

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **CHILTERN GATE SCHOOL**

Verney Avenue, High Wycombe

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110578

Headteacher: Mr Wayne Marshall

Reporting inspector: Mr Alistair J M Bates  
21737

Dates of inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> November 2001

Inspection number: 193870

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:	4 - 12
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Verney Avenue High Wycombe Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP12 3NE
Telephone number:	(01494) 532621
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Chris Fisher
Date of previous inspection:	April 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21737	Alistair J M Bates	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology Physical education	What sort of school is it? Standards Teaching Leadership and management Residential provision
19650	Susan Thomas	Lay inspector	Personal, social and health education	Standards (Attitudes and Behaviour) Relationship with parents
27409	Susan Hunt	Team inspector	English Humanities	Curriculum
11353	Janet May	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology	How well does the school care for its pupils
14943	Eric Peagam	Team inspector	Science Religious education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
3055	Clive Tombs	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Music	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Chiltern Gate School is a mixed community special school for 120 pupils (79 boys, 41 girls) between the ages of four and eleven. At the time of the inspection there are two 12 year old pupils. Pupils have a range of special educational needs including learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders. At the time of the inspection nearly a third of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Pupils are from a range of ethnic backgrounds with 32 pupils for whom English is an additional language. These proportions are high in comparison to similar schools nationally. The pupils' attainment on entry is low due to their special educational needs and pupils' difficulties have become more complex since the last inspection. Pupils are admitted at different times throughout the school year or their school career; nearly half of all pupils have been at the school for less than 18 months. The school has weekly boarding provision and at the time of the inspection there were between 14 and 16 pupils in residence. The school is organised into three departments:

- The First School for pupils between the ages of four and eight with moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties;
- The Middle School for pupils with moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties up to the age of 12;
- The Communication Centre which caters for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders of all ages.

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

Chiltern Gate School is an effective school with very many strengths. Pupils with a range of special educational needs achieve well in their learning and in their personal development through good teaching, a good curriculum and positive attitudes and behaviour. The school is well led and managed. As a result of the emphasis on meeting the needs of all pupils the school is an inclusive community and provides good value for money.

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

- Relationships are excellent. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and the pupils' personal development is very good.
- Standards of achievement are good with pupils achieving well in the majority of National Curriculum subjects.
- Parents have a very positive view of the school.
- New initiatives including the National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy have been implemented well.
- The school is well led and managed. All members of the school work effectively to ensure that it fulfils its own aims very well.
- The residential provision is good.
- The moral and social development of the pupils are very well promoted.
- Pupils are well looked after.

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

- The school has provided time for the monitoring of teaching and the curriculum by subject co-ordinators but this is not happening yet.

*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 improved well since the last inspection (1997) and is dealing effectively with the more complex needs of its pupils. Standards of achievement have risen, particularly in literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour remain a strong feature. Teaching has improved. The provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders is much more effective. The leadership and management remains strong, despite changes in personnel which have been brought about through a range of enforced redundancies. The school improvement plan has improved and already identifies the weakness in monitoring. The school is well placed to continue to improve and raise standards.

## STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by Year 6	Key	
speaking and listening	A	very good	A
Reading	B	good	B
Writing	B	satisfactory	C
Mathematics	B	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	A	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in Individual education plans*	B		

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

The school has yet to set whole school targets using the new national measures but pupils achieve well towards the individual targets set in their individual education plans. There is only one pupil in Year R (four years old) and two in Year 7 (12 years old). These pupils achieve well although the report does not make detailed comments about their individual attainment. Pupils between the ages of four and eleven in both Key Stages 1 and 2 achieve well in communication and pupils leave the school as confident speakers. They make good progress in literacy and numeracy. Pupils between the ages of five and seven achieve well in science, humanities, art, design and technology and physical education. They make very good progress in music. Their achievement is satisfactory in information and communication technology and religious education. Pupils between eight and eleven years old achieve well in all National Curriculum subjects. Progress in religious education is satisfactory. Pupils of all ages achieve well in personal, social and health education.

The school achieves good standards and these have improved since the last inspection, notably in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology and science. This is good as the nature of the pupils' special educational needs has changed and pupils are admitted at different stages in their school career.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The children like their school and this helps them learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave well in school, on the playground and when out in the local community.

Personal development and relationships	Relationships are excellent. Pupils get on well together and help each other. The personal development of the pupils is very good. Older pupils help younger ones and show considerable maturity.
Attendance	Good.

The pupils benefit socially from being at the school. Pupils with additional behavioural difficulties respond very well to the consistent management techniques used by all staff. The pupils' enthusiasm and positive attitudes significantly enhance their learning. Pupils are very understanding of the needs of others and are often very supportive.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>Years 1 – 6</b>
Quality of teaching	Good

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

Teaching is good in English and mathematics. It is very good in science and personal, social and health education. Communication is very well taught including the use of sign language for pupils with communication disabilities. Literacy and numeracy are well taught. The best feature of teaching is the staff's knowledge of the individual needs of the pupils and this ensures that all pupils are generally well taught. Pupils with additional special educational needs including behavioural difficulties are managed well. The pupils' learning is enhanced by their positive attitudes to work and they are willing to persevere with their work. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good – the curriculum is broad, balanced and has been well adapted to meet the more complex needs of the pupils being admitted.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good – pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve as well as the other pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision for moral and social development. Good provision for spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good – all the staff know the individual pupils well and ensure that their needs are met. The residential provision is good and promotes the pupils' social and moral development very well.

The curriculum is good with joint planning by teachers to meet the needs of individuals. Subject co-ordinators do not yet monitor teaching and learning although this process is included in the school improvement plan. The school meets the needs of individual pupils very well through the use of accurate assessment procedures. Pupils with additional needs have good individual support plans, for example to help them manage their own behaviour. As a result they make good progress.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good, the senior staff ensure that there is a shared commitment and vision and this enables the school to meet its own aims very well.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The work of the governing body has improved since the last inspection and it now fulfils its duties well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The procedures for the performance management of all staff are very good and this has helped staff to improve their work. The school monitors the progress of individual pupils well. It is only beginning to look at the performance of different groups of pupils or the quality of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Good use is made of resources, particularly specific funds such as the New Opportunities Fund and the National Grid for Learning.

The leadership of the school ensures that all members of the school feel part of a community and there is a very clear commitment to meeting the needs of individuals. The school improvement plan identifies the need to improve the monitoring of teaching, the timetable and the curriculum. The school ensures that the principles of best value are considered and is beginning to compare its effectiveness with other schools. The school improvement plan identifies developing the use of new national measures to set targets for groups of pupils. The accommodation is good and very well maintained. Resources are good. Good quality teaching and the effective use of support staff compensate for one teaching vacancy. The work of learning support assistants makes a significant contribution to the pupils' learning and welfare.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children who have been unhappy in previous schools are well supported, happy and make good progress.</li> <li>The good quality of teaching.</li> <li>The good quality of leadership and management.</li> <li>The school helps children to become more mature.</li> <li>Parents are kept well informed about what is happening in the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some parents raised a concern about pupils' coming home and using swearwords.</li> </ul>

The inspection team confirm the parents' positive view of the school. Observations in class, at play and at lunchtime did not note any swearing in the school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Due to the pupils' special educational needs the report does not make judgements about pupils' standards of attainment in comparison to pupils in other schools. Judgements on attainment are based on what the pupils know, understand and can do and against the targets in their individual education plans.
2. Although the inspection considered the quality of provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 3, there was only one four year old and two pupils in Year 7. The attainment of these three children is not reported in detail. The report concentrates on the attainment and achievement of pupils at the ages of seven and eleven at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. The report also identifies achievement at other ages to demonstrate the pupils' progress.
3. The children and pupils of Chiltern Gate School achieve well in the majority of National Curriculum subjects and in personal, social and health education. These high standards result from the good teaching and good management. Although levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 have fallen since the last inspection this results from the more complex needs of the pupils and the fact that a much lower proportion of the pupils are at the school for all of their primary education. In general pupils are admitted much later than in the past and after time in mainstream education. Those pupils who are now being admitted to the younger classes often have additional and more complex needs, for example needing medical or communication support. Despite these factors, all pupils make good progress in their time at the school.
4. There are no significant differences in achievement between boys and girls or different age groups. The very small number of Foundation Stage and Key Stage 3 pupils achieve well. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress in line with other pupils. Pupils with additional special educational needs also make good progress and are very well supported. Pupils make good progress towards the targets identified in their statements of special educational needs or individual education plans. In the past the school has used these as a measure of its success and has only recently begun to transfer its target setting to the new national measures. The current school improvement plan includes appropriate plans to adopt these for whole-school target setting.
5. The school's implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has resulted in higher standards in English than in the last inspection. The pupils' achievements are very good in communication. Pupils who are able to speak make good progress in the First School department (ages four to eight). Younger pupils up to the age of six will respond appropriately to questions and begin to describe events in their life. Higher attaining pupils explain what they are doing although they do not always ensure that anyone is listening! Pupils with speech difficulties respond very well to the consistent use of sign language and begin to use common signs themselves, for example for food ("biscuit") or to say "please" and "thank-you". By the age of seven, at the end of Key Stage 1, higher attaining pupils describe their experiences using sentences and link phrases together. All pupils listen well and watch the sign language carefully. By the time they move from the First School to the Middle School (ages eight to eleven) in either Year 3 or 4 pupils take part in regular class discussions. They listen well to one another. All pupils listen attentively to the teacher when using the "Big Books" and higher attaining pupils predict the end of the story.
6. By the age of eleven, at the end of Key Stage 3 pupils describe events from the past. They describe their emotions and behaviour when on visits, for example pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties or with autistic spectrum disorders were able to discuss their visit to the Roald Dahl museum. Pupils ask questions to find out information. Lower attaining pupils use some sign language confidently and speak with their classmates, teachers or with learning support assistants.

