop to the best of their ability. Their behaviour, which was praised at the time of the last inspection, is very good. They respond well to the ethos of the school and, when required, to the strategies for maintaining acceptable behaviour. The result is a calm and purposeful atmosphere within which teachers, LSAs and pupils are industrious in getting on with the jobs of teaching and learning. No bullying or bad behaviour was seen during the inspection.

11. Playtimes are a happy mixture of activities, such as running, chasing, climbing and playing with large toys, as pupils have fun. Pupils look after each other well and ensure that those who have limited mobility, especially those in wheelchairs, are fully included in the games. They show kindness and concern for each other when, for example someone is upset or falls over. They are polite and friendly and communicate to the best of their ability with each other and with the adults who work with them. They work well in pairs or when they

are taught in small groups. They show good respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. In this they are helped particularly by the lessons in religious education. They respond well to responsibility and to the challenge of being as independent as possible. Even the youngest pupils routinely show initiative, and that they can take responsibility by, for example returning class registers to the office and helping to clear up after lessons. Lunch is a calm and well-mannered time that is well overseen by friendly and supportive lunchtime supervisors. Pupils chat constantly with each other and their supervisors and they enjoy the routines associated with being fed, or when they are learning to feed themselves.

12. Pupils have fully accepted their role as learners. In nearly one lesson in two they show very good or better attitudes to their work. In nine lessons in ten these are good or better and satisfactory in all the others. They work hard, enjoy their lessons and delight in each other's success and when they please their teachers and LSAs. For example, in a lesson in mathematics for Year 1 pupils, the highest attaining pupils counted from one to ten and applauded one another when they gave the correct answers during a 'ten green bottles' game. All pupils are capable of sustained concentration when working on their own and when they co-operate with others in small groups. For example, in a Year 6 literacy lesson they listened attentively and were able to compare and contrast the stories of Beauty and the Beast and Billy Beast. They revelled in the humour and enjoyed each other's interpretations of events.

13. The attendance rate, at 91%, is satisfactory and in line with the national average for similar schools. There have been no unauthorised absences or exclusions in the last year. Registers are taken appropriately.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14. At the time of the last inspection, the quality of teaching was very good or better in seven per cent of lessons. It was satisfactory or better in 88% of lessons and unsatisfactory in the other 12%. Now, it is very good or better in 38% of lessons, good or better in 89% of lessons and satisfactory or better in all the lessons. This represents a considerable improvement in the quality of teaching.

15. The severity of pupils' learning difficulties is greatest for those who are aged seven years or less. The challenge to their teachers is to manage their learning in the smallest of steps, often with the use of augmentative communication strategies. The oldest pupils attain at much higher levels and present a different challenge. They have less of a requirement for augmentative communication, but an increased range of learning needs, which may result from movement difficulties or from difficulties with expressive language. Teachers are adept at meeting both challenges.

16. Most teachers have considerable experience. Many of the more recently appointed have taught their specialist subject in mainstream schools. They know their subjects well. They also know the pupils well. For many subjects, the procedures for assessing pupils' work provide very good information on what they know, understand and can do. Each informs lesson planning, which is uniformly good, and makes an important contribution to the good match that is regularly seen between lesson tasks and the needs and abilities of pupils. The targets in pupils' IEPs also help. They are specific and are stated precisely with easily recognisable learning outcomes.

17. Nevertheless, the greatest single contributor to the good and very good quality of teaching seen in most lessons is the work of the LSAs. They are generous in number, well trained and deployed well by their teachers. In many lessons there are as many adults as there are pupils. This promotes intensive teaching and results in good quality learning

experiences that realise good or better progress. The good work of the multilingual support assistant, and the extra attention given to these pupils by teachers and LSAs, enables pupils who are learning English as an additional language to achieve similar standards and the same level of progress as other pupils.

18. Most subjects are well resourced with equipment to help meet the specific needs of pupils. Teachers and LSAs are good at making best use of these resources. Special chairs, raised tables and sloping boards, for example, allow pupils to be comfortable when they are working. Increasingly, ICT is providing good support for teaching and learning. For many pupils, the use of switches or roller balls means that they can gain a level of access to the subject that is not possible without electronic support. As a result, the progress they are making is good. Other pupils are good at using basic or advanced word processing programs to draft and re-draft their final work. Taking part in the national initiative training programme for improving computer skills has resulted in teachers and LSAs being very effective in supporting individual pupils and small groups of pupils on computers. They showed these qualities very well in a very good lesson for older pupils on the use of spreadsheets and when switched electric toys were being used in a lesson for the younger pupils.

19. The good quality of teaching motivates pupils to do well as learners. In almost four lessons in ten, learning is very good or better. In nine lessons in ten, it is good or better and is satisfactory in all the others. Lessons are happy and friendly events, particularly those for pupils with the severest of learning difficulties. The very good relationship between teachers, LSAs and the pupils contributes to this. It also helps pupils to be confident as learners. Routinely, they make a considerable intellectual effort to learn. They work quickly and determinedly to produce their best work. Only rarely is there a need for teachers to remind pupils of their responsibility as learners. When this is the case they, or the LSAs, act swiftly and appropriately according to the behaviour management plan, most often with little or no disruption to the learning of others in the class.

20. For many pupils the home-school book is effective in promoting the work of the school in the home, especially in English and mathematics. It informs parents of the events of the day and what may be followed up at home.

21. Since the last inspection, the improved quality of teaching has led to improvements in pupils' attitudes to their work, their better behaviour in lessons and the better progress they are making in their subjects.

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

22. The curriculum is very good. It provides a very good range of learning opportunities, which fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. It has improved since the last inspection and the areas of concern identified at that time having been fully addressed. The focus is developmental to meet the additional needs of pupils with the most severe learning difficulties and is presented through multi-sensory methods for those with vision and hearing difficulties. Music therapy and augmentative communication beneficially enhance the curriculum. The curriculum is socially inclusive and enables equality of opportunity and access for all pupils. Literacy and numeracy are promoted well across the curriculum. In part this is because of the good implementation into lessons in all subjects of the principles of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy.

23. Long, medium and short term planning is good. Evaluation is thorough. The targets in IEPs are well thought out and smart. They act to guide teacher's planning very well.

24. The very wide range of extra-curricular activities, that includes a residential week for pupils in Years 5 and 6, make a significant contribution to extending and enriching the curriculum for many pupils. Each year, a family event is organised, for example a visit to the seaside. Visits are arranged to support teaching and learning in all subjects. For example, a trip to Wardown Museum, to investigate Victorian Luton and a visit to the source of the River Lea as part of a project on rivers in geography. A visit to Hazard Alley looked at safety issues. Riding for the disabled takes place weekly and extends the older pupils' curricular experiences in physical education. Pupils' social development, particularly, has been well promoted by visits to the pantomime and to the Holiday on Ice show, both of which were supported by charitable donations. Weekly after school drama and music clubs are enjoyed by older pupils, for whom late transport is arranged. A gardening club operates from Easter to October. Last year the activities of the club made a considerable contribution to the school winning a category in the 'Luton in Bloom' competition. Pupils, and parents alike, gain benefit from the two-week play scheme that operates during the summer holiday for pupils of the school and for others in mainstream primary schools.

25. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good. Very good links with all subjects reinforces the learning that takes place in lessons in personal, social and health education. The co-ordinator has benefited from training in Citizenship and this is now reflected in the planning. Educational broadcasts are used to inform pupils from ages seven to 11 of sexual matters, and the 'Stranger Danger' programme to warn pupils of the activities of some strangers. Healthy eating, hygiene and the need for physical activity are also well covered in the curriculum.

