# INSPECTION REPORT

# NORTHCOTT SPECIAL SCHOOL

Kingston upon Hull

LEA Area: Kingston upon Hull

Unique reference number: 118138

Head teacher: M Johnson

Reporting inspector: M Whitaker 1424

Dates of inspection: 21 - 22 January 2002

Inspection number: 196355

Short 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 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Dulverton Close

Bransholme

Kingston upon Hull

Postcode: HU7 4EL

Telephone number: 01482 825311

Fax number: 01482 822253

Appropriate authority: City of Kingston upon Hull

Name of chair of governors: David Smith

Date of previous inspection: June 1997

# INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members				
1424	M Whitaker	Registered inspector		
13462	R Mothersdale	Lay inspector		
7615	P Hall	Team inspector		
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### PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

#### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Northcott School is an area community Special School for boys and girls aged four to 16 years. The school makes provision for an increasingly diverse range of special educational needs. These include moderate and severe learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties, communication disorders and designated provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. There are currently 111 pupils in the school, all of whom have statements of special educational needs. They represent a broad social background with some living in the city of Kingston upon Hull and others coming from the East Riding of Yorkshire. 41 pupils are eligible for free school meals. The vast majority of pupils are of white United Kingdom origin, although one pupil is from a minority ethnic group. The range and balance of special educational needs within the school has broadened since the last inspection. The school has achieved national recognition in a number of areas and has been identified as a Beacon school.

### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an excellent school, which has continued to develop and improve over a number of years. The quality of leadership and management is excellent and is continually seeking ways of improving the school further. This has resulted in consistently very good and often excellent teaching. The exceptional level and quality of resources and the excellent planning, assessing, recording and monitoring procedures are key factors. They support teaching very well and enable pupils with a diverse range of special educational needs to achieve very high standards in relation to their earlier learning. Very effective learning and progress takes place. Costs are broadly average and the school provides very good value for money.

### What the school does well

- Enables pupils with a very wide range of special educational needs to achieve very well and make very good progress.
- Has excellent planning recording, assessing and reporting systems which support very good teaching.
- Develops excellent attitudes to learning, attendance and behaviour amongst pupils.
- Leadership and management from the head teacher and the deputy head teacher are excellent. They are supported very well by staff and governors.

#### What could be improved

• There are no significant areas for improvement.

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

The school has made very good improvements since it was last inspected in June 1997. All the issues for action identified in that report have been successfully tackled. All teaching time is used effectively, the quality of teaching has improved further and targets in the school development plan are met, and the governors fully meet their statutory duties. In addition, standards have continued to improve whilst the diversity of needs has broadened. Resource levels have improved significantly across the school. The school has been identified as a Beacon school, and is very well placed to continue to develop and improve.

### **STANDARDS**

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

Progress in:	by age 11	by age 16
speaking and listening	A	A
Reading	A	A
Writing	A	A
Mathematics	A	A
personal, social and health education	A	A
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A

Key		
very good	A	
Good	В	
satisfactory	C	
unsatisfactory	D	
Poor	Е	

<sup>\*</sup> IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.

Pupils of all ages and with a diverse range of special needs achieve very well and make very good progress as they move through the school. The designated provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders has recently been accredited by the National Autistic Society and pupils attending this provision make the same amount of progress as other pupils in the school.

### PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils enjoy school and join in lessons with enthusiasm.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils respect each other and behave very well both in and out of the classrooms.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships are excellent and pupils unite a very wide range of needs, become mature and responsible.
Attendance	Excellent. Attendance is very high compared with similar schools. The level of unauthorised absence is very low.