7. Standards of achievement are good in reading and writing. First School pupils know that books contain information and will look at pictures, describing the characters in the book. Most begin to recognise their own name and other personal information. The good use of symbols with words throughout the First School aids achievement in reading. By the end of Key Stage 1 at age seven higher attaining pupils identify specific words from stories and recognise letter blends and sounds. Lower attaining pupils know most letters of the alphabet. The youngest pupils begin by making marks on paper and by the age of seven most can over-write words written by the teacher or learning support assistant. In the early years of Key Stage 2, at the age of nine, pupils begin to use information and communication technology to write with the words linked to symbols for lower attaining pupils.
8. By the age of eleven the highest attaining pupils have developed good reading skills through their work in the literacy hour. They use a dictionary or thesaurus to find different words to replace "said" and to convey different meanings. Lower attaining pupils can recognise common words and recall words from their "Big Books". Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders use symbols to understand their individual work and timetables. The majority of pupils can copy information from a worksheet or on the same page. Higher attaining pupils can answer questions with simple sentences and change words to alter the meaning. Lower attaining pupils begin to write simple stories and use information and communication technology to produce text.
9. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has improved standards of achievement in mathematics since the last inspection and standards are now very good in numeracy. Pupils in the First School use numbers in everyday activities such as rhymes or counting the number of people in the room after break. By the age of seven the highest attaining pupils can carry out simple additions, recognising the symbols "+" and "=". They carry out mental counting but find the words for numbers more difficult. The youngest pupils in the Middle School (eight to nine years old) enjoy number games, for example measuring their teacher using non-standard measures. They begin to understand the principles of subtraction and multiplication using real objects. By the end of Key Stage 2 the highest attaining pupils remember number facts and use these in activities such as giving change. Pupils of all ages use the integrated learning computer system to develop their individual mathematics skills, for example a Year 3 pupil was able to match the number of objects to the numeral and begin to say whether another number was more or less. Pupils make good progress in other areas of mathematics.
10. Pupils of all ages achieve well in science with some very good achievement at the end of Key Stage 2, attaining higher levels than in other subjects. This achievement results from high quality teaching, good support and excellent accommodation and resources. Pupils in the First School make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of the world, for example understanding the requirement of living things to have food and water. By the age of seven they can distinguish between different things such as animals or materials. By the end of Key Stage 2 the pupils achieve well in all areas of the subject. Higher attaining pupils understand and describe the reasons to make a test fair. They understand the difference between different types of electrical circuits. Lower attaining pupils enjoy experiments and can describe physical changes such as changes in state from solid to liquid.
11. The pupils make good progress in all areas of information and communication technology. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards are also good in art, design and technology, humanities (history and geography), music and physical education. These good standards are the result of consistently good teaching that recognises the needs of individual pupils. Good standards were seen in religious education lessons and the pupils' progress over time is satisfactory. However, it is not taught as a discrete subject in some classes and this means that pupils do not systematically develop their past learning.

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

12. Relationships between all members of the school community are excellent. All pupils are equally valued. Staff know the pupils well and respect them as individuals. This ensures that the school is fully inclusive and individual needs are met very well. Standards have improved since the last

inspection as the needs of the pupils have changed. The pupils respond well to the support and atmosphere of the school with parents of very new pupils commenting on very rapid improvements in attitudes and behaviour.

13. Pupils trust their teachers and have confidence in them. They respect each other and help each other when necessary. Younger children wait patiently and understand when they must take turns. Year 6 pupils help younger pupils with their schoolwork. Teachers and support assistants provide good role models. As a result of the support provided by all staff, pupils are motivated and have very good attitudes to learning. They enjoy their lessons. They are attentive and listen carefully to their teachers. In a Year 2 English lesson pupils were confident to speak in front of the class when they changed places with the teacher. Year 4 pupils sat engrossed in a story about feelings and enjoyed answering the teacher's questions. Children in the Communication Department all made positive contributions to their lessons.
14. Behaviour is very good. Teachers set clear boundaries for acceptable behaviour and have high expectations. Pupils respond well. They are polite. They greet visitors warmly and hold doors open for adults. Even the youngest children learn the school routines quickly and they follow them, for example when crossing from the First School to the main school site. There are occasional instances of disruptive behaviour in class. These are generally caused by those pupils who present challenging behaviour as a result of their disabilities. Staff and senior managers deal with this behaviour quickly and firmly. Most children and pupils play well either alone or in groups at playtime. The pupils generally get on very well with each other and respect each other's cultural backgrounds. Sometimes play is boisterous but no bullying or harassment was observed. Parents expressed concerns about pupils swearing in the school but there was no evidence of this during the inspection. In the last school year there were 14 fixed period exclusions, involving a small number of pupils who present challenging behaviour. The rate of exclusion is much lower than the average for Buckinghamshire special schools. There were no permanent exclusions.
15. The pupils' personal development is very good. Staff take every opportunity to reinforce social skills and to help children gain in confidence. This was particularly noticeable at lunchtime. Pupils enjoy their meals, sitting in "family style" groups. Food is served at tables of eight headed by a member of staff. Pupils politely wait for others to be served. They learn appropriate table manners and talk to the others on their table quietly and respectfully. At the end of the meal older children take turns at clearing and wiping the tables. Children's behaviour and social skills during this period were a credit to the school. Pupils are given targets of responsibility for their academic and social learning. They are justly proud when they achieve their targets.
16. Attendance is good. The average attendance rate is higher than the national average for special schools. Unauthorised absence rate is low. The main reasons for authorised absence are medical or long holidays abroad in term time. Parents say their children like coming to school. Most children arrive in time for the start of lessons and lessons throughout the day begin on time.

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

17. Teaching is good and results in good standards of achievement. During the inspection it was satisfactory or better in nearly all lessons. It was good or better in four out of five lessons. A third of lessons were very good or excellent. This is an improvement over the previous inspection where the proportion of very good teaching was lower. Teaching was consistently good in most subjects and very good in literacy and numeracy.
18. The main strength of teaching is the teachers' good knowledge of the individual pupils. This is based on regular and consistent assessment of the pupils' past attainment. Literacy is well taught and the material in the lessons relates well to the pupils' individual education plan targets. Therefore, once the main group activity has been completed, pupils work towards their individual targets with a clear progression of activities. The learning support assistants are very important in this process as they ensure that the pupils are able to succeed and record their progress. In a very

good lesson in the First School all members of the class team worked very well together to record the individual pupil's responses to a story.

19. Teachers use their good knowledge well to encourage all pupils to participate in the lessons. Pupils gain in confidence from this approach and this enables them to make good progress, for example, pupils in the First School finish each day by leading the group in a song. A pupil, without speech, volunteered to lead the singing and stood with the teacher. He used some sign language and a very slight whisper. The other pupils listened and congratulated him at the end of his "song". This confidence contrasted with earlier reports, which indicated that he had been aggressive and withdrawn and represents significant progress.
20. The teachers use a range of imaginative techniques to interest and motivate pupils, particularly as part of the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies. In a very good numeracy lesson, a group of Year 4 pupils made considerable progress in developing their understanding of the use of measures when they had to make an outfit for their teacher. Much of the humanities teaching is good and results from the use of interesting artefacts to stimulate the pupils' interest and imagination.
21. The good teaching in science results from high expectations and good planning. The school has recently adopted a clear format for lesson planning. This brings a consistent approach to lessons that provides an effective structure for the pupils learning. Teachers share the learning targets for the pupils at the beginning of the lesson and most lessons include a final group discussion where pupils describe their own learning and feelings about their work. This can produce some outstanding self-evaluation where pupils not only identify what they have learned but are able to say how to improve in the future, for example in a physical education lesson Year 6 pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties identified how to develop and improve their gymnastics technique.
22. Teachers have high expectations. An excellent lesson for older pupils with moderate learning difficulties required the pupils to work independently using the computer and the Internet to find information. Pupils were then expected to report back to the group. The very good science and music teaching is characterised by the high expectations of the specialist teachers and this subject knowledge improves standards.
23. All teachers manage the pupils' behaviour very well, particularly those teachers who have classes that are predominantly made up from pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils are given clear instructions and are expected to follow them. Any potential difficulties are identified quickly and dealt with, often with a look or frown. This is often enough and the other pupils are not aware that correction has taken place. Learning support assistants provide good support to individual pupils who have behaviour programmes and work effectively to deal with challenging behaviour. Teachers structure the small group activities of the literacy and numeracy sessions to ensure that pupils who find it difficult to work with others are well supported.
24. The teachers also manage the ability and cultural range in the classes very well. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are fully involved in lessons and are confident to participate. Learning support assistants are deployed appropriately and all staff work very well with pupils who have additional special educational needs including communication or behavioural difficulties. Many instances were observed where teachers or learning support assistants used a range of successful techniques to enable pupils to take part, for example ignoring the difficult behaviour of pupils and encouraging them to focus on their work.
25. Very little unsatisfactory teaching took place during the inspection. The quality of teaching in a small number of lessons in the Communication Centre suffered when pupils changed activity before completing their initial task and this disrupted their learning. In contrast, in a similar number of lessons the regular change of activity ensured that the pupils concentrated throughout the lesson.
26. Learning is good throughout the school and results from the pupils' positive attitudes to their work. Older pupils become more independent learners assisted by their individual work on the integrated

learning system. The oldest pupils carry out research using either books or information technology. Pupils try hard in lessons and show considerable perseverance, for example in a music lesson, pupils with moderate learning difficulties tried hard to keep up with the rhythm and supported each other. Pupils are interested in the activities provided, for example pupils in Years 3 and 4 in the First School were very interested in a visit by the "Hearing Dogs for the Deaf". Later in the week, they used words such as "rough" and "silky" to describe the dog's coats and tried hard to reproduce these textures when they made their own "dog" collages in art. Pupils develop their patience, for example waiting for the next stage in a lesson or for support when using the computers. The learning of pupils with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language is good and shows many of the same good features as that of the other pupils. These pupils are part of the educationally inclusive nature of the school.