26. Excellent links with the community help extend the curriculum and also advantage pupils in other ways, for example through the purchase of specialist equipment to allow better access to lesson tasks. At the local level, individuals, institutions and charities such as the church, youth clubs, sheltered housing, public houses, the Rotary Club and 'Happy Days' make a wide range of contributions. For example, they provide counselling services, raise funds, act as voluntary workers in the school library, help organise trips and contribute to celebrations such as Divali and the summer fete. The links with local firemen are well established and especially strong. Pupils enjoy their regular visits to the fire station to support learning in geography and in other subjects. National commercial, retail and manufacturing organisations regularly contribute time, talent, resources and money to support the school. For example, the apprentices with a major employer at the local airport, make special toys and equipment for the school. Pupils register their appreciation of the support they gain from the local community by, for example entertaining the residents in local sheltered housing at Christmas time.

27. Through a comprehensive network of contacts, the school constantly searches for and finds better ways and means of meeting pupils' needs. Through organisations such as Equals and ACE it draws on expertise from all over the country. The work of the local health and social services are routinely involved in the provision through, for example regular visits by the consultant paediatrician and by those in social services. Work placements from local colleges and sixth forms, trainee teachers and students from colleges of higher education and from other countries are regular visitors to the school. Staff contribute to the local Area Child Protection Committee's training programmes. Increasingly, the school acts as a resource for the authority's primary schools in assessing pupils needs so that they can gain access to computers, and advising where the specialist equipment that is required can be purchased. All benefit pupils by extending and enriching their curricular experiences.

28. Very good provision is made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This has improved since the last inspection, especially the way in which the pupils' own cultural diversity is celebrated.

29. There are many opportunities for pupils to increase their spiritual awareness and to think about ideas and values, not only in assemblies and in lessons in religious education, but also in subjects such as art and science. In class assemblies, prayers, music and the use of simple resources such as candles and perfume sprays encourage pupils to enjoy a quiet time of reflection. The "Worship Through Song" sessions in the hall bring pupils together for an enthusiastic celebration through song, prayer and dance. Visits to local churches and representatives from different faiths help pupils celebrate their special religious days.

30. Moral development is promoted so effectively that it is the norm for pupils to help each other and to behave with a good understanding of their responsibilities to themselves and others. Their achievements are celebrated regularly and visibly in lessons, in assemblies and on the 'Achievement Board'. There are many planned opportunities for pupils to recognise what is right and wrong and what is acceptable and best. The respect that all staff show pupils, both in and out of lessons, provides an excellent example for pupils to follow.

31. The targets in pupils IEPs and the PSHE programme help pupils to develop their social skills. Activities, such as the sponsorship of a child in India, and visits to sheltered accommodation for the elderly help reinforce pupils' awareness of rights and their responsibilities to others.

32. The variety of cultural activities provided for pupils is rich. Visits to churches and mosques, art galleries and farms, visits to the school by members of different faiths and by various musical and dance troupes, the use of multi-ethnic resources, costumes and food and the very good selection of books in the library on multi-cultural themes all help pupils' gain a very good appreciation of their own culture and that of others. Very good use is made of pupils' own experience. Their knowledge of their first culture and their religious practices is well used in providing first hand information about different cultures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. Pupils are cared for very well in a safe and secure environment. Arrangements for child protection are very good and involve all the appropriate local agencies. All staff know the child protection reporting procedure. Governors, the headteacher and site manager make regular health and safety inspections. All procedures, including risk assessments, follow the local authority's health and safety guidelines. There are more fully trained first aiders than in many similar schools. All staff have completed basic first-aid training. Lunch-time supervisors have been well inducted into the routines and expectancies of the school and are very experienced in feeding and supervising pupils with learning difficulties.

34. A key concern is to ensure that all pupils have maximum access to the curriculum. Hence, specialists such as paediatricians and dieticians hold clinics and consultations at the school in order to minimise pupils' absence. Specialist therapists and nurses are always on hand to attend to the physical and developmental needs of pupils, especially those with the severest of needs who may have life limiting conditions and major feeding problems. Every pupil has a designated key worker and pupils' handling notes are prominently displayed on the walls of their classrooms.

35. The support and guidance offered to pupils to promote personal and academic development are very good. This has a significant impact on the good standards pupils achieve and the good progress they are making. The system of immediate, direct praise and

rewards using stickers and certificates recognises and encourages pupils' achievements and the efforts they make. In every classroom, and in the main corridor, notice boards celebrate pupils' successes. Pupils enjoy being praised and know that this only occurs when they have made their best effort or have achieved their best work. Good behaviour is encouraged through a number of effective procedures. Those, who because of their special needs are not always able to control their behaviour, have behaviour management plans and frequent one-to-one supervision. The result of these strategies, which are operated consistently by all staff, is a calm and well-ordered environment in which pupils are able to learn and make progress, including progress in recognising responsibility for their own actions.

36. The procedures for monitoring and assessing pupils' academic progress are carried out regularly and are very effective. They include the evaluation of the after lesson summary sheets, the on-going summative forms, success against targets in the IEPs and annual reviews. All these arrangements contribute to a detailed profile of pupils' attainment and chart the progress they are making so that realistic and challenging targets are routinely set. The school has developed its own software programme to present a concise analysis of pupils' results, to evaluate performance and to predict future individual and whole-school targets. It also links annually with the research team at Durham University, which provide comparative data on 'P' levels. This is the first step for judging the effectiveness of pupils' work against those in equivalent schools. In different ways, each has a significant effect on pupils' achievement because staff, through the quality of their teaching, are committed to having pupils succeed against their targets. Similarly, gains in personal development are tracked through judging behaviour, mobility, communication, and depending on individual needs on matters to do with general health. This information is very well used in planning lessons to ensure that lesson tasks make a good match with pupils' needs, abilities and the targets they are working toward. Its very good use helps make teaching focused and makes an important contribution to pupils' good quality of learning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37. The governing body and all staff are committed to a full partnership with parents, who are welcomed into the school. The links with parents are very good and contribute well to the standards pupils are achieving and the progress they are making.

38. Regular newsletters keep parents informed about what pupils are learning and what is happening in the school. Formal documents such as the prospectus are well produced and meet legal requirements. Information about pupils' progress, which parents describe as 'excellent', is provided through three open evenings a year, three reviews of the IEPs and a comprehensive annual report. Most parents are involved in all of the reviews. The home-school book keeps staff and parents in every day touch with each other about progress, routines, health, problems and, in the case of older pupils, the requirements of homework.

39. Recently, a comprehensive questionnaire was forwarded to parents to gain their views on how links with them could be further improved. The headteacher operates an open door policy and encourages parents to meet with her to share their concerns about problems and progress. Home visits and special appointments are available for those parents who cannot visit during the school day. Interpreters are available for parents who are insecure in their use of English.

40. Although pupils travel to school from a wide geographic area, their parents are very much involved in the life and work of the school. A small number regularly work in classrooms as volunteer helpers and two are employed as learning support assistants. There is never a shortage of helpers for one-off events such as educational trips or for the

Christmas fair. The Parents and Friends Association works very hard to support the school. Recently, for example it raised more than £20,000 for a minibus and is now working on the development of a sensory garden and play area.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41. Leadership and management by the headteacher are very good. She is very well supported by the deputy headteacher and the other senior staff. The headteacher provides a clear direction for the work of the school that is in close harmony with the role identified by the LEA. Since the last inspection, the headteacher, and all staff, have worked very hard and successfully in extending the range of provision to meet the needs of the increasing number of pupils with severe, and profound and multiple learning difficulties. Improvement since the last inspection is very good, and the capacity of the headteacher and the senior management team to further develop the work of the school, continues to be very good.