The excellent ethos of the school is a significant factor in its success. It has developed excellent attitudes to school and to learning amongst its pupils. There is a real commitment to raising standards. Relationships are excellent and all pupils respect each other and support their learning.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 4 - 11	Aged 11 - 16
Quality of teaching	Very Good	Very 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 consistently very good throughout the school. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subjects they teach and in particular how to enable pupils with a very diverse range of needs to learn effectively. They know the pupils well and take account of this when planning lessons to ensure that all can benefit. The choice and level of resources are excellent and try very well. Support staff are used very well to enable all to take an active part in lessons and a wide range of teaching strategies is used to motivate and interest pupils. Literacy and numeracy are very well taught and the excellent assessment and monitoring of pupil's achievements are very effective in ensuring that work is reflected to the needs of individual pupils.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is very well planned and taught in an exciting, stimulating way. It is enhanced by the wide range of additional activities provided, particularly at lunch times.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are well supported.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school has created a very supportive ethos in which the personal, social, spiritual, moral and cultural development adds to the richness of their experiences.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent. The procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance and behaviour are excellent. Procedures for maintaining academic progress and personal development are excellent.

The very high quality and range of the curriculum is a significant factor in the achievements of pupils. They enjoy a very well planned curriculum, which is taught in an exciting and stimulating way so that all pupils, regardless of their individual needs have full access to it. The very good range of activities provided outside teaching time further enhances pupils' experiences. The whole ethos of the school is concerned with pupils' development and a climate has been created which positively promotes this. The excellent monitoring procedures ensure that all pupils benefit from the provision.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Excellent. The head teacher and deputy head teacher have provided a clear vision for the school. They promote high standards by creating a very effective learning environment which is exceptionally well resourced.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Very well. The governing body is fully involved in the school and is well aware of its priorities for development and the improvements that have been made.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The head teacher and the deputy head teacher fully evaluate the performance of the school and take very effective action to enable it to develop further.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. The school is exceptionally well resourced and this is very effectively used to provide learning. The school uses specific grants very effectively.

The quality and determination of the head teacher and the deputy head teacher, very well supported by the governors, have been key factors in the development of the school. They are constantly seeking improvements and work tirelessly to ensure that resources are available and teachers are able to work to a very high standard to promote pupils' learning. Every aspect of school life is carefully evaluated and positive action is taken to develop where necessary. Principles of best value are fully evident in the work of the school.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved		
Their children are happy	Behaviour		
The progress made by children	The amount of homework provided		
The quality of teaching			
The leadership and management			

The inspection team fully agreed with all the positive comments made by the parents. They could not agree with their concerns. Behaviour in school is very good and homework is used effectively to support teaching.

# **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Enables pupils with a very wide range of special educational needs to achieve very well and make very good progress.

- All pupils build very effectively on their reading as they move through the school making very good progress and achieving very well in relation to their earlier standards. Pupils enter the school at different points in their educational careers with a variety of special educational needs including severe or moderate learning difficulties, behaviour difficulties, medical problems, speech and language disorders and autistic spectrum disorders. Because of their special educational needs it is inappropriate to compare their attainment with age-related averages or expectations. It is important to ensure that whatever the level of standards pupils are reaching when they enter the school they make progress and achieve appropriately during their time in the school. The excellent leadership and management and the high quality of teaching enables pupils of all abilities to make very good progress and to achieve very well.
- Throughout the school pupils achieve very well and make very good progress in speaking and listening. The majority of pupils find it difficult to express themselves when they enter the school, many lack confidence and are afraid of making mistakes whilst others have speech and language difficulties which inhibit them. Evidence from observers and from a scrutiny of pupils' records indicates that rapid progress is made by the vast majority of pupils. The very supportive environment and positive ethos which provides support and encouragement and where it is alright to get things wrong, quickly provides pupils with a greater confidence and, coupled with the very good teaching, leads to very good progress. In a literacy lesson for the youngest pupils for example, when describing story settings and incidents, pupils discussed the 'Three Billy Goats Gruff' with enthusiasm. They shared their ideas about what might happen next and one boy suggested alternatives to what the Troll might say to the goats. They confidently used vocabulary such as author, index and illustrator and were able to talk about books, which provide information and fiction books. They listened carefully whilst a pupil and the teacher read sections of the story aloud and were able to answer questions about what had happened and what might happen next.
- In a Year 11 class pupils demonstrated the characters in 'Gregory's Girl'. Pupils whom records showed a reluctance to join in conversations were able to explain their views and were not allowed to answer with one word. They used relatively complex sentence structures when responding to questions like 'what sort of person is Gregory', and they willingly talked about their views in potentially sensitive areas such as 'I think Gregory is in love with Dorothy'. They listened to everyone's ideas and asked sensible questions to try to understand the reasoning behind people's answers.
- Similarly, very good progress is made in writing and reading. Where again, the climate for learning supports pupils who have often, previously regarded themselves as failures. When asked, many pupils said that they had improved because everyone helped them and again it was okay to be wrong. In the lesson for younger pupils referred to earlier, those with a wide range of needs, including a child with a visual impairment made very good progress. The challenge in-group or individual work was very well related to the needs of pupils and support staff were very effectively used to ensure that all could benefit and make progress. More able pupils could re-tell the story with an emphasis on sentences using full stops and capital letters, whilst another child was re-telling the story by drawing pictures and putting captions under each. The pupil with visual impairment could re-tell the story using a range of toys with excellent discussion with a support staff.