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

27. The school has made good progress in developing a relevant and balanced curriculum since the last inspection. The curriculum has been adapted well to meet the more complex needs of the children who are now being admitted. As children are admitted at different times during the year curriculum planning is made more difficult. There has been a very good improvement in the provision for information and communication technology since the last inspection. There is still no co-ordinator for design and technology but teachers have taken responsibility for co-ordinating the subject for their own pupils and the programme is satisfactory. The curriculum provision for art, music, physical education and the humanities is good. The provision for religious studies is satisfactory and meets the requirements of the Buckinghamshire locally agreed syllabus. The school has adopted an appropriate curriculum of pupils with disabilities on the autistic spectrum as a result of the recommendations of the previous inspection. This is generally having a positive effect on the learning for these pupils. However, in a very small number of lessons it was judged that this organisation disrupted the learning for individual pupils.
28. The nationally recognised Foundation Stage curriculum has been introduced for First School pupils between the ages of four and seven. This is appropriate and planning is appropriately linked into National Curriculum requirements for higher attaining pupils in science and other National Curriculum subjects. The National Literacy and Numeracy strategies have been very well adapted to meet the different needs of all pupils at the Foundation Stage and in Key Stages 1 and 2. The provision for personal health and social education is good. The pupils make good progress and gain in confidence and social skills. Health and drugs education is taught appropriately as part of the programme and the school nurse teaches sex education to the Year 6 pupils. The school is very much involved in promoting healthy eating and fresh fruit is provided for every pupil at break each day.
29. Since her appointment the curriculum co-ordinator has developed a uniform system for subject action planning. Subject planning is co-ordinated. As yet, there is no central timetable to allow the monitoring of the time allocated to the range of subjects in the different classes or to allow subject co-ordinators to monitor the implementation of the planning. Time for monitoring within subjects has only been introduced since the beginning of the current term and co-ordinators do not monitor the teaching of their subjects. Although this is not currently affecting the overall good quality of teaching and learning, it is difficult for co-ordinators to identify whether the planned programmes are implemented in the most effective way. For example, there are no formal mechanisms to discuss the success or failure of particular topics or strategies. The school improvement plan recognises this area as a priority for development.
30. All pupils have full access to curriculum opportunities and the school is an inclusive community. The needs of pupils with additional medical disabilities or learning difficulties are met very well. The school has agreed to implement a single form of sign language to support pupils without speech and this is used consistently throughout the school. There is appropriate support from the speech therapy service for the younger pupils and pupils in the Middle School. Appropriate training has been provided by the speech therapists to the school staff. In addition the school employs its own

part-time speech therapists to deal with the pupils in the Communications Centre and the school is seeking to increase this provision because of the increasing number of pupils coming to the school with speech problems. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are well supported; there is a bilingual support assistant who gives valuable support for ethnic minority pupils. If necessary annual reports are translated into the appropriate language; annual review meetings are attended by a translator. The school is intending to run a sign language course for parents with translation provided for parents from ethnic minorities. The school also employs a music therapist for pupils in the communication centre.

31. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. These are regularly reviewed and revised in accordance with the changing needs of the individual pupils. Suitable individual education plans are in place. The targets set for English, mathematics and personal, social and health education are good and reviewed regularly. The school provides very well for the needs described in the pupils' statements, particularly those who have individual health care plans and staff work hard to ensure that all pupils have the same opportunities to learn and succeed.
32. The curriculum has been enhanced through a range of initiatives. The National Literacy and Numeracy strategies have been adapted successfully and are both implemented very effectively. The school now has Internet access through the National Grid for Learning and this is used effectively, for example, Year 4 pupils sent e-mail to a school in California as part of their humanities lesson. Year 6 pupils access the Internet to help with research into Egyptian gods. The school uses commercial programs for literacy and numeracy and these are having a very positive effect on pupils' literacy, numeracy and social skills.
33. There is a good range of opportunities to extend pupils' experiences outside school, although most pupils travel to school on transport provided by the local education authority and this restricts opportunities for after-school clubs. Each week younger pupils go horse riding to a nearby specialist centre. All pupils can join in the activities taking place in the residential provision until 7 pm. These opportunities offered within the extended day and residential setting help support the education of the whole individual. In addition there is a lunchtime football club, which is very successful. Although the school does not undertake any residential trips, pupils benefit from day trips as part of the curriculum, for example trips to the British Museum, local parks, farms and to Oxford Museum. The school has run a fund raising scheme for the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital with "Jeans for Genes". The Hearing Dogs for the Deaf Association visited the school during the inspection week and was very well received by the pupils.
34. At the present time there is one pupil on an inclusion programme at the local primary school. The school finds placements if it has been agreed as the best course of action for individual pupils. However, the feeling expressed at the parents meeting was that it must be remembered that the majority of pupils have only recently come into the school following unsuccessful placements in a mainstream school. The school has good links with a local school for pupils with severe learning difficulties and pupils from that school take part in lessons at Chiltern Gate.
35. The previous inspection found that there were a number of strengths in the school's provision for pupils' personal development, in particular, spiritual development. These standards have been maintained and the provision is good overall.
36. Assemblies and religious education make an effective contribution to the good provision for spiritual development. The school meets the statutory requirement for collective acts of worship. Assemblies are sensitively managed at appropriate times with good opportunities for quiet reflection. Pupils learn about religious leaders and communities and develop a good awareness of the significance of religious practices in different faiths. They listen well to stories in lessons and assemblies and are respectful when considering other beliefs. Provision for the arts, science and music makes an effective contribution to spiritual development by offering pupils opportunities to admire beauty and reflect on how things have come to be as they are.
37. The provision for moral development is very good. Teachers kindly but firmly explain the difference between right and wrong and most pupils are quick to learn. Teachers set a good example of

appropriate behaviour to pupils and the school behaviour management policy is based on clear moral principles. There are simple class rules that the pupils themselves have helped to devise. Personal, social and health education lessons provide an opportunity to discuss moral issues at an appropriate level. The result is that the school is a very moral community in which pupils generally choose to do what they know to be right.

38. The school provides very effectively for the pupils' social development. The formal personal, social and health education programme is well supported by the sense of community within the school where all individuals are valued. It is a strength of the school that it helps many pupils with poor social skills, or those who present challenging behaviour as a result of their disabilities, to become more socially integrated and to function effectively in class groups. Pupils learn to accept the rules of the group they are in and to see themselves as part of that community. Relationships are excellent and when difficulties arise because some pupils are having difficulties the other pupils continue to remain focused on their task.
39. The arrangements to support cultural development are good and continuing to develop. Pupils experience the nature of their own culture in a variety of contexts, through work in the arts and visits in connection with the curriculum. Teachers use regular opportunities to develop the pupils' understanding and celebration of a range of other faith communities through its religious education programme. This encourages pupils to examine and understand the beliefs, values and religious customs of people across the world. The music curriculum provides pupils with the opportunity to experience examples from a range of musical traditions. The pupils' awareness of other cultures is well supported in other areas of the curriculum especially through stories from other countries. They develop an awareness of life and culture in other societies through work in the humanities and explore the art forms that are typically found there. In one class pupils enjoy the opportunity to examine the culture of the United States through an Internet link with pupils in a school in California.

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

40. This paragraph refers to the provision during the school day. The quality of the residential provision is described in a later section.
41. The excellent relationships that exist in the school provide good personal support for the pupils. The very good monitoring of personal development continues to be a strength of the school since the last inspection. The monitoring of academic progress is good and contributes well to pupils' progress. Overall, the school provides a good level of care for its pupils, with good first-aid provision. Staff know pupils very well and pastoral care is good. Pupils feel safe, nurtured and secure. The food provided by the school is of good quality, recognises individual preferences and mealtimes reflect the caring nature of all staff. Arrangements covering accidents, illnesses and medicines are very good. Sufficient staff have up to date first aid qualifications. The child-protection policy is good, the designated child-protection officer is trained and known to staff and very good links have been established with the requisite agencies.
42. The school health and safety policy is comprehensive and clear. The policy is implemented effectively to ensure that staff and children are safe. All appliance and equipment inspections are up to date and risk assessments are carried out. Staff have good awareness of health and safety matters. The school is very clean and very well maintained. In the previous inspection report, problems were raised regarding the use of seat belts on the school transport and these problems have been rectified.
43. The school's procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. The attendance registers are frequently checked and most parents ensure their children arrive at school on time. The educational disadvantages of pupils taking holidays in term time are clearly stated in the school documentation and by the headteacher. There are good links with the education welfare officers.
44. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. There is a very comprehensive behaviour management policy, which gives clear guidance to staff on dealing with a



range of issues and this works very well. There are also many references in school documentation to the management of pupil behaviour and this reinforces the importance of positive behaviour. The school has adopted a common agreed format for behaviour management and this is implemented consistently well. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There is a balanced range of rewards and sanctions that are implemented by staff with consistency and common sense. Class rules are prominently displayed. Playtime and wet weather arrangements are good. The school's procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good and no groups or individuals are unfairly treated or disadvantaged. Pupils are fully aware that any signs of abuse, harassment or aggression will be dealt with firmly. Pupils are well integrated and included in all aspects of school life.

45. There are good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and these are implemented well. The school has recently introduced the nationally recommended scheme for pupils in special schools and this is recorded in the individual pupils' records for literacy, numeracy, science and personal, social and health education. When enough information has been gathered, it will be used to set achievable and more challenging targets for each pupil and for groups. Since the last inspection suitable assessment systems have been put in place for information and communication technology, religious education and music. Teachers keep extensive records of pupils' current attainment including attainment in topic work. Topic planning sheets have been developed to include assessment and the progress that pupils have made. This information is used effectively to ensure that pupils are provided with work that is suited to their individual needs. This good assessment compensates in many ways for the lack of curriculum monitoring identified in paragraph 29.
46. Teachers and other staff monitor the progress of individuals well. The annual reviews and individual educational plans target individual needs and teachers use this information well when planning their lessons. Pupils with additional special educational needs are regularly assessed and a wide variety of information is recorded. The individual educational plans for all pupils are reviewed at least every term and more frequently if there are any concerns.