42. The very good improvement seen since the last inspection reflects the shared commitment of all staff to succeed. Day-to-day this is seen through the high standards they aspire to and in the detail of the procedures and policies that direct the smooth running of the school.

43. The school's aims are precise and detailed. They are clearly identified in the development plan. The procedures and success criteria linked with these aims are reasonable and appropriate. Many of the aims, either directly or indirectly, focus on extending the skill base of teachers and LSAs and on increasing the range and quantity of resources to support teaching and learning to those with the severest of learning difficulties. The attention to detail in running the school, that is a characteristic of the headteacher, is reflected in the development plan, which also includes aims for the administrative staff, lunchtime supervisors and the premises staff.

44. The headteacher has a first hand knowledge of all that occurs in the school. She is beginning to delegate her responsibilities well. The deputy headteacher very effectively discharges her duties, especially those to do with monitoring and evaluating the work of pupils. Through the priorities identified in subject action plans, co-ordinators work well in developing provision for their subjects. As a consequence, they are making a good contribution to the quality teaching and learning in their subjects. The work of the Makaton co-ordinator is increasingly contributing to the standards achieved, through the better use by teachers and LSAs,

45. Governors are committed to the success of the school. They are wholehearted in their support for the work of the headteacher and the senior managers. The governing body is appropriately formed and has a sensible number of sub-committees, including finance and curriculum. Governors know very well the quality of the work of the school because of the good procedures for receiving reports. The rolling programme of one-day visits per term allows them to gain a first hand knowledge of how well staff are working and the effort pupils are making to learn. The governing body fully meets its statutory responsibilities and its role as 'critical friend'. Since the last inspection, governors have provided very valuable help and advice in decisions on finance and planning that relate to the new building and in meeting the changing needs of pupils.

46. The procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning are very good. They are now well established and have made a significant contribution to the better teaching seen at this inspection. At least once a term, teachers are observed teaching literacy or numeracy by the headteacher or the deputy headteacher. They receive a formal report, which identifies the strong elements in the lesson and those that require further

development. They may also be seen by relevant outside specialists, such as the LEA numeracy consultant, who visited over the time the principles of the National Strategy for Numeracy were being implemented. Increasingly, subject co-ordinators are observing lessons in their subject and report back to teachers and to the headteacher. Teacher's planning documents for each week are analysed by the headteacher, as are teacher's end of lesson judgements. Analysis of the effectiveness of teaching sometimes results in whole school in-service training, for example when teachers and LSAs followed the nationally accredited course in ICT. They may also take part in training activities offered by outside providers or by the local authority, for example in learning Makaton. These procedures are effective because they not only help monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, but also provide directions for training which makes teaching more effective.

47. The strategy for appraisal and performance management is very good. The headteacher's targets have been set for the second time. The deputy headteacher and all other teachers have three targets, which are formed on the model of the headteacher's. The principle of target setting has been very effectively implemented into the school's routines and procedures. Each teacher has annual targets that are most often linked with the areas for further development identified through the procedures for monitoring teaching and learning. These work very well. They provide a focus for improvement for all who teach in the school. The targets are reviewed annually and this information is available to support any performance management decision.

48. Induction procedures for new staff are very good. They are better than at the time of the last inspection. As a result newly appointed teachers and LSAs quickly become effective in their roles. Each new appointment is assigned a mentor who is responsible for ensuring that specific training is provided, for example on the administrative system and matters to do with the classroom, such as registers, educational visits and pupils' records. Newly appointed staff are required to keep a record of training that forms part of their professional development portfolio.

49. The school's statutory targets have been appropriately set. Targets for individual pupils, written in IEPs, work well in informing the planning of lessons. The computer based recording system, created specifically for the school, works very well in providing information on the gains pupils have made since the last review. This information is well presented at annual reviews and forms the basis for the establishment of pupils' targets for the following year.

50. Staffing levels are generous and have a significant impact on the good quality of teaching and learning. The very favourable pupil-teacher ratio allows a very good match between staffing, the requirements of the curriculum and the needs of pupils. The good number of teachers enables considerable flexibility in their deployment. As a result, there are ample opportunities for staff to carry out non-teaching duties, such as the co-ordination of subjects. The good range of subject expertise available also has a very positive effect on standards, and results in specialist teachers teaching more lessons in their subject, especially to pupils ages seven to 11 years, than is found in many equivalent schools.

51. The number of LSAs is very generous. They are very skilled and experienced. Their competence in areas such as signing, the teaching of basic skills and in using computers is an invaluable asset to their teachers. The excellent teamwork between teachers and LSAs allows for very effective teaching and ensures, in most lessons, equal access to the lesson tasks for all pupils.

52. Similarly, other staff including nurses, the music therapist, the English as an Additional Language (EAL) co-ordinator and, especially the occupational and

physiotherapists, make a major contribution to the range and quality of the provision and to pupils' access to the curriculum. The time available in the school for physiotherapists and occupational therapists enables them to work very closely and effectively with school staff. The provision of speech therapy, though adequate to meet the needs of pupils as specified in their statements of educational need, is more limited. The time for developmental work and joint planning with teachers, for example, or in supporting the use of alternative communication devices is very limited.

53. Both teachers and LSAs benefit from the very good training opportunities. For example, the arrangements made to extend the expertise of staff to meet the needs of the increasing number of incoming pupils with the severest of learning difficulties have been very effective. Similarly, the development of ICT skills among teachers and LSAs and their training in the implementation of the principles of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy have helped promote more effective teaching and learning.

54. At the time of the inspection, the school was taking possession of new buildings. These will add a great deal to the quality of provision, particularly for pupils with the severest of learning difficulties. Additional facilities, all of which are of very good or excellent quality, include a sensory room, a soft play area and a swimming pool. The appointment of a Premises Officer has done much to maximise the school's input on this exciting development and to increasing the value for money within the building programme. His work has also realised significant improvements to the existing school buildings, including the development of toilets to provide upgraded facilities and greater privacy for pupils. The site manager and his staff maintain high standards of cleanliness throughout the school.

55. Since the last inspection, there has been considerable investment in resources to support teaching and learning. Subject action plans have carefully identified the resources needed to raise standards. Most subjects now have a very good quantity and range of resources and these add much to pupils' interest and to the variety of classroom activities that are provided by teachers and LSAs. A good stock of resources for the teaching of pupils with the severest learning difficulties, such as 'objects of reference', has been quickly developed. Digital cameras are used very effectively in the recording of pupils' work. Access to the curriculum, especially for those with the severest of learning difficulties is being enhanced by the developing use of switch technology, but the use of augmentative and alternative communication devices is, as yet, too limited. As a result, a small number of pupils have too few opportunities to initiate communication and to explore their thoughts with the use of augmentative aids.

56. The establishment of the new local authority of Luton in 1997 began a time of considerable change. Since then the substantial changes in the provision of the school, and the extensive building programme, have been very well supported by the local authority. Sensibly, it has recognised the need for transitional funding for three years to help manage the extension in provision required to meet the needs of pupils with the severest of learning difficulties. This has resulted in the unit cost per pupil being marginally higher than is normally found in similar schools, but it has paid dividends. The growth in provision has been accomplished so effectively that the standards pupils with the severest of learning difficulties are achieving and the progress they are making are equivalent to those of pupils with less severe difficulties, with whom the staff are more familiar.

57. Priorities for spending are clearly identified through the management plan and the targets for staff development. The fairly high carry over percentage into this financial year includes money that has been held back to fund elements of the building programme, for example the hydrotherapy pool that are designed specifically to match the needs of pupils with the severest learning difficulties.