- Very good progress and achievement is evident in mathematics throughout the school. Younger pupils learn how to count to 100 in 10, 5 and 2, and make very good progress in estimating numbers between 1 and 10. Braille cards are used to ensure that pupils with visual impairment can take part in lessons and are able to make very good progress. They have learnt to count back, forward and on teachers' records show how this reports very good achievement for all pupils since joining the school.
- Attainment varies considerably for older pupils. However again teacher's assessments and record keeping indicates very good progress over time irrespective of their level of attainment. This was supported by evidence from lessons, for example in a Year 10 class pupils with a very wide range of ability made excellent progress as a result of the carefully matched work and appropriately targeted support. Pupils were divided into four ability groups. Less able pupils were carrying out a range of exercises developing their understanding of coin recognition up to 20 pence. By the end of the lesson the pupils were able to find the correct coins to 'buy' articles up to 20 pence, selecting the correct coins. Slightly more able pupils could complete a similar task up to a pound and give the correct change. The third group made excellent progress in finding the fewest and most amount of coins needed to purchase articles up to five pounds. They were able to explain this in written form as a sum and add up correctly. The most able group were able to make excellent progress working with ten pounds. Excellent teaching challenged them to work out the sums mentally and they responded very well demonstrating excellent progress and understanding.
- In the other subjects of the curriculum pupils of different levels of ability made very good progress and very effective learning when investigating how sedimentary rocks are made, investigating resistance and testing rocks for hardness. The quality of reading was excellent, ensuring that challenges were well matched to the different needs and abilities of pupils and using a stimulating range of resources, including video. Excellent support was provided for a visually impaired pupil, enabling excellent learning to take place.
- 8 The excellent subject knowledge of the teacher and the high quality resources enables pupils to make very good progress in information and communication technology. Year 11 pupils for example, demonstrated high levels of competence in using email and can explain the differences between systems and search engines.
- 9 Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders also make very good progress and achieve very well because of the quality of teaching, the level of researching and the excellent assessment and record-keeping procedures. This was identified in the recent accreditation by the National Autistic Society.

# Has excellent planning, recording, assessing and reporting systems which support very good teaching.

The school has developed excellent systems for planning, recording, assessing and reporting the progress of pupils and the curriculum they experience. These systems are key factors in raising the quality of teaching since the last inspection as they provide high quality information about the curriculum and the gains individual pupils make. This is then very successfully used to plan future learning targets for pupils, which are challenging but realistic. This, in turn leads to the very good progress pupils of all ages make in all areas regardless of their level of attainment. During the inspection 25 lessons were observed. Teaching was excellent in six lessons, very good in 13, good in five and satisfactory in one. Assessing pupils' progress and using this for planning future lessons against the background of a comprehensively planned curriculum for all pupils were significant elements in the successful teaching.