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

47. The school has a good partnership with parents. Ninety three per cent of parents who returned the questionnaire together with those parents who attended the parents' meeting felt that the school works closely with them. They feel comfortable about approaching the school with any problems. The headteacher and staff are readily available to see parents. The vast majority of parents feel the school keeps them well informed about their child's progress. They felt that they were particularly well supported at the time of admission, particularly when this took place in the middle of the academic year. All parents receive an appropriate guide to the school curriculum and information about the planned teaching. The quality of pupils' annual reports is satisfactory. They give adequate detail about children's progress in the main subjects. They are less evaluative in other subjects. The school prospectus is informative and clearly sets out the school's expectations of parents and pupils. The governors' annual report is a useful summary of the school year. It does not, however, contain all the required details with minor omissions. Parents report there are some inconsistencies in the amount and quality of written home/school communication.
48. Parents show a keen interest in their children's education and are appropriately involved in school, although the wide area from which pupils travel to school prevents some parents attending on a regular basis. Despite these difficulties parental attendance at parents' evenings and curriculum meetings is good. The attendance at annual review meetings is very good and parents are kept well aware of the targets in the pupils' individual education plans. All parents have signed the home/school agreement. The active Friends' Association organises social and fund-raising events and has provided many resources for the school. Where possible parents help their children at home, for example, hearing them read or supporting behaviour plans.

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

49. The school is well led and this ensures that all the pupils receive a good quality of education. Since the last inspection it has had to implement a programme of redundancies following reductions in its budget. Two members of the previous senior management team left and a new senior management team has been formed. This is effective with all members sharing a common vision for school priorities and taking responsibility for specific areas of the school. The management team has appropriately recognised that its priorities are the development of common systems for planning the curriculum and developing monitoring by subject co-ordinators. Time has been allocated for this process but the system is not yet in place. At the moment, there is little negative impact on the standards the school achieves but this is the result of the quality of teaching and assessment.
50. The school has included lesson observation as part of its performance management system. This system, which incorporates statutory requirements for teacher appraisal, is very good. All staff are involved in setting targets and a wide range of training is provided. This includes whole school initiatives such as the behaviour management system and training for staff to work with pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. The New Opportunities Fund has been used well to provide training for teachers in the use of information and communication technology and the school is providing in-house training for learning support staff. All of these developments have raised standards of provision since the last inspection.
51. The school has made good progress in other areas. Standards of achievement have been raised in most National Curriculum subjects, notably science and information and communication technology. The National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy have been very successfully implemented. Teaching has improved. The curriculum provided has been extended to meet the more complex needs of the pupils and this has meant that the school is able to cater for a wider range of needs than in the past.
52. The current school improvement plan is better than previous ones and identifies appropriate areas for development. Areas identified in previous plans have been addressed and resulted in improvements in standards, for example the development of information and communication technology provision using National Grid for Learning finance. School improvement is enhanced by the whole school ethos to value all members of the school as individuals and the commitment to all expressed in the school aims. This ethos, which stems from the headteacher's personal commitment, is evident in all the work of the school and results in improved standards. The school is committed to all its pupils and will often admit pupils who have failed elsewhere. These pupils become successful in learning and behaviour as shown elsewhere in the report.
53. The governing body has become increasingly involved since the previous inspection. Governors now visit on a regular basis and observe lessons or other school activities. They are fully involved in staffing appointments, for example agreeing to employ specialist learning support staff when a teacher could not be found to fill a vacancy. Link governors report back to full governing body meetings. The governing body receive regular reports from all members of the senior management team about their specific areas of responsibility. The governing body has raised questions in the past as part of its role as "critical friend" although members acknowledge that they are not experts and rely on the judgement of the professional staff. Senior staff recognise this involvement and feel that they are and should be accountable to the governing body.
54. The school uses its funds well to support its priorities as identified in the school improvement plan. Additional learning support staff have been appointed to provide specialist support for subjects such as science and information and communication technology or medical support for individual pupils. Specific grants have been used well as detailed above. School administration is good. Staff and pupils make good use of new technology including the internal network, individual learning systems and the Internet. Financial control is good with a recent local education authority audit identifying only minor criticisms. The governing body has taken appropriate action to remedy these. The current budget identifies a potential surplus above recommended levels but this results from the school being unable to recruit a teacher following rising pupil numbers.
55. There is currently a vacancy for a teacher. However, this is having little impact on progress due to good organisation and good quality teaching in the First School. There are sufficient support staff who are appropriately qualified and have good experience. The school has increased the number of

support staff as a result of its use of local education authority monitoring information. There is a comprehensive staff handbook and new staff are well supported to learn the school systems. All staff feel part of the team and work well together. The accommodation is generally good with very good facilities for information and communications technology, physical education and science. A number of rooms are small and this limits the range of work in practical subjects such as art and design and technology, for example the use of resistant materials in technology. Two classes in the Communications Centre are located in former staff accommodation. Although this means that there are a number of spaces for individual work, group rooms are small and pupils have to use steep staircases. This means that the areas are not suitable for pupils with mobility difficulties.

56. Standards of achievement are good and the pupils have very positive attitudes. They behave well. Teaching is good with a high proportion of very good teaching seen during the inspection. Leadership and management are good. The school is an effective, inclusive community and provides good value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57. In order to continue to raise standards the governing body, senior management and staff need to:
- Develop a master timetable to identify when subjects are taught.
  - Implement the planned system for subject co-ordinators to monitor the teaching in their subject area in all departments.
  - Ensure that subject co-ordinators report regularly to the whole-school curriculum co-ordinator.

(paragraph 29)

## RESIDENTIAL PROVISION

58. The residential provision is good and high standards have been maintained since the last inspection. The pupils who board show improved behaviour and positive attitudes to the provision. The relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are very good. The pupils talk positively to each other, collaborate during activities and recognise each other's success, for example when the points are awarded for individual activities. Pupils gain an understanding of the impact of their own behaviour through the points system and are able to recognise when they have or have not behaved well. Pupils are friendly and relate well to staff. Even when corrected for their behaviour they respond positively, listening and agreeing to try and improve.
59. The staff work very well together to provide an environment which is supportive to the pupils and enables them to develop their personal and social skills. A comprehensive range of activities is provided ranging from the use of computer games to quiet activities and more formal activities where pupils discuss their progress with their "key-workers". The pupils' behaviour is recorded at the end of each session during the evening and all staff give a balanced view on the quality of behaviour. This enables the pupils to know where and when they are being successful. In addition to running the activity sessions, the team explain and ensure that pupils undertake personal hygiene and similar routines and develop their personal skills. Individual pupils have detailed care plans. They are aware of the targets contained in the plans and work well with staff to improve in these identified areas. Even new pupils settle quickly into the established routines, follow instructions and behave well.
60. The residential provision is effective in promoting the pupils' moral and social development. Boarding pupils at meal times learn to co-operate and many examples were seen of pupils helping each other or carrying out responsibilities, for example clearing tables or helping less-able pupils. A range of activities includes opportunities to visit the local community, for example the supermarkets and to understand social routines. These activities are available to non-boarding pupils and provide support for families of these pupils. Links with parents are good. There is a comprehensive introductory booklet that fully describes how the provision operates and this is given to prospective parents. There is regular written communication between the staff and the parents of the boarding pupils. This system has been introduced since the appointment of the new senior childcare officer and is being reviewed and developed to further improve communication.
61. The residential provision is well led and managed. Senior school staff have an oversight of each evening and this ensures a balance between male and female staff. The newly appointed senior childcare officer is very well supported by a team of residential child care staff, teachers and learning support staff. There is a very good ratio of staff to pupils. This enables staff to undertake key worker duties with specific interest in named individual children, for example the workers have group breakfast and teatime tables. The quality of interaction on these tables is very positive. Residential staff are undertaking appropriate training towards National Vocational Qualifications and the school management is investigating the issues raised by the new guidance on the best provision for residential childcare.
62. The accommodation for pupils is good. There are sufficient bedrooms to enable most rooms to be occupied by only two boys and this gives them sufficient space to be private. There are good

communal facilities including television rooms for different age groups, a computer games room and different types of playrooms. The staff accommodation is limited to a duty/sleeping in room and this does not have private bathroom facilities. The pupils have access to a telephone although this is in a communal area and would not allow for private or personal individual telephone calls. The school accepts that is unsatisfactory and different solutions have been tried. At the moment all boarders are male but the school has not been required to admit girls and feels that it could make arrangements if necessary. The resources are very good with a wide range of play equipment for all activities. The pupils are able to use the full facilities of the school and the local community. Overall the improved standards of behaviour achieved and the gains in social development show that the unit provides very good value for money.

## 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	28

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	23	33	8	2	0	0
Percentage	3	34	49	12	3	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.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	120
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	39

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	32

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	10	School data	1.4

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

Due to the small number of pupils at the end of each Key Stage in the last reporting years the pupils' attainments at the end of Years 2 and 6 are not included in this report. The figures in the data reflect the S1 form, which applied at the end of the previous inspection year.

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	8
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	22
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	81
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### ***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	1	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	13	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y7**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.5
Average class size	8

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y7**

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	532

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/01
	£
Total income	1,082,488
Total expenditure	1,073,690
Expenditure per pupil	9099
Balance brought forward from previous year	23,906
Balance carried forward to next year	32,696

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
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)	1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*





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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

120

Number of questionnaires returned

38

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	18	3	3	3
My child is making good progress in school.	63	29	3	3	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	39	0	3	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	47	32	13	0	0
The teaching is good.	79	21	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	68	29	3	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	24	3	0	6
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	29	0	0	6
The school works closely with parents.	71	24	0	0	6
The school is well led and managed.	76	18	0	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	68	29	0	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	24	11	6	24

### **Summary of parents' and carers' responses**

The parents were very positive about the school at the pre-inspection meeting and the questionnaire returns indicate the same features as identified in the table above.

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

Parents identified that their children had often been unhappy in previous schools and that they were much happier since being at Chiltern Gate School. A number of parents raised a concern about their children swearing but this was not evident during the inspection.

## **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**

63. No judgements have been made on standards, achievement or the quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage as there was only a single pupil of this age in the school at the time of the inspection. This pupil was taught with slightly older pupils with all pupils following an appropriate mixture of individual programmes and topics based on developing their knowledge and understanding of the world, creative skills and physical development. The pupil is making good progress in line with others in the group.
64. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good and has operated in the past with larger groups. The curriculum is well-planned and resourced for children from the age of three. It includes appropriate activities to meet their physical, intellectual, emotional and social needs. The early years curriculum is carefully structured to provide for different starting points for children and to provide relevant and appropriate activities that match their needs. The accommodation is very good and provides opportunities for teaching and learning both indoors and outdoors. Staff are well qualified and experienced. They have a good understanding of a range of special needs and appreciate that children develop rapidly during the early years. There are good initial and ongoing assessment procedures in place, so that teachers can build on what children already know, understand and can do. The school is particularly good at working closely with parents as shown in individual records for pupils who had joined before the age of five.