58. The headteacher is an expert at raising additional money. This includes being part of all national initiatives that result in staff training. For example, money has been gained from the National Grid for Learning, for the implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, for the training of LSAs (Teaching Assistant Monies), for curriculum development (Citizenship Frameworks and Early Years Training and Development), for school improvement (School Self Improvement and Performance Management and Training) and for small school initiatives such as Administrative Support for Small Schools and the Small School's Support Fund. Monies gained from non-educational sources are considerable and include donations from a large number local business and from social institutions. The Parents and Friends Association regularly donates substantial sums of money. All grants and donations are being used effectively. The most recent auditors' report (April 2001) judges the procedures that operate in spending money to be good.

59. Effective use is made of new technologies. All teachers and many LSAs have become skilled in using computers. They use their skills well in lesson planning, changing pupils' targets for learning and in preparing information for pupils' annual review. The specially prepared software records and tracks pupils' progress against their targets and allows a readable and accurate record of the progress they are making. This is beginning to inform the judgement about the effectiveness of outcomes for all pupils and provides basic information for comparison with the progress made by pupils in equivalent schools. The office systems are supported by relevant software, which staff use very well.

60. Best value principles of are appropriately applied in the management and use of resources. The school follows a best value statement. It actively seeks value for money in staffing and in the purchase of training. The recently completed training in computer skills for teachers and LSAs is a very good example. Very good use has been made of money to add additional features to the new building to ensure as far as is possible a very good match between it and the curricular and additional needs of all pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

61. In the context of the school's many strengths, no major points for improvement can be identified. However, the governing body and the headteacher should consider:

- continuing to increase the skills of staff in using augmentative communication systems and expanding the range and quantity of augmentative resources.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 68 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 42 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Number | 1 | 24 | 34 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 1.5 | 36.4 | 51.5 | 10.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point. The total number of lessons in the table equals 66. This is because two lessons were taken by LSAs and were not assigned to a teacher.

Information about the school's pupils

| Pupils on the school's roll | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll | 70 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | 21 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 17 |

| 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 | 9.9 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|-------------|-----|
| School data | 0.0 |

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

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 1 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 |
| Black – other | 0 |
| Indian | 0 |
| Pakistani | 12 |
| Bangladeshi | 3 |
| Chinese | 0 |
| White | 38 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 2 |

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 – Y6

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 11.0 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 6.3 |
| Average class size | 8.0 |

Education support staff: YR – Y6

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 33 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 766 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Financial year | 2000/2001 |
| | £ |
| Total income | 882495 |
| Total expenditure | 860644 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 11775 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 89783 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 171824 |

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|---|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 2 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 3 |
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) | 0 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE) | 0 |
| Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE) | 0 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 63 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 34 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 85 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 79 | 18 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 75 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 39 | 42 | 10 | 0 | 10 |
| The teaching is good. | 91 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 71 | 24 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 89 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 88 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 79 | 15 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 88 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 85 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 52 | 34 | 3 | 3 | 7 |

Other issues raised by parents

One parent raised an issue about provision for that was better directed to the local authority.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

62. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. On entry, they attain at 'P' Level 1. Most progress to 'P' Level 3 by the time they leave the Foundation Stage for Key Stage 1 and do not attain in full any of the early learning goals. Nevertheless, because of the very good curriculum, good provision and the good quality of teaching children achieve good standards and are making good progress against the targets set in their IEPs.

Personal, social and emotional development

63. Children make good progress in this area. The nursery base is attractive and welcoming. It provides a stimulating and safe environment in which children respond well and grow in confidence. Teachers and LSAs relate very well to children and are consistent in their approach to them. As a consequence, children feel safe in exploring and become increasingly independent. Planning is very good. Targets range from separating from a parent on entry to the nursery to washing hands in the bathroom independently. Choices are routinely presented to children and liaison with the therapists is good. Some children take turns successfully. The care provided for the personal needs of children is very good. They are making good progress in the development of feeding and drinking skills.

Communication, language and literacy

64. As a result of the good provision and the good opportunities provided for them by teachers, LSAs and therapists, children make good progress in developing communication and language skills. Routinely, objects of reference and symbols are used to cue what will happen next, as a way of reinforcing routines. The highest attaining children match objects to photographs. Some enjoy sharing books and a few children use the book box independently. One child, with the severest of learning difficulties, has learned to indicate choice through eye movement. The development of early writing skills begins with the tolerance to tactile materials and through finger-hand exercises. Whenever possible, children are encouraged to gesture, sign, point or vocalise. All staff sign well and confidently. This, together with the good quality of teaching, makes a significant contribution to the development of childrens' emerging language and literacy skills.

Mathematical development

65. Children are making good progress in acquiring the early skills and knowledge of mathematics. Teaching is good and lessons are well planned to provide a range of opportunities to reinforce mathematical concepts and language, such as light and heavy. Mathematical experiences, especially sequencing activities, are interwoven into all the lessons of the day. Good multi-sensory activities, based on well-selected topics, such as 'The Wheels on the Bus' reinforce learning, as do counting rhymes and songs. As a result of the good provision, the highest attaining children count together up to three as they stack their bricks.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

66. Children's achievement in relation to this early learning goal is good and is developed primarily, through children taking part in a wide range of physical and sensory activities. When they are making their way to their classroom, they are encouraged to do so as independently as possible. Before entering the classroom, children look at the photographs

on the door to identify themselves and also another class member. The “Hello” activity on arrival is well used as an introduction both to the classroom and people present. Each helps develop children’s observation skills about the world around them and at the same time helps increase their self-confidence. They learn about themselves, for example the different parts of their bodies by singing songs and simple rhymes. Those with the severest of learning difficulties experience being enveloped in soft and hard materials as a first step to recognising some of the differences in their world. Teaching and learning in this area is linked with other aspects of the curriculum very carefully, and to good effect. Photographs are well used to record children’s experiences.

Physical development

67. Children achieve well and are making good progress. They benefit from the good sensory areas within their classrooms, the outside play area with a good range of swings, bikes, trikes, and soft play equipment and the good soft play area itself. The physio and occupational therapists make an important contribution to children’s physical development, for example by adjusting trikes and bikes, and other play equipment, for use. Children, especially those who are most mobile gain from their lessons in the hall. This term, the programme is dance-based. Those with least mobility experience a programme for sensory awareness, which offers a variety of tactile sensations and movements to a musical background. All are encouraged to walk independently, whenever this is possible, and to sit appropriately for activities. The development of fine motor skills is promoted in all lessons, through hand over hand support, then modelling before children complete their tasks without support. Eating finger food at break time also promotes gains in fine motor skills. The new swimming pool will help promote very good gains in children’s physical development.

Creative development

68. Children are given many opportunities to work creatively in a number of different ways using a wide variety of materials and equipment. Music is used a great deal to create different moods and to attract and maintain childrens’ attention. They enjoy playing a variety of untuned instruments, including bells, tambourines and drums. They experiment well with texture, shape and space. In one lesson, children showed delight in exploring ‘blue’, which involved them in finger painting and running small cars through the paint to make tracks. Teaching is good. It is based on clear learning objectives, which are regularly evaluated.

69. In each of the early learning areas, children’s learning is good as a result of the good quality of teaching. Teachers are very well supported by a generous number of competent LSAs and additional specialists such as the therapists and nurses. Teachers have a good knowledge of the needs of the children and, through the good assessment procedures, the levels at which they attain. This helps in the development of good plans, which recognise the learning needs of all children in the activities that make up the lessons. Routinely, children enjoy their lessons and are enthusiastic in their responses. All have IEPs with good quality and relevant targets, which are reviewed with parents in six weekly or 12 weekly cycles. The very good relationships teachers and LSAs have with parents benefits children by extending their learning opportunities into the home.