- Long term planning has been improved and developed since the last inspection. Policies for all subjects are in place in a common format and the long term planning ensures that all pupils receive a broad and balanced experience with all appropriate subjects being taught throughout the school. For secondary-aged pupils, planning is sequential with pupils systematically building on their learning. For primary-aged pupils, because of their number, planning occurs on a rolling programme basis, again ensuring a broad experience. For the oldest pupils external accreditation through Certificate of Achievement Awards has been developed. For individual, more able pupils the school makes arrangements for General Certificate of Secondary Education to be provided. This has happened recently in mathematics. The head teacher is aware of the need to continue to ensure that this level of accreditation is made available to those pupils who would benefit from it in the future.
- Planning in the medium term is also excellent. It is largely based on half termly study units and pupils' individual education plan targets. Assessment is on-going in relation to individual subjects and end of unit assessments take place with records completed feeding in to pupils' Record of Achievement folders. Short term planning for lessons is excellent. All lessons have clear learning objectives as intended learning outcomes for the lesson as a whole and individual objectives related to IEP targets. The intended outcome for each lesson is shared with pupils at the beginning of the lesson and then progress is evaluated at the end so pupils can be clear what they have learnt. A Year 11 information and communication technology lesson provided a good example, where pupils recapped on the work covered in the previous week in relation to logging on to UK email. Clear objectives were discussed to reinforce the previous learning and to develop confidence and expertise in using the knowledge and understanding and, at the end of the lesson, a very good discussion took place about what gains pupils felt they had made and what still concerned them. As a result very effective learning and progress took place where, because of the planning, pupils were able to evaluate their own learning.
- All planning is very thoroughly maintained by the deputy head teacher and by subject leaders to ensure that work is fully covered. Individual education plan targets for mathematics and English are maintained by the subject leaders whilst the deputy head teacher monitors the other targets. They are fully evaluated and revised in relation to the progress pupils make. Information from IEPs is fully used in the Annual Review of pupils statements, which again are very thorough.
- The school is developing its assessment procedures further through the detailed monitoring of pupils' progress using the national 'P' scales. It is intended that, in conjunction with the local education authority, the progress of different groups of pupils as well as individuals, will be fully evaluated so that school targets can be set for the different groups and the school will be able to evaluate its relative success with different special educational needs.

## Develop excellent attitudes to learning, attendance and behaviour amongst pupils.

- Pupils throughout the school have excellent attitudes to learning. They co-operate well in lessons and are keen to improve. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school and as a result, attendance levels are excellent compared with similar schools. The average for attendance for special schools nationally is 89 per cent. Attendance at Northcott was 94 per cent last year. There is very little unauthorised absence. Behaviour throughout the school, in lessons and during break and lunch times is also excellent.
- A climate for learning has been established where pupils care for each other. They respect the feelings and challenges faced by others and accept and support them. In assembly, for example, one boy with a speech difficulty took some time to explain to everyone what he liked about another

- pupil. Everyone waited patiently until he had finished what he wanted to say and agreed with his comments. There were many similar examples during lessons. In a Year 9 English lesson where pupils were discussing 'Macbeth', the pupils with a very diverse range of special educational needs were allowed time to express their opinions and others listened carefully to what was said. Very mature discussions took place in pairs about the key factors introduced in Act one. For example, they debated the influence of Lady Macbeth and how they thought Macbeth would feel about the situation and everyone's opinion was carefully considered by their partner.
- Throughout the school pupils concentrate well on their work, they enjoy what they do and become fully involved. In a Key Stage 4 sex education lesson, pupils displayed sensible and mature attitudes. They worked very well together in mixed pairs discussing how boys and girls develop relationships and how they should approach people they like. They identified a range of appropriate things to say and ask in trying to get to know someone better. As a result of their excellent attitudes and mature response very effective learning took place. By the end of the lesson all pupils could understand and empathise with difficult points of view as well as being much clearer about their own views.
- In a Key Stage 3 geography lesson considering Eco-systems, the very positive attitudes of pupils and their eagerness to learn led to good progress being made. Through very good teaching pupils co-operated very well and began to develop research skills to discover things for themselves. They learnt to use a range of resources to discover information, such as maps, atlases and books, using content and index pages successfully. The use of the interactive white board also has a very positive effect in developing and maintaining pupils' interest and promoting effective learning.
- The school works very hard and successfully to create this climate for learning. It develops amongst pupils the desire to learn, work hard and to succeed in relation to individual learning objectives but within a context where there is mutual respect between staff and pupils and between pupils. This is a key factor in developing a confidence within pupils, which, in many cases had been missing. Pupils are not afraid to try, in the knowledge that their attempts will be respected, and there is nothing wrong with making a mistake. One boy said to an inspector, 'If I try and I get it wrong I can learn the right answer. Nobody will laugh at me. If I don't try I won't know if my ideas are right or not!'.
- This epitomises the climate created and leads to a very positive learning environment where pupils want to be and where they behave exceptionally well. As a result they learn very effectively and make very good progress in all areas of learning regardless of their level of attainment.