### **ENGLISH**

65. Standards of achievement are good throughout the school including pupils in the Communication Centre and for pupils with additional special needs. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has been successful and has had a positive impact on standards. The co-ordinator has ensured that planning for progress towards meeting the school's targets in literacy has been good. However, monitoring of teaching has not yet taken place and a whole school system of assessment using the national measures for small steps of progress is still at a very early stage of development. Despite this, teachers and support staff record and assess the progress of individual pupils regularly. Individual education plans are in place. These are reviewed each term and are used to inform teachers' planning particularly in the First School.
66. Pupils arrive at the school at different times during the academic year and they are assessed on entry to the school. This enables early identification of their individual needs and strengths. Good progress has been made since the last inspection to meet the literacy needs of pupils on the autistic spectrum although in a single lesson the classroom organisation resulted in disjointed learning for a group of these pupils. The school makes effective use of other strategies to help develop literacy skills including an integrated computer program and a specific project to develop the older pupils social use of language.
67. Pupils by the age of seven make very good progress in speaking and listening. This includes pupils for whom English is an additional language and pupils with additional special educational needs including those with disabilities on the autistic spectrum. Higher attaining pupils in Year 1 talk about events from a story, for example putting ice cream in a frog's bag in a story. Pupils with communication difficulties are able to use sign language to support their early attempts to communicate. Higher attaining pupils in Year 2 were able to dictate their version of a story about three pigs to the teacher. They used the words 'It was the key to the Tree House,' and 'They went into the Tree House and they looked around, there was no one in and the house was in a mess!' They responded well to the Big Book, 'Mrs Honey's hat' recalling the main points of the story.

Lower attaining pupils record their voices onto tape, for example when describing a picture of a sweet shop and relating it to a recent visit to a sweet shop.

68. By the age of eleven the pupils' achievements in speaking and listening are very good and they make very good progress throughout the key stage. Pupils for whom English is an additional language become increasingly confident. They are encouraged to participate fully in lessons and respond enthusiastically to the imaginative teaching. Pupils with disabilities on the autistic spectrum show an increasing awareness of others in their communication, for example listening to others. During a Year 3 lesson pupils talked about all the animals in the Big Book, 'I love animals'. They could describe and act "doing" words such as washing, hopping, clapping and standing. A higher attaining pupil worked independently on the integrated learning system on the computer and was able to correct any mistakes. In a Year 4 lesson, the teacher was able to instigate imaginative conversation from the pupils using a puppet and a 'magic cooking pot'. Pupils were enthusiastic and very articulate in their descriptions of a red jelly. Pupils of this age talk about fiction and non-fiction literature while lower attaining pupils can use sign language and magnetic letters to help them with their accounts of stories. Higher attaining pupils predict the ending to a story. Pupils can read out their answers after un-jumbling words and forming sentences. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, encouraged with the use of puppets, named the animals in a story and responded well to the use of sign language. Year 6 pupils can describe the objects on a card or features on a photograph. They can describe events in the past and convey their enthusiasm.
69. By the time they are seven, pupils make good progress in reading using various commercial reading schemes effectively in conjunction with other resources such as library books to aid independent learning. Higher attaining Year 2 pupils read back their version of a story. Pupils with pre-reading skills are very articulate either verbally or by using sign language when describing a story from pictures. Pupils in the Communication Centre match initial letter sounds such as 'sh-sheep' and "ch- chicken". Higher attaining pupils read fluently and accurately.
70. By the age of eleven, this good progress is maintained. Higher attaining pupils have learnt to read more fluently from chosen books, for example a Year 6 pupil read his chosen library book with great insight and understanding and reached levels close to national averages. Other higher attaining pupils were able to find different words for "say" using a thesaurus. Pupils with additional special educational needs make good progress, for example pupils with sensory impairments use a range of different equipment to assist their literacy development. A lower attaining pupil with communication problems was able to verbally read simple text whilst at the same time signing the meaning of the text.
71. The pupils' level of achievement in writing is generally good throughout the school. By the age of seven, most pupils can overwrite whilst some can copy sentences. Higher attaining pupils write simple stories independently including constructing a sentence. By the time they are eleven, higher attaining pupils are using capital letters and full stops and they understand nouns, verbs, adjectives and plurals. They use word processing skills to complete their work and have, for example, put these skills to good effect when writing about 'Asha in the Attic' or in cross-curricular work in humanities. Lower attaining pupils copy matching rhyming words and link them together.
72. Teaching is very good overall and this improvement since the last inspection reflects the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. During the inspection over half of the lessons were very good or excellent and only one was unsatisfactory. In the very best lessons the teachers plan well and link the pupils' individual learning targets to the schemes of work for pupils of that age. Teachers are skilled in the use of different strategies to support literacy. They plan work to suit individual needs and they use resources in an imaginative way, for example using photographs of the pupils in different places to encourage them to describe their experiences. This helps to motivate pupils and they respond by working hard and showing high levels of enjoyment. Teachers and support assistants manage pupils' behaviour very well. They know their pupils and relationships are very good and play a positive part in the quality of learning in English.

73. All staff have taken part in literacy training and this has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Resources are good and the library facility has improved since the last inspection. Pupils are encouraged to use their literacy skills in many other subjects such as science, religious studies and humanities. In a humanities lesson, Year 6 pupils explained in great detail their visit to the Egyptian section of the British Museum. Pupils are encouraged to communicate effectively in all lessons and staff take the time to listen attentively to help even the lowest attaining pupils to develop this skill. This is a significant strength, which contributes well to the pupils' social development.
74. The quality of English displays throughout the school is good and this has a positive effect on pupils' learning. A wide range of work is attractively displayed including local news and world news, displays of 'words we know' and 'words I can read.' The younger pupils are well supported by visiting speech therapists twice per week in school. The school provides a speech therapist to work two days per week with pupils in the Communication Centre. The therapists also work with individual pupils and with groups of pupils with moderate learning difficulties but there is no on-site provision for speech and language therapy for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school has expressed a strong desire to increase provision.

## **MATHEMATICS**

75. Overall, pupils' achievement and progress in mathematics are good throughout the school. This good progress applies equally to most pupils although the progress of pupils in the Communication Centre is more erratic as lessons are not always as well organised and in a small number of lessons pupils were moved to another activity before completing their initial task. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress. They benefit from the good models of spoken, signed and written language provided by all adults. Good standards have been maintained since the previous inspection as a result of consistently good teaching and because pupils are set challenging and interesting tasks. Day to day assessment is well used to identify learning objectives. Work is carefully matched to pupils' abilities and planned to build on prior learning.
76. The very youngest pupils with learning difficulties make very good progress in developing their mathematical understanding and in learning key numeracy skills. In a very good lesson in the First School the teacher ensured a smooth change of activity from 'snack' time into the numeracy lesson so that pupils knew what was expected of them. Relationships were excellent and pupils were confident, co-operative and attentive. The pupils learned to use sign language and were provided with a very good model by the teacher. She read and signed them the Big Book, "The Five little ducks", stopping to involve the pupils each in turn. In this way, they confirmed their learning and understanding of numbers to five and they began to recognise relationships. The pupils counted in rote to five and indicated how many ducks there were by displaying their fingers, one more or one less. The learning support assistant was very effectively used to evaluate their progress on an assessment sheet against specific targets in their individual learning plans. The teacher's good questioning developed a mathematical vocabulary.
77. Higher attaining pupils by the end of Year 2 recognise and use numbers to 10 and are familiar with larger numbers from their everyday life. They demonstrate understanding of number operations such as addition and subtraction. They use and understand the mathematical language for shape, position, size and quantity. Lower attaining pupils match and copy simple patterns. They join in with new number rhymes, songs, stories and games.
78. Pupils in Year 4 build on prior learning with confidence and competence. They make good progress in measuring and comparing using non-standard units and applying their knowledge, skills and understanding in a 'real life' situation. This took place in a practical lesson, which motivated pupils. They were challenged to make an outfit for the teacher - a hat and costume. The teacher introduced the session with sharp, direct questioning on mental calculation involving consecutive numbers up to 100. All pupils were involved in turn and the questioning was varied so that all pupils were successful. A story "The Paper Bag and the Princess" was used well to reinforce the mathematical language of number, properties of shape and comparatives. With no tape available there is then a lively discussion about what could be used to accurately measure the teacher's

head, waist and length. They all agreed that because it had to be long and flexible that strips of paper would fit the criteria. Group work was well organised. Thorough preparation and clear planning ensured that the pace of the lesson and productivity of pupils was maintained. Pupils worked well in small groups, measuring, cutting, decorating and stapling their paper outfits. The teacher and learning support assistant circulated the groups challenging, questioning and encouraging their efforts. The plenary was a memorable occasion. The teacher tried the outfit on and - "It fits, It fits!" The teacher, splendidly attired, then summarised the key facts and ideas and congratulated pupils on their combined efforts.