70. The good quality of provision identified in the last inspection report has been maintained. This is commendable given the increasing severity of the learning difficulties of children on entry to the Foundation Stage and the change in teaching strategies and resources required to match their needs. Resources in all the areas of learning are very good.

ENGLISH

71. The provision for English is very good. All pupils achieve very well and are making very good progress in the three elements of the subject, speaking and listening, reading and writing. By the age of seven years, the highest attaining pupils reach 'P' scale Level 7 in speaking and listening and reading and Level 5 in writing. By the age of 11 years, the highest attaining pupils reach Level 3 of the National Curriculum statutory assessment procedures in speaking and listening and in reading, and Level 2 in writing. The principles of the National Strategy for Literacy have been successfully implemented into the teaching of English and into lessons in other subjects. These are having a good effect on the standards pupils are achieving, which have improved well since the last inspection.

72. Appropriately, speaking and listening are major focal points in the curriculum. By the age of seven years, most pupils are able to communicate well using the communication system best suited to their needs. Even those with the greatest difficulties with communication indicate 'yes' and 'no'. They recognise personal objects of reference and respond to their names. Some are using symbols and successfully matching them to pictures. By the age of 11 years, the highest attaining pupils are able to discuss the differences between two stories on a similar theme, for example from 'Beauty and the Beast' and 'Billy Beast', and appreciate the subtle humour. They greet visitors politely, respond well to questions which they answer accurately and fluently. The development of speaking and listening skills in lessons is very well supported during the social times of the school day, such as break and lunchtimes.

73. In reading, by the age of seven years, the highest attaining pupils name the letters of the alphabet and identify letter sounds. They distinguish between two sounds and sort objects and pictures on the basis of the initial sound. One pupil has done very well in achieving a sight vocabulary of up to 30 words. Another reads aloud fluently, using a mixture of vocalisation and signing. Most read the names of all pupils and some of the adults in their class. By the age of 11 years, the highest attaining pupils read with fluency and good intonation. They have a good understanding of what they read, be that fiction or non-fiction. They enjoy reading together from shared texts. This activity is well developed in plenary sessions where the set text is often discussed and debated in a very lively manner. This contributes to the progress pupils are making. The lowest attaining pupils continue to read hesitantly. They use a limited sight vocabulary and mainly phonic cues. They continue to need support when they tackle new texts.

74. In writing, by the age of seven years, the best writers trace accurately over the teacher's writing, using one movement for each letter. They are beginning to generate simple sentences for themselves and tell whether their efforts are sensible or not. Some have considerable difficulties with fine motor control. For these pupils, very good use is made of 'cut and stick' stories, so that they can learn the conventions of writing, for example that it proceeds from left to right in straight lines, even though they may not be able to form the letters and words themselves. Word processing programs are well used to produce final work, which is often well presented and with correct spelling. By the age of 11 years, the highest attaining pupils are writing for a variety of audiences. One pupil with severe difficulties with movement dictated a well-structured story, which had a beginning, middle and end and conveyed pace and excitement and used appropriate adjectives such as 'sneaky'. Others have written humorous advertisements for a lonely-hearts column of a newspaper pretending to be Henry VIII seeking a seventh wife.

75. The severity of the learning difficulties of entering pupils has required the routine use of signing to support development of their communication skills. The good training

programme for staff has resulted in signing of a very high standard throughout the school. Similarly, computers are used very well to help pupils draft and redraft their writing, as well as to help support teaching and learning through, for example programs to promote the match of sound with letters, pictures and symbols.

76. The quality of teaching is very good. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good. Teachers and support staff plan lessons well and they have high expectations for pupils' learning. They and their LSAs make good use of open-ended questions and respond carefully to responses made by all pupils, including those who communicate primarily through sign. They give good prompts and gentle but firm reminders so that pupils continue to attend to their work. The generous number of LSAs regularly seen in lessons, which often results in one-to-one learning, provides intensive learning opportunities that make a considerable contribution to the very good rate of progress pupils are making. In one lesson observed, the teacher's skilled reading resulted in pupils being totally enthralled by the story and inspired to do their best on the follow up tasks.

77. Leadership and management are very good. Since the last inspection, the co-ordinator has managed the development of provision very well through extending the signing skills of teachers and increasing the resources required to best meet the needs of pupils with the severest levels of learning difficulty. This includes implementing the principles of the literacy strategy into lessons in English and in the other subjects. Resources in English are very good. However, whilst ICT is used well to support teaching and learning, there are few communication aids to stimulate and to reproduce speech and this restricts the opportunities for those with the severest learning difficulties to communicate. The ability of a small number of pupils with the severest of learning difficulties to communicate is compromised because of this. Multi-sensory resources are plentiful and used well in lessons. Books, especially big books, are in good condition and the texts for shared reading are of high quality. The library is well stocked and pupils make good use of the facility to promote their skills of investigative learning and to select books to read for enjoyment. Very good displays around the school, some of which include symbols, support the teaching of English very well. The speech and language requirements in pupils' statements of special educational needs are met, although teachers and LSAs would benefit from more specialist advice from the speech therapist in dealing with individual pupils. A specialist programme for feeding and swallowing has been provided in school by a locum speech and language therapist, for staff and parents.

78. By the end of their time at the school, the highest attaining pupils are sufficiently literate to use their skills as tools for learning when they enter their secondary schools.

MATHEMATICS

79. The provision for mathematics is good. The principles of the national strategy for numeracy have been sensibly adapted to best meet the needs of pupils. Between the ages of five and seven years, the curriculum is based on the national scheme of work. Pupils attain over the full range of the 'P' scales. The highest attaining pupils at age 11 years reach Level 3 of the National Curriculum procedures. At both key stages, the standards pupils achieve are good, as is the progress they are making. This represents a good improvement since the last inspection when provision in mathematics was a key issue for improvement.

80. When pupils enter Foundation Stage, they are working at the awareness level. They classify by characteristics such as colour, size and shape, rote count to five and are beginning to match numbers to five. By the time they are seven years of age, the highest attaining pupils count to ten, carry out simple additions and are beginning to take away with the help of a number line. Pupils recognise numbers smaller than ten and know the signs for addition, subtraction and equals. They tell time by the hour and can recognise coins for their

value, but cannot calculate money sums. By the time they are 11 years of age, the highest attaining pupils have a good grasp of the full range of the subject. For example, they manage number bonds into three digits. They add, subtract and multiply. They recognise and describe a range of 2Dimensional and 3Dimensional shapes and solve money problems with pretend and real coins. They are beginning to learn about area. Their technical vocabulary is good. For example, for 2Dimensional and 3Dimensional they use the words 'dimensions', 'cuboid', 'pentagon', 'hexagon', 'surface area', 'face' and 'edge'. They tell time well in twelve and twenty-four hours on digital and analogue clocks. They can apply their skills in addition and subtraction to time. They have been well prepared for their work at the secondary level.

81. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Effective planning results in learning objectives that match well with pupils' different needs. Teachers are good at ensuring new learning builds on what pupils already know. By working to a familiar structure in the lessons based on the recommendation of the national strategy, teachers create a consistent learning environment in which expectations are explicit but demanding. Targets in pupils' IEPs provide good help in planning lessons. Number songs and rhymes are regularly and effectively used to consolidate learning. The very good work of the LSAs ensures that pupils' interest and concentration are held for extended periods. They make an important contribution to the progress pupils are making. The youngest of pupils can concentrate for twenty minutes. All adults are adept in giving encouraging feedback when pupils do something well and the very good quality of relationships helps pupils be confident in their learning. Learning is good or better in the majority of the lessons observed. Pupils' attitudes to their work and their behaviour are similarly impressive.

82. Leadership and management are good. The schemes of work ensure that study is systematic and progressive and are better than at the time of the last inspection. The extensive training programme for teachers and LSAs in the principles of the national strategy has had a very good effect on pupils' achievement and progress. Good use of the subject action plan has resulted in the resources to support teaching and learning being of good range and quality. These include resources to support multi-sensory teaching and those to allow teaching and learning through the use of ICT. The assessment procedures very effectively record pupils' attainment and recognise the progress they are making.

SCIENCE

83. The provision for science is good. The standards pupils achieve and the progress they are making are good. Pupils enjoy lessons in science. This is because the quality of teaching is good and provides regular opportunities for them to be active in their learning and to find out for themselves through experimenting. The highest attaining pupils leave school attaining at Level 3 of the National Curriculum in each of the attainment targets.

84. By the time they are seven years of age, pupils have encountered a wide range of scientific experiences and have, for example grown a bean plant, explored different materials, such as pasta, sand and gravel, and as part of their project on "My Body" have used their feet to feel different textures and temperatures. They make good progress in sorting materials and classifying them by their similarities. They also do this well for living things. One class of mainly Year 2 pupils, looked at stuffed animals and made good progress in learning the vocabulary required to discuss their observations and in understanding the functions of some of the different parts of the animals. The highest attaining pupils record their findings from investigations with greater independence, and they talk about their findings with confidence. The high quality of teachers' planning, the skilful use of symbols and the very effective support given by the LSAs enable the lowest attaining pupils to take an increasingly active part in simple scientific investigations so that they also learn to find out for themselves.

85. By the time they are 11 years of age, pupils' have learned about topics such as sound and light, simple electrical circuits and how some processes can alter the state of materials. By this time, they have made very good progress in their use of experiments, including the recording of their findings. Year 4 pupils, for example, in describing their experiments with insulators and conductors, recorded accurately 'what we will change' and 'what we will measure' and used word processing programs to present their findings. In one lesson for Year 5 pupils, they contributed very confidently to a discussion on light, including how it travels and how shadows are formed. Teaching concentrates very effectively on key words and concepts. Challenging questions are well used to encourage pupils to make predictions and they help in setting high expectations for pupils in the presentation of their findings. The generous number of LSAs, their industry, competence and their good deployment each make a considerable contribution to the good standards pupils achieve and the good progress they are making over the key stage. As a result, by the end of Year 6, the written work of the highest attaining pupils shows evidence of good progression in learning in all aspects of the subject, including systematic investigation.

86. The leadership and management are very good. Long and medium term planning is full and detailed and helps guide lesson planning very well. Assessment is good and better than at the time of the last inspection. The procedures to record what pupils know, understand and can do are detailed and result in accurate records. The very good range of well-chosen resources allows teachers without specialist knowledge of the subject to teach confidently and pupils to progress well. The subject action plan has been well used, especially to increase resources to match the needs of pupils with the severest levels of learning difficulty, for example through increasing the range of specific signs and symbols for the subject.

87. Good standards have been maintained in science since the last inspection. Over their time at school, pupils have a good grounding in the subject and are well prepared to build on this at their next school.

ART AND DESIGN

88. Only a very small number of lessons in art were seen. An analysis of teachers' planning documents and consideration of the range and the good quality of display around the school makes it clear that art plays an important part in the life of the school. Pupils' work is well presented and labelled appropriately with both captions and symbols. Displays of pupils' work confirm that good standards are achieved and good progress is being made in responding to and exploring a wide range of materials and techniques. The work of the best artists is approaching Level 4 of the National Curriculum and matches the quality found for many pupils in mainstream primary schools.

89. By the age of seven years, pupils are using a variety of techniques and tools to create art, either as individuals or as small groups of pupils when they work on a collage. They experiment with pattern and texture and produce new colours from primary colours. By the age of 11 years, the highest attaining pupils have learned to understand tone, line, shape, form and space in drawing and painting. They show a good understanding of these aspects of art through their confident use of these words when describing their work. They have a good knowledge of the art of different cultures including the work of local artists. By this time, they have experimented with 3Dimensional work, firstly through the making and decorating of 2Dimensional tiles, then 3Dimensional sculpture.

90. Teachers provide challenging tasks to stimulate learning. In one lesson, good quality sensory experiences such as 'Mother Nature the Designer' was used to provide good opportunities to use colour to represent 'hot' and 'cold'. Following this up, pupils built an

imaginary fire with logs and identified all the colours they could see. To stimulate their thinking of what is possible in art, pupils are presented with a wide range of experiences. These include ultra-violet lights, a smoke machine, mirror balls, a bubble machine, fibre optics, cold water bottles and a foot spa. They especially enjoy the well-organised setting with light and sound features. Each helps set the scene for learning and results in the imaginative and lively work that is well displayed around the school.

91. The subject is well led and managed. The vision of the co-ordinator includes broadening pupils' experience of art topics before they attempt their work. This works very well through the innovative use of the good facilities such as the smoke and bubble machine and extends pupils' knowledge of what may be possible. This benefits the range and quality of pupils' work. The provision in art has improved since the last inspection.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

92. The provision for design and technology is good and has improved since the last inspection. Pupils' achievements are good, as is the progress they are making. Many pupils have considerable difficulty in using tools and equipment with precision and good control. Nevertheless, they persevere and enjoy designing and making a wide range of products. The good quality of teaching is characterised by the very good deployment of LSAs and by the very effective use that teachers make of resources.

93. By the time they are seven years of age, pupils have had many opportunities to explore familiar objects, such as toasters and hair-dryers, and to begin to perform simple tasks with food, such as washing and cutting up fruit. The lowest attaining pupils require much support in completing their tasks but they are making good progress in co-operating with staff and in making choices. Teachers are very effective in encouraging pupils to use smell and touch and in emphasising safe practice. For example, the highest attaining pupils have learned why they should wash their hands before working with food. They follow a recipe well to completion by reading words and symbols on a recipe card, for example when making pastry. In working with resistant materials, they are able to join materials using a number of different techniques, such as glue and staple, to complete good quality models of playground equipment.

94. By the time they are 11 years of age, their skills in design and in making allow them to complete increasingly complex tasks. The focus of teaching emphasises the need for planning and for sequencing tasks in the correct order. As a result, pupils know the need for detailed planning and are good at completing clear plans in the design stage of their work. For example, a project undertaken by pupils aged eight and nine years of age to design and make a variety of bags and wallets provided very good opportunities to complete a detailed design brief. This was well drawn before pupils began cutting out their designs. They produced the template and added the decorative features. Photographs and pupils' files show that the range of completed work is impressive and includes the use of simple mechanisms, construction kits and motors. In one lesson, pupils aged 11 years of age built a simple model car. They showed good knowledge of construction techniques, such as the use of stiff cardboard triangles to secure joints.

95. The subject is well led and managed. Good use has been made of the action plan to develop the provision to meet the wider ranging needs of pupils with the severest of learning difficulties. Long and medium term planning has improved since the previous inspection. The good quality of teaching results in all pupils, including those with the severest of learning difficulties and those who are learning English as an additional language, making equivalent progress.

GEOGRAPHY

96. The quality of the provision for geography is good. The schemes of work, developed from the national guidelines ensure breadth and balance. They have been well adapted to meet the specific needs of all pupils. The standards pupils achieve and the progress they are making are good. In part, this is because teachers know their pupils very well and have a good knowledge of the subject. The result is a good match between lesson tasks and pupils' needs and abilities. This benefits the standards pupils are achieving and the progress they are making, which are better than at the time of the last inspection.