79. Pupils in Year 6 build on prior learning and make good progress in using and applying their numeracy skills in solving money problems. They are able to do this because all lessons start briskly with oral work and mental calculations and pupils remember number facts and recall them without hesitation. They have now built up of a repertoire of basic strategies to help them solve problems. They take pride and care in recording their calculations on worksheets. Pupils recognise coins and make up different amounts up to a £1 using the least amount of coins. Good resources in the form of individual moneybags and relevant worksheets motivate pupils. Good questioning, skilfully targeted and class discussion, challenges pupils to think, to reflect, to generalise and helps them work out their own answers. High expectations, that pupils will work hard and behave, mean that pupils do their best. Pupils in Year 6 also act as mentors or peer tutors for younger pupils working through the individual learning program in the information and communications technology suite. This considerably enhances their self-esteem and also consolidates their basic number skills.
80. Higher attaining pupils by the end of Year 6 count forward in 2s, 5s and 10s to a 100. They recognise the relationship between addition and multiplication, and addition and subtraction. They are able to interpret data presented in block graphs and other simple diagrams. They know and work with everyday non-standard and standard units to measure length and mass. Lower attaining pupils count and order numbers up to 20.
81. A scrutiny of pupils' work in mathematics confirms they make good progress over time. Pupils' profiles are good and contain a comprehensive range of assessment data. There is a balanced coverage of the mathematics National Curriculum Programme of Study and pieces of pupils' work are collected, stored, annotated and levelled to demonstrate progress and achievement. Photographic evidence is also used successfully to show progress.
82. The school has successfully introduced the National Numeracy Strategy. The mathematics co-ordinator supports staff with clear advice and guidance. The teachers' subject knowledge and understanding of pupils' special educational needs is good and this is a significant factor in the good and very good teaching across the school. Teaching has improved well since the last inspection. Numeracy skills are effectively reinforced in many areas of the curriculum, especially in information and communication technology, science and design and technology.
83. The subject is well led and co-ordinated with joint planning. Curriculum documents, the targets in pupils' individual plans and lesson plans are all detailed and closely linked to the National Numeracy Strategy. They provide good support for teachers and ensure pupils progress through and between year groups. The school is aware and intends to introduce classroom monitoring by the mathematics co-ordinator and this has the potential to further improve the quality teaching and learning. Resources are good and have improved since the previous inspection. Teachers also make very good resources to match pupils' specific needs. The use of information and communication technology, especially the use of the individual learning program reinforces pupils' progress through finely graded tasks. Classroom discussions and group work make a good contribution to pupils' moral and social development and to their speaking and listening skills. Appropriate homework further extends and consolidates pupils' learning.

## SCIENCE

84. At the time of the previous inspection, progress in science was good, based on good teaching and an appropriate scheme of work. Significant aspects of the provision have been improved and the outcomes by the time pupils leave the school, are now very good.
85. Curriculum planning has been significantly improved and a comprehensive and appropriate scheme of work has been adopted which provides well for pupils in mixed-age classes through a two-year cycle. Teaching is consistently good and often very good. There is a well-equipped specialist science room that provides an excellent learning environment. During their time in the school, pupils in all classes make good and very good progress through all strands of the National Curriculum and achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment. A few higher attaining pupils attain at levels close to the national benchmark (National Curriculum level 4), in aspects of the subject, although communication and literacy difficulties inhibit their ability to do so consistently or to score well in written tests. On average pupils attain significantly higher levels in science than they do in the other core subjects of English and mathematics.
86. The youngest pupils up to the age of seven have access to science through specifically planned investigative work relating to developing their knowledge and understanding of the world. This approach is appropriately planned to ensure that they acquire the necessary skills and knowledge across the full range of the subject. There was insufficient evidence to allow a judgement about the standards reached by these pupils. The achievement of the older pupils in the First School is good.
87. By the time they leave the school at age eleven, pupils have acquired many of the necessary skills for successful scientific enquiry. Younger pupils in Years 3 and 4 carry out investigations devised by the teacher, observe and discuss the results. By the age of eleven, with appropriate guidance they devise, set up and conduct experiments, record their results and compare these with the predictions they have made. As a result they confirm, for example that the gradient of the ramp, the weight of the vehicle and the hardness of the push all have an effect on the distance travelled by a toy car on a particular surface. They note that it travels further on some surfaces than others as a result of the variation in friction levels between surfaces. They know the principles that underlie fair testing, pointing out in an experiment on waterproofing that the same quantity of water should be used on each test material. Higher attaining pupils devised methods for enhancing sounds in a hearing experiment, by using a conical funnel.
88. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 understand the conditions required for the growth of plants and animals. They recognise and name familiar specimens. They know that plants take in food through the roots and animals do so through their mouths. By the age of eleven, pupils name the main parts of plants and animals, including the major bones of the human skeleton. Higher-attaining pupils have a good understanding of life-cycles, reproductive processes and classify creatures according to diet into herbivores, carnivores or omnivores. They know that humans are omnivores and that to remain healthy they must eat a balanced diet. They are beginning to develop an awareness of the role of predators in the food chain.
89. The pupils develop a good awareness of the properties of a range of materials through experiment and research. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 sort objects according to the materials they are made of and classify them by common properties. They know that the state of materials can change as they see ice melting in a warm place or observe how a jelly sets. By the time they are eleven, pupils begin to identify aspects of materials that make them suitable for specific purposes as when they select materials for a waterproof hat or explore the possibilities of materials that stretch. They recognise that air has properties, including weight. Higher-attaining pupils describe how liquids behave, identifying and comparing liquids other than water, explain what happens to water when it boils and begin to show understanding of the water cycle.
90. Pupils develop a good awareness of physical processes as they investigate a range of forces. The youngest pupils, in the Middle School, name a range of light sources and know that sounds can be made in different ways. They differentiate between pulling and pushing forces and examine these in operation. Older pupils extend this by exploring the forces that are involved in stretching, squeezing, twisting and rotating. They begin to understand the properties of electricity; they know that a circuit must be complete to work and can trace faults when it does not. Higher attaining

pupils plan and make a circuit with one or more switches, understand that bulbs are brighter when wired in parallel than in series. They explain cause and effect when devising or drawing circuits.

91. Teaching is very good overall; it always at least good and it is usually very good when the subject is taught by a specialist teacher with very good knowledge and understanding of science. As a result, pupils learn very well and display a very positive attitude to the subject. The teacher's expectations are consistently very high and pupils come to adopt these for themselves. The very good teaching ensures that lessons start with a very clear introduction and a review of previous work that enables pupils to recall what they have previously learned and to see how this links to the current lesson. This was clearly seen in a lesson when pupils revised their knowledge of materials and the origins of finished items when preparing for an investigation into suitable materials for a waterproof hat. Lessons are planned in great detail and good knowledge of pupils' learning and behaviour is evident in the planning to meet individual needs, including the management of any difficult behaviour. The teacher's anticipation of response is very good as in a lesson on the skeleton when pupils had assembled a two-dimensional version by sticking 'bones' on to paper in the correct relationship. Some did not want to 'spoil' their version with labels for individual bones so the teacher supplied them with a smaller photocopied version that she had prepared earlier. In this and other lessons, the vocabulary required is identified in the planning and carefully taught so that pupils develop an appropriate awareness of scientific language. In all lessons, well briefed, highly competent and confident support staff play an important part in high quality teaching. They provide support to individual pupils and assess how pupils have responded. The quality of learning is significantly enhanced by good behaviour that enables pupils to work together. For example, a Year 6 class worked very well together to complete and label a life-size drawing of the human body. They showed good regard for one another's need for space, shared resources and supported each other well. On a number of occasions however, the learning of individual pupils was disrupted when they were required to leave the class to follow other parts of their learning programme.
92. Curriculum planning and assessment, which were already good, are constantly being reviewed and improved so that they make a very good contribution to pupils' learning. The two-year cycle of topics ensures that pupils in mixed-age classes are able to build on their previous learning without unnecessary repetition. Planning is based on the accurate assessment of previous learning. This is very effectively used to identify short-term learning targets and to meet the individual needs of pupils. The subject is very well managed by the specialist teacher who ensures that there is effective planning for continuity between the key stages. The good resources are very well used, including the opportunities for fieldwork offered by the extensive site. The excellent specialist science room provides a very good focal point for activities and provides a stimulating environment with good displays recording and celebrating the pupils' work.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

93. At the time of the previous inspection, pupils' progress in art was at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Teaching was satisfactory or better but there was no co-ordinator in place. Pupils' progress now is good, teaching is consistently good and an effective co-ordinator is now in post. Curriculum planning has been improved and a nationally recommended scheme of work has been adapted which provides well for pupils in mixed age classes through a two-year cycle. During their time in the school, pupils in all classes achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
94. The youngest pupils enter school with under-developed creative skills. Between the ages of four and seven they gain experiences in art through specifically planned work within the Early Learning Goals relating to creative development. This is the nationally recommended Foundation Stage curriculum for children aged between four and five. The work is very well planned to ensure that they make good progress. The learning support assistants support the teachers very well and they work effectively as a team. There is a clear focus on pupils' individual learning needs and a range of stimulating activities helps them to achieve well. They use pencils, felt tips, crayons and paints confidently to make marks and movements on paper to represent their ideas. All pupils have a sound knowledge of colour and texture, as illustrated in their collage work following the talk on "the

hearing dogs". They talked about colours and soft and hard materials. Also in this lesson good use was made of sign language to enhance speech development.

95. By the age of eleven, pupils gain a good knowledge of a wide range of artists. They experience painting in the style of different painters, for example Van Gogh, Turner and Suerat. They build up good background knowledge of the painters and how they worked. A good illustration of this was a Year 6 lesson based on a selection of Seurat's paintings. Pupils used magnifying glasses to identify his painting techniques. They noted that he used small dots and as a result of this study, they successfully produced paintings in his style. Their interest was so strong that the higher attaining pupils used the Internet to find out more about his life and work. This information was shared in a lively whole class discussion. Pupils develop their observational and interpretative skills as shown in the Middle School where pupils created effective drawings of a pharaoh's death mask after a visit to the British Museum. They also sculptured realistic mummies and successfully produced three-dimensional pictures of a papyrus boat scene. Pupils use information and communication technology well to support their learning through the use of specialist art software as seen in their Egyptian paintings and abstract paintings in the style of Jackson Pollack and Mondrian. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language is also good.
96. The teaching of art is good overall and was sometimes very good during the inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about the subject. This enthusiasm motivates the pupils, which results in good quality learning. Lessons are well planned and often linked to the topic work and seasonal celebrations. Teachers use questions well, often linking to other areas of the curriculum, for example in the Year 6 lesson on Monet the teacher questioned the pupils on the meaning of "width, narrow, height, and horizontal" in relation to Monet's painting of the regatta. This questioning helped to reinforce their understanding in mathematics. Teachers are well organised, they provide clear explanations and give clear instructions for tasks. This encourages pupils to develop their thinking and enthusiasm for the subject. Teachers help the pupils to develop the ability to recognise effective work through perceptive questioning. In all lessons, the support staff were well-briefed, highly competent and helped to encourage the pupils to become independent learners. In the First School, they are fully involved in the assessment of pupils and record the support they give to pupils. This helps the teachers to plan the next stages of learning. Relationships within the classroom are very good and this contributes very well to the positive and purposeful working atmosphere. Pupils respond well in lessons and display good attitudes to learning.
97. Curriculum planning is good and supported by visits to the museums and art galleries. There are good links to topic work in the humanities, music and religious education. The recently appointed co-ordinator has worked hard to effectively reorganise the resources and has reviewed the scheme of work to ensure that pupils build on their previous learning. She is eager to develop the subject and plans to further develop assessment. At present, the co-ordinator has not monitored classroom practice, which means that she lacks detailed knowledge of teacher performance. There is no specialist art room. The accommodation in some classes in the Middle School is cramped with no sinks. There is space in the First School which might provide a specialist art room and a space to display work and bring resources together in one room.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

98. At the time of the school's previous inspection progress in design and technology was reported as generally satisfactory throughout the school. Since then the pupils' attainment on entry has declined and so although attainment levels are lower the pupils make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. During the inspection, only two lessons took place and judgements are based on a study of teachers' planning, discussions with pupils and previously completed work. There is no longer a specialist technology room, as this has now become a specialist science room. There is still no co-ordinator although the headteacher monitors the teachers' planning and a small working party plans the curriculum. This cooperation has enabled less confident teachers to begin to develop the subject as part of topic work. A nationally recommended scheme of work provides well for pupils in mixed age classes through a two-year cycle.