97. By the time they are seven years of age, pupils have learned about features in their local community, including the position of their home and school. The highest attaining pupils have developed a good sense of place, especially as this relates to the geography of the school. For example, they can travel to most parts of the school and follow their paths on a map. They recognise landmarks on the journey from home to school and know their address. From regular visits to the community they have become familiar with local amenities and the location of the buildings of the different services, especially the fire station. The lowest attaining pupils recognise different places but have not yet established links in distance, location or time. By the time they are 11 years of age, the highest attaining pupils achieve at Level 3 of the National Curriculum in some elements of the Programme of Study. Local studies of Stopsley require pupils to translate their practical research in the village into mapping activities and demographic surveys. They are interested and motivated to do their best and this is reflected in the extent of detail they recall from their fieldwork. For example, they name shops or businesses and also remember the position of one relative to the other. They learn about the geography of other countries, for example Nepal and South America, and explain their learning using vocabulary such as 'habitable', 'rain cycle' and 'fragile environment'. They have learned that the Sherpa farmers from Nepal live close to Mount Everest. The lowest attaining pupils are at Level 1. They know about the rain cycle and how the sea, and lakes contribute to making rain, about different countries and how the climate of many is hotter and less rainy than is ours. They have learned of physical features such as mountains, valleys and the built environment, including roads, bridges and towns and cities. The highest attaining pupils make good use of CDROMS and the Internet to gain information, and word processing to present their work.

98. The quality of teaching is good overall. Planning is detailed and great care is given to meeting the individual learning needs of pupils. Resources are of good range and quality. They are well chosen and teachers maintain good pace and energy in their teaching. Skilled questioning and sensitive prompts also contribute to making learning effective. The generous number of LSAs in lessons and their good deployment is a major factor in making a good match between lesson tasks and pupils' needs. They are very effective in their work and this helps ensure that all pupils achieve equivalent standards against their targets and make similar progress. Pupils show very good attitudes and behave well in all lessons.

99. The co-ordinator offers good support to colleagues. She has recently revised the syllabus for pupils between five and seven years of age to ensure it more accurately reflects their increasingly more complex needs. Assessment is carried out at the end of a topic and is used well to record the progress pupils have made. This information is well presented at the pupils' annual review and helps inform their new targets.

HISTORY

100. Only one lesson was seen during the inspection. An analysis of planning documents and the range and quality of resources, the assessment of completed work and evidence from displays in and outside of classrooms indicate that provision is good. Pupils achieve well and are making good progress, suggesting that the provision is better than that last time.

101. By the time pupils are seven years of age, the highest attaining pupils understand differences between the past and present, especially as this relates to family members. They know who is the oldest and the youngest and sequence their family members in the correct order. By the time they are 11 years of age, the highest attaining pupils have refined their sense of chronology and appreciate that the Ancient Greeks came before the Tudors, who come before the Victorians. They link events of the past well to the eras they have studied, for example the Mary Rose to Tudor times. Learning relates well to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and benefits from visits to sites of historical interest. These include visits to Hitchin and Letchworth to see Tudor architecture, to St. Albans, to carry out brass-rubbings and to collect photographic evidence of Victorian Luton. In the lesson observed, pupils were completing their half-term project on Tudor Britain. The highest attaining pupils were able to explain their learning through impressive descriptions of building materials using appropriate terms such as wattle and daub and through recognising differences in the clothes worn by the rich and the poor.

102. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers try hard to make the past relevant to pupils as was the case when pupils pretending to be Henry VIII wrote an advert to a lonely-hearts club for another wife. Lessons are well planned and wherever possible use artefacts and videotapes. Pupils benefit from this. When they see objects or videotapes, or make a visit to a site in the locality, learning becomes first hand, is exciting and is made easier. The LSAs are very effective in helping pupils by making lesson tasks accessible to them, very often through working one-on-one. Assessment is well used to record pupils' attainment and to report on progress for the annual review meeting or at the end of the year.

103. History is well led and managed. The schemes of work are sufficiently detailed to be of help in lesson planning. The subject action plan has been well used to build a good resource bank of artefacts and videotapes. The subject makes a positive contribution to pupils' understanding of their own and other cultures

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

104. Provision for ICT is good. Over all the school, the standards pupils achieve and the progress they are making are good. This represents a good improvement since the last inspection.

105. The considerable range in the severity of pupils' learning difficulties is reflected in what pupils know, understand and can do. Those with the severest of learning difficulties are beginning to control their environment through the manipulation of a single switch. Those with less severe difficulties have gained complete control over the computer screen and use CD ROMS and the Internet to gain information to support their learning. Appropriate switchgear, adjusted keyboards and roller balls allow those with the severest of learning difficulties to achieve against their learning targets as well as those who make good use of the standard keyboard and mouse.

106. By the time they are seven years of age, the highest attaining pupils confidently use a wide range of equipment in controlling the computer screen. These include, simple switches, the touch screen, modified keyboards, roller balls and the mouse. Their keyboard skills are well developed and are well used in, for example word processing. They switch the computer on and off correctly, save and print files, load and follow well a wide range of

appropriate software from disc and CD drives. They learn how computers control events by programming a Roamer vehicle to follow patterns and to stop at a precise location. They use digital cameras well and can load pictures into a file, although they cannot yet modify their pictures. They are beginning to understand data handling through being able to classify, for example fruit into different groups using My World. They attain at Level 1 of the National Curriculum. The lowest attaining pupils are working toward Level 1. They are gaining control of the screen through touching it or through using simple switches. They began learning about switch control by starting and stopping a wide variety of battery driven toys that produced light, audio and movement responses, before transferring their knowledge of control to the screen.

107. At age 11 years, the highest attaining pupils have progressed to Level 3 in word processing and to Level 2 in the other attainment targets. For example, in word processing, they create new files and load existing files for editing. They change font size and choose different fonts, which they can bold, underline or italic. They cut, paste and import pictures into their files from, programs such as Clip Art before saving their files to main drive, floppy disc or CD. They use a spreadsheet program well to create a database of up to ten columns. They input the data, use the formula procedures to add, subtract, multiply and divide to a new cell. They take this information and present it visually as a pie chart or bar graph. They increase their understanding of modelling and control through more complex work with the Roamer and through their good use of the screen Roamer. Their technical vocabulary is of good range because of the frequent use of key words. For example, in the lesson on spreadsheets the words 'data', 'graph', 'profit', 'formula', 'sum' and 'tool' were used confidently and were well understood by all pupils.

108. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers and most LSAs have completed the nationally accredited course. Their knowledge of computers is good and they are very effective in helping pupils in the completion of their tasks. Lessons are well planned and are often supported by a generous number of LSAs. The wide range of adapted devices allows pupils to gain control of the screen, when keyboard use is not an option. The number of computers in classrooms, especially for the older pupils is sufficient for them to work as individuals or as pairs. Each helps lessons to be intensive learning sessions, to the benefit of the standards pupils are achieving. Assessment is very good and is sufficiently precise to help in the planning of future lessons. Very good records are kept of the adapted devices pupils require to be able to operate the computer, as well as of the software programs with which they are familiar. This information is well used by all teachers to ensure equality of access when pupils are taught in different classrooms by different teachers. Pupils enjoy lessons, especially when they are working on the computers. They work hard and take pride in explaining their work using appropriate technical words and phrases and in demonstrating what they can do.

109. Leadership and management are very good. The co-ordinator has considerable experience of computer use by pupils with learning difficulties. Over time, the very good use of the subject action plan has resulted in a wealth of switches and other devices that enable pupils, including those with the severest of learning difficulties, to gain mastery over the computer screen or other electronic equipment. For some pupils this means they can communicate their needs, gain access to the curriculum and achieve a quality of life not possible without this control. Throughout the school, ICT is used well to support teaching and learning in other subjects, especially in English.

110. The school is rapidly developing expertise as a centre for assessing the capabilities in ICT of pupils with learning difficulties from mainstream primary schools. A visit to Lady Zia is followed by the completion of an assessment report, which identifies the specialist devices the pupil requires in order to gain access to electronic equipment, especially computers. For

example, the equipment advised for one pupil recently assessed was the 'Big Keys Plus Keyboard', 'Penny and Giles Roller Plus' and 'Semerc Mouser' interface to support easier access. Information is given as to where the equipment can be purchased and at what price. This service is beneficial provision for all the primary schools and is helping to include the expertise and resources available at Lady Zia fully into that of the authority.

MUSIC

111. The quality of provision for music is good. It is better than at the time of the last inspection. The focus of music is performing. Pupils achieve good standards, especially in their singing. Good examples of the good progress pupils are making were seen in two sessions of 'Worship through song' held in the school hall. Pupils up to age seven years were enjoying the songs and, although most were unable to join in with the words, they were clearly familiar with them, knew when to clap their hands, moved well with the rhythm and many signed to them with good levels of fluency. Pupils seven to eleven years of age have learned a good range of songs. They sing well, with clear diction and accurate phrasing, even when the songs have complex lyrics and require changing rhythms. For example, they sang 'The Lord is my Shepherd' in two parts, with confidence and control.

112. By the time they are seven years of age, the lowest attaining pupils play untuned percussion instruments with decent rhythm. They respond well. They very much enjoy drumming and the chance to shake their instruments to time. They start and stop playing on time. They recognise high and low sounds, loud and quiet sounds and slow and fast rhythms. The highest attaining pupils of eight years of age devise their own compositions in pairs using instruments such as chime bars and hand bells. They accurately record their music using non-standard notation and can play it back with good accuracy. By the time they are 11 years of age, the highest attaining pupils have a good vocabulary of musical terms and they use these well in explaining the tunes they have composed and the music that they like best.

113. Pupils' standard of achievement, the detailed planning documents and the good recording of what pupils' know, understand and can do suggests that the quality of teaching is good.

114. The leadership and management are good. The action plan has been used well to extend the resources to support teaching and learning to meet the needs of pupils with the severest levels of learning difficulty. The range of switched battery toys that produce simple rhymes is good. The range and quality of untuned instruments is also good. Resources include a wide range of recorded music from different cultures and countries, including traditional African and South American music. The last inspection recognised the contribution made by music to the pupils' cultural development and, through musical productions, to the cultural life of the school. The contribution of music to pupils' cultural development continues to be good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

115. Provision for physical education is satisfactory. The standards pupil achieve and the progress they are making are satisfactory over the full range of the subject. The new accommodation has a custom designed pool and hydrotherapy area, which will be available from April 2002. This is an excellent facility and is designed to have a significant impact on the standards pupils achieve and the progress they make in swimming.

116. In gymnastics, by the time they are seven years of age, the highest attaining pupils have learned to link together a sequence of movements which include a moving stretch, a balance, jump and roll and perform these to a controlled finish. In pair work, they have

learned to support each other and to balance together. The Sherbourne approach is the focus of much of the gymnastic work. This means that pupils benefit from being active in their lessons. They explore their range of movement in the soft play area where they stretch and flex to positions not achievable outside of it. The quality of gymnastic work in the hall, for example when they learn to push, pull and swing benefits from this. In games, the highest attaining pupils propel a large ball with accuracy and control the ball well when they receive it. They move with good rhythm to music in dance lessons. The lowest attaining pupils work well according to their movement capability. For these pupils, teachers gain very good support from the physiotherapists who advise and help in identifying what is achievable and what should be emphasised.

117. By the time they are 11 years of age, pupils' increased strength, better co-ordination and balance abilities allow them to move more confidently. They demonstrate this through gymnastics movements that are more complex and demanding, on the floor, on large apparatus and when they use the climbing frames. They are good at moving to music with sticks, as they do in Indian dancing, and when country or modern dancing. They have learned to travel with a ball and do so satisfactorily well. They gain a good experience of athletics between the ages of seven and 11 years, especially of the throws and the jumps. They are confident in the water and the best swimmers moved forward on their front and back with ease. The curriculum is beneficially extended by lessons in horse riding arranged through Riding for the Disabled and by the annual residential camp of one week which includes opportunities to take part in and learn about outdoor activities, including canoeing. The lowest attaining pupils take a full part in all lessons, but the level they attain in all aspects of the subject is limited by the complexities of their movement difficulties.

118. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are planned well and LSAs are routinely deployed very well. Praise is very well used. In most lessons, pupils work hard at their learning and enjoy working alone or together, as they did in a good lesson in gymnastics for older pupils. They listen well and pay appropriate regard to safety rules when climbing on the apparatus or moving at speed in the confined space of the hall. The very considerable range of pupils' movement seen in any lesson, for example from movement that is unrestricted to movement that is severely constrained because of pupils' learning difficulties, makes matching lesson tasks to the needs and abilities of all pupils extremely difficult. In a small number of lessons, this is achieved well but in others some pupils are insufficiently challenged and others attempt tasks, which are too difficult for them. The limitations of the hall, which is used for indoor lessons, and the insufficient range and quantity of small resources, adds to the difficulty in matching lesson tasks to pupils' needs. This is especially so for pupils with the severest of movement difficulties.

119. The subject is being well led and managed by the recently appointed co-ordinator. She is completing a training course in Sherbourne techniques. The newly appointed instructor is undertaking Halliwicks training. Both these courses will provide staff with greater expertise in meeting the needs of the pupils with the severest of movement problems. The subject action plan outlines a number of initiatives, including matching the criteria to be recognised as a 'Healthy School', and establishing closer links with the Sportability organisation. These are good, as they will act to extend the curricular experiences of pupils.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

120. The provision for religious education is good. The standards pupils achieve and the progress they are making are good. The range of experiences offered to pupils in religious education has developed well since the last inspection. Lessons in religious education make a very positive contribution to the spiritual and cultural development of pupils. One reason for this is the quality of curriculum planning which is firmly rooted in the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

121. Pupils' knowledge and understanding benefits from regular visits to different places of worship. The digital photographs taken on the visits and the follow-up work help reinforce learning about the major religious beliefs, practices and rituals of the major religions of Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism and Islam. One group of Year 1 and 2 pupils, for example, have learnt about baptism in role-play at a local church, have 'read the lesson' from its lectern and rung the church bell. They have also learned about the important artefacts of Sikhism by making cardboard swords and bracelets and wearing a turban. This practical approach to the subject is very successful in bringing religious concepts such as symbolism alive for pupils by making it relevant to them. The older pupils extend their knowledge of religions through listening to and reading stories about the sacred writings. They are developing a good understanding of the significance of religious symbols. The highest attaining pupils recount well the main points of religious stories. For example, in a lesson about the Nativity, Year 6 pupils showed a sufficient understanding of the events surrounding that time to realise that modern representations do not always accord with the biblical version.

122. The quality of teaching is enhanced by good assessment procedures and the clear identification of learning objectives in lesson plans. Difficult abstract concepts are taught well. For example, skilful questioning in a lesson for older pupils resulted in pupils recognising the similarities and differences in the qualities of leadership of Jesus Christ and the prophet Mohammed.

123. Since the last inspection the co-ordinator has extended pupils' curricular experiences and developed the assessment procedures sufficiently so that they help in lesson planning. The current action plan appropriately prioritises the need to further increase the range and quality of artefacts and other resources such as videotapes, especially those designed to meet the needs of pupils with the severest of learning difficulties.