99. The youngest pupils, aged four to seven, have access to design and technology through specifically planned work within the nationally identified Early Learning Goals relating to knowledge and understanding of the world. This approach is appropriately planned to ensure that they acquire the necessary skills and knowledge across the full range of the subject. They make good progress because of good quality teaching and learning. Children learn to experiment and build with construction materials during a range of well-planned activities. They put together boxes on a base to make a farmyard for toy animals. The younger pupils make a bird feeder and talk about the reasons for making it and the materials they are using. These pupils enjoy the experience of making a fruit salad and observing the different skins and pips. This enhances their understanding of a healthy diet, sharing the preparation and eating the end product.
100. In the Middle School pupils draw up appropriate plans for making an item; first, closely examining commercially produced items to help them. For example, when making bread they study the different types of bread commercially available and taste them. In group work they then make bread using different types of flours and they confidently evaluate their final product. They adopt the same process for making money containers. In this activity, pupils made two different types of money container using different types of materials and methods of joining. They designed a logo. They then successfully compared their plans to their final products.
101. Both lessons observed involved food preparation. In the lower school this was carried out in an appropriate kitchen and both teaching and learning were good. Unfortunately, in the Middle School although the teaching was good, the classroom was inadequate in size and the quality of learning and achievement suffered from the inappropriate facilities. An examination of teacher's planning, discussions with pupils and an examination of some of their finished work show that overall both teaching and learning are good. The teachers' planning is good and pupils are provided with opportunities to carry out a variety of activities and develop appropriate skills. Pupils clearly enjoy the subject and readily discuss the work they have produced, how successful it has been and how it could have been improved. The range of activities provided and the instruction received, clearly help pupils to make good gains in both their designing and making skills.
102. There is a new policy for design and technology and scheme of work based on the National Curriculum programmes of study. Resources are adequate and since the last inspection they have been re-organised and are now easily accessible to teachers. Assessment takes place for some assignments, for example, the money containers, but in the absence of a co-ordinator there is no effective monitoring of assessment or the quality of teaching.

## **HUMANITIES**

103. The pupils achieve well in the humanities curriculum, which includes both history and geography. They make good and occasionally very good progress in lessons throughout the school and this is an improvement since the last inspection.
104. The youngest pupils are taught through the Early Learning Goals as part of the national Foundation Stage curriculum. They achieve well in developing a knowledge and understanding of their world because very good teachers' planning ensures that they take part in activities based on first hand experiences. These encourage exploration and problem solving. Initially pupils learn about their classrooms, for example where they sit in whole class lessons. They learn about themselves and the people who help them. In the three-year humanities cycle they look at a good range of topics including the weather, mini-beasts or colours and shape. During a Year 3 lesson pupils tried on costumes from other parts of the world. They talked about how different they looked and used different methods of recording this information, video, photography, tape recording, verbal descriptions and drawings. Relationships in the lesson were very good and the teacher managed the pupils' behaviour very well. The pupils took turns to speak and helped each other dress up in the various costumes.

105. In the Middle School all pupils are taught through topic work and care is taken to ensure that the programmes meet statutory requirements. The topic cycle includes topics based on the National Curriculum programmes of study such as the Egyptians, our environment/special days, the Romans, castles, Britain since the 1930s and the Victorians. The topic includes many areas of study; for example pupils will study the Ancient Egyptians, the geography of Egypt and the art of modern and ancient Egypt. This work is linked well to literacy, for example a lesson included gathering words relating to Tutenkahamen. Pupils in the Communications Centre are taught an adapted curriculum for their needs, for example they studied Egyptian hieroglyphics in a practical way. Other Year 4 pupils made bread. One group made unleavened bread for the poor and another group put fruit into their bread for a rich Egyptian. Pupils access the Internet to find out about Ancient Egyptian gods; the pupils had used a digital camera to record their findings on a recent visit to the British Museum.
106. During another session a class of Year 4 pupils with behavioural difficulties opened a parcel full of presents and information about America from a school in California. They could identify America on a wall map and globe. They then discussed what has been sent to them including a letter from the Californian teacher describing the sad feelings of the children and her with regard to the events of the 11<sup>th</sup> September. The pupils talk about the twin towers and the devastation that occurred, displaying very good speaking and listening skills.
107. By Year 6 pupils role-play the differences between rich and poor in Victorian times. They identify the differences between the social classes by using different sources such as video and contemporary pictures. They use their information and communication skills well, for example to scan photographs of their faces onto bodies of Victorians. They collect artefacts and describe Victorian inventions and the Victorian way of life.
108. Teaching is satisfactory overall although some very good teaching took place during the inspection. Teaching was good when imaginative activities were used to stimulate the pupils' interest and links were made with other work. In good lessons, teachers explained to the pupils what they were going to learn and used questions to keep the pupils thinking about the task. In a single unsatisfactory lesson the objectives were not achieved and the level of work was not suitable for the ability of the pupils. Teachers generally manage the age and ability range in the classes well and learning support assistants support lower attaining pupils.
109. The co-ordinator has a good influence on subject development this includes consistency in planning for all classes of pupils within the school. However monitoring is not in place and the assessment in the subject is still very much at an early stage of development with the introduction of the nationally recommended measures for pupils with special educational needs. There are very good links to other subjects through the topic approach including literacy and numeracy. Resources are good and are used well and information and communication technology is used well to enrich the subject. The subject makes a good contribution to social, moral, spiritual and cultural education. The quality of humanities displays around the school is stimulating and encourages pupils' learning.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

110. Standards in information and communication technology are good and this represents very good progress since the previous inspection. Standards of achievement have been improved through a combination of good specialist teaching, improved training and resources and more structured opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology in specific timetabled lessons and in other subjects across the curriculum.
111. Pupils aged between four and seven in the First School have appropriate opportunities to use computers and other communication technology devices such as cassette recorders or adapted switches. Pupils understand how to control screen objects such as the cursor with higher attaining pupils able to use a trackball to initiate other events such as making on-screen animals perform. By the end of the key stage higher attaining pupils begin to use the integrated learning

system for individual literacy and numeracy work. This includes being able to log-on to the computer to ensure that their work is recorded by the system. They follow screen instructions or verbal prompts from the system. They perform more complicated actions such as dragging items with the mouse or matching symbols on the screen.

112. By the end of Year 4 in the Middle School higher attaining pupils produce text for labels or to support their work in other subjects. These higher attaining pupils know how to choose capital letters and are using the return and backspace keys appropriately. Lower attaining pupils are only beginning to use such keys but use the mouse well and approach new tasks confidently. By the end of Year 6, the highest attaining pupils produce independent work for the school website. This includes designing their own buttons and they understand how pages of the website can be linked together. The website features a range of material including multimedia presentations and images taken by pupils using the digital camera. Lower attaining pupils use graphics programs to produce a range of the designs and simple spreadsheets to produce graphs.
113. Pupils of all ages have very positive attitudes and learning when using information technology. In class lessons pupils log on to the Internet to find information, for example about the work of famous artists or to investigate material about Roald Dahl in conjunction with their literacy work. They can identify web addresses and know how to navigate between web sites. All pupils show considerable perseverance when using the computers, for example following completely through an individual learning session on the integrated learning system and attending to the questions even when the other children are engaged in other activities. They collaborate well, for example when having to share computers. Higher attaining pupils help other pupils when they run into difficulties and pupils wait patiently for staff support. The highest attaining pupils recognise their own progress and become increasingly independent in the use of information technology.
114. The teaching in specific information technology lessons is good. The teacher has a very good understanding of the school system and a wide range of software is available to suit the full range of ability. Lessons are well planned, include a wide range of activities to match the ability range in the class and pupils are encouraged to describe their own learning. A specialist member of learning support staff has been appointed and is able to support with hardware and software problems. The teacher is well supported by the general support staff and class-teachers. These are confident in the use of the equipment and provide individual support in lessons for pupils with additional special educational needs. All classes in the Middle School and Communication Departments receive timetabled information technology lessons and this ensures that they make good progress. Pupils in the younger classes in the First School receive appropriate opportunities to use the computer but these are not identified consistently in planning nor are the outcomes recorded consistently. In the oldest class in the First School and in the other departments the pupils' skills and knowledge gained are recorded very well. Individual profiles are well maintained and transferred to ongoing record sheets. These are well evidenced by a range of work demonstrating progress using different applications as required by the National Curriculum programmes of study.
115. All pupils have appropriate access to the full range of information and communications technology equipment and there are no differences in attainment or achievement between different groups of pupils. There are a number of enhancements available for pupils with sensory impairments. There are plans to develop specialist hardware and software to support literacy and this is being supported by funds raised by the Friends Association. Teachers have received good training through the use of the New Opportunities Fund initiative. The information and communication technology co-ordinator is providing training for the learning support assistants. The school network has recently been upgraded and a wide range of software is available. Pupils are able to access the Internet from any computer and use e-mail to communicate with other schools. There are appropriate policies and procedures to ensure that the use of the Internet is monitored and regulated. The school website is informative and provides an opportunity to display the pupils' work and celebrate their achievements.

## **MUSIC**

116. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in music. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection when pupils' progress was inconsistent and is a direct result of using a very good specialist teacher to deliver the subject across the school. This ensures that pupils build steadily on prior musical knowledge, skills and understanding, as they get older. This good progress applies equally to all groups of pupils including those for whom English is a second language.
117. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make very good progress in creating and imitating movement in response to music, while continuing their topic on 'Animals'. Pupils reply to an initial greeting in turn and in tune showing an awareness of pulse. Pupils listen attentively, recognising the differences in pitch, for example when the teacher used two puppets to demonstrate high and low sounds. Pupils are allowed to choose from a wide range of multi-cultural percussion instruments and explore the different sounds they make, which delights them. They choose different instruments to identify different animals.
118. In the Middle School, in a Year 3 and 4 singing lesson, pupils show good attention and appraisal skills when listening to sea shanty songs. Pupils sing as individuals and groups, accompanied and unaccompanied, with confidence and good control of rhythm and pitch. They show an understanding of life at sea with appropriate role-plays of 'What shall we do with the drunken sailor' and 'Rio Grande' in front of a large audience. Year 6 pupils with social and communication difficulties, build on prior learning and musical experience. For example, they listened carefully to African music 'Edongo' and accompanied it by playing a range of African instruments with reasonable control, tempo and timbre. Some move rhythmically around the room in time with the music when they are encouraged to do so. They show a natural enjoyment of movement in response to music. Higher attaining pupils understand how time and place influence the way music is created and performed. By the end of Year 6 pupils have had the opportunity to listen to and appreciate a wide range of music of different cultures. They can play a variety of untuned percussion instruments and are developing voice control when singing individually or in a group. Many can maintain a simple beat. They can identify a few common instruments by name and have been introduced to a wide variety of music including African and Indian music and dance.
119. The teaching of music is good. Planning and preparation are thorough, so that activities flow and learning opportunities are maximised as in a First School lesson where the teacher sang a greeting to pupils as they arrived. The teacher made very good use of puppets and a range of music including 'Walk like a Brown Bear', and 'The Carnival of Animals'. Pupils moved around the floor in response to the music, imitating the actions of the bear. The teacher set a good example, crawling and scampering on all fours, while the learning support assistant was effectively used recording pupils' responses. The teacher asked pupils to play their instruments and helped them decide which sounds are most appropriate to the movements and roar of a lion and the strutting and cackle of chickens. They then began to develop a piece to show the lion chasing the chickens. All pupils were involved, beating and shaking instruments, most demonstrating an appropriate understanding of the musical elements of rhythm and tempo.
120. In the Middle School the specialist teacher is particularly skilled at communicating ideas and in helping pupils express their feelings through music and movement. She is well supported by other teachers and learning support assistants. Staff manage behaviour in a patient and positive way so that learning is not interrupted. Teaching is well planned but the teacher has the confidence to change this in line with the pupils' response. In a very good lesson the teacher demonstrated one or two African instruments and showed how these are played. The pupils listened attentively, while she explained that these instruments are made by hand and are hundreds of years old, compared to the electronic organs that are modern and machine made. She briefly introduced an African chant, 'Che-Che-Kule' but abandoned it when pupils were not receptive, instead allowing pupils to research African instruments using a website.
121. The music department is well led. The curriculum meets the requirements of National Curriculum Programmes of Study. There have been good improvements in assessment procedures and in

resources since the last inspection. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' social, moral and cultural development and has close cross-curricular links with religious education and history. Good records of pupils' achievement and progress are recorded on audio and videotapes. The co-ordinator is aware of the need for a greater use of information and communication technology to explore, create and record sound, and the need to improve the storage of musical instruments.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

122. Standards have improved in the subject since the last inspection. Many of the pupils admitted since that time have more complex physical or learning needs. The attainment of the highest attaining pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 is no longer as close to national expectations as identified in the previous report. However, all pupils achieve well in relation to their abilities. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 in the First School follow instructions well and are enthusiastic when taking part in group activities such as "Oranges and Lemons" or "Follow my leader". They take part in a "warm-down", stretching and relaxing as instructed. Physical education extends their personal and social learning when dressing after the activity.
123. Younger pupils in Key Stage 2 recognise the need to warm up prior to exercise. They follow the teacher's instructions well with higher attaining pupils beginning to work more independently, for example finding a space to work in. They begin to sequence their movements combining balances with rolls. They use equipment safely, for example when moving "up then sideways" along a set of wall-bars. When swimming, most pupils are confident in the water, ducking their heads or swimming widths and lengths of the pool. Older pupils, including those at the end of Key Stage 2 work much more independently and are more confident using a range of equipment or following a series of instructions. They use equipment safely and sensibly including unfamiliar equipment such as a springboard. There is no significant difference in attainment or achievement between boys or girls or pupils for whom English is an additional language.
124. The pupils' learning, attitudes and behaviour are very good. For example, a group of pupils visited the local leisure centre to take part in a gym-club. They warmed up well with even pupils new to the school or those with physical difficulties working hard. Despite considerable background noise they listened attentively to the instructor and willingly undertook unfamiliar activities. Higher attaining pupils were able to provide demonstrations or encouraged others, for example by applauding a successful jump. Pupils with behavioural difficulties responded well in all lessons and were able to accept criticism or correction. All pupils changed quickly before and after activities and wore appropriate kit.
125. Teaching is good. Teachers plan sessions effectively to ensure that although there may be a wide age and ability range in the group all pupils are supported to work at their own individual level. Teachers manage the range of activities and the pupils' behaviour very well with clear instructions and correct children who become too excited. Support staff work well with lower attaining pupils offering encouragement and coaching. This enables the pupils to gain confidence and achieve well. Teachers record the range of activities in the lesson, the pupils' responses and successes. The lessons have a good structure with a range of activities. Where teaching was better higher attaining pupils were used to demonstrate activities or provide leadership.
126. The subject is co-ordinated well with all the staff who teach the subject agreeing on the range of activities to be provided. The range of activities is good and based on their knowledge of the pupils and the requirements of the programmes of study. This ensures that all pupils are given the opportunity to make good progress. Assessment and recording are appropriate although reports in annual reviews offer little detail. The pupils' achievements are recognised through a range of national schemes such as swimming awards. The school has good accommodation and makes good use of local facilities. The pupils have the opportunity to participate in sporting events against other schools and the co-ordinator is leading the school's involvement in a county-wide physical education initiative. Resources are good for the range of activities provided.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

127. At the time of the previous inspection, religious education was judged as strong with good progress recorded in all key stages. The report identified that some of the pupils attained levels of attainment that matched those of all pupils at the end of Key Stage 2. The more complex needs of the current pupil population have resulted in lower levels of attainment. However, with the successful introduction of the new local agreed syllabus, the pupils are still making good progress in religious education lessons and their achievements are satisfactory over time. Where pupils receive more regular lessons, which are distinct from the topic lessons, their achievement is better.
128. There was insufficient evidence from lessons or from pupils' previous work seen, to enable judgements to be made about achievement, teaching or learning for pupils aged four to seven in the First School. The pupils do not follow the agreed syllabus, but work within the nationally agreed early learning goals relating to knowledge and understanding of the world. They are offered an appropriate weekly story drawn from one of a range of faith traditions and illustrating an aspect of religious belief.
129. The pupils in the Middle School follow the programme set out in the local agreed syllabus. The youngest pupils experience dressing up in appropriate clothing and enacting aspects of celebrations from a range of religious cultures. By the age of eleven, the pupils demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge of the basic structures of Christianity and other world religions and the practices that characterise each faith. They understand the parallels between families, friendship and faith groups and the importance of these in helping individuals to organise their lives.
130. They know that there are special places or buildings to which people go to worship and that worship is supported by the use of special objects and associated rituals that represent and reflect important aspects of belief. They associate specific practices and artefacts with particular religions and indicate how these are integrated into religious beliefs. They identify similarities and differences and begin to understand how religions have developed. They show respect and tolerance for the beliefs of others and demonstrate this when they talk and write about their visits to places of worship.
131. Pupils recognise the part that special stories play in explaining the basis of beliefs and in illustrating concepts through relating them to individual experiences. They enjoy stories such as those of Noah, or that of Rama and Sita. Higher-attaining pupils offer explanations of the part that these stories play in the belief systems of the Judaeo/Christian and Hindu religions. They know that religions have their own holy books that are used to inform believers and to support worship.
132. Teaching in the Middle School is good overall and was very good at times in individual lessons. In the most effective lessons, good subject knowledge allied to an enthusiastic presentation ensures that pupils learn well about the customs and beliefs of Hindus and Jews. The teacher makes good use of direct questions and monitors the contributions of individual pupils. This ensures that all pupils are enabled to participate. The teachers make effective use of religious artefacts and other resources to illustrate teaching points and to bring the subject to life. They use a range of books to provide information and to focus pupils' attention on the story being told. High quality worksheets are used and enable all pupils to answer while ensuring that higher attaining pupils are challenged by the work. Pupils listen well and acquire appropriate knowledge of a range of beliefs, rituals and celebrations. Where teaching is less effective the pupils have fewer opportunities to participate in the lesson and are largely passive listeners. The curriculum provided and pupils' understanding is well supported by a range of visits to places of worship and visits by representatives of various faith communities to talk to pupils.
133. Although the subject is managed by an enthusiastic co-ordinator, there is no monitoring of teaching or curriculum coverage. In some classes, the subject is taught in blocks at intervals and in others, it is offered within a cross-curricular topic or as part of the personal, social and health education programme. This has a negative impact on the continuity of pupils' learning and their achievement is satisfactory in this subject whereas it is good in others despite equally good teaching. Good assessment procedures have recently been devised and piloted with one group, but have not yet been in use across the school long enough to generate effective records of progress in

the subject. The co-ordinator is building up a very good selection of resources which are very well used by teachers across the school.