# Leadership and management from the head teacher and the deputy head teacher are excellent. They are supported very well by staff and governors.

The head teacher and the deputy head teacher provide excellent leadership and management for the school. This was identified as a strength, which was helping the school to improve at the last inspection. They have continued to develop and as a result have been instrumental in moving the school from a rapidly improving school in 1997 to an excellent school. This has been the result of developing an exceptional climate for learning where everyone is concerned with enabling pupils to make as much progress as possible in the context of a school, where everyone is valued and cared for. Systems have been established to enable teachers to work effectively through excellent planning and assessing procedures. The head teacher, in particular, has been very successful in promoting the school through a variety of national and international awards which have raised its profile and generated considerable additional income. This has led to the school now being exceptionally well resourced. The careful management of resources, including staffing, has had a very beneficial impact on the quality of teaching and consequently on the achievement and progress of all pupils.

Considerable demands and expectations are made of staff, but they are rewarded by the excellent attitudes of the pupils and the very high level of resources with which they work. All of this has been achieved alongside a changing and extending range of special needs within the school. The excellent leadership and management have enabled the school to take all the changes in its stride without detriment to any pupils. The school has been recognised as a Beacon school and is providing advice and support in the areas of leadership and management to a range of other schools.

- The governing body fulfils its role very effectively. This is important since the last inspection. It has been active in developing the role of the school and has been involved in discussion with the local education authority, as the range of special educational need has developed. This has included the inclusion of pupils with moderate learning difficulties from a local special school which closed and an increase in the number of autistic spectrum disorder pupils attending the designated provision. A further development of an outreach service for autistic spectrum disorder pupils is being introduced with the local education authority, this year. Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and of priorities for development. They receive a comprehensive report from the head teacher and are fully involved in the school development planning process. A strength of the governing body is the number of parents represented as past governors have become co-opted when their term has been completed. This has led to a significant number having first hand experience of the school.
- The senior staff support the head teacher and deputy head teacher very well in determining the priorities for development. All staff are involved and the allocation of development money is closely linked to the priorities in the school development plan. Subject leaders are involved in monitoring the provision and standards achieved in their areas of responsibilities, and they produce plans based on their evaluations to improve standards and the quality of education. They do so, confident that they will be supported by the head teacher and deputy head teacher. Funding from a wide range of sources, including standards fund and support from the local Education Action Zone is very well managed and used to enhance teaching and raise standards. The head teacher carefully evaluates the impact of spending on the standards achieved as well as comparing results and prices to ensure best value for money is achieved.

### WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

There are no significant areas for improvement identified in the report.

# PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

# Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	25	
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	8	

# Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	6	13	5	1	0	0	0
Percentage	24	52	20	4	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than four percentage points.

# Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	
Number of pupils on the school's roll	111
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	41

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

### Attendance

### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	5.4

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6

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

# Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	110
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	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	2	2
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 - Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.3
Average class size	9

 $FTE\ means\ full-time\ equivalent.$ 

# Education support staff: YR - Y11

Total number of education support staff	27
Total aggregate hours worked per week	744

# Financial information

Financial year

	£
Total income	987,880
Total expenditure	922,423
Expenditure per pupil	8,386
Balance brought forward from previous year	61,671
Balance carried forward to next year	127,128

2000 - 2001

# Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2.0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0.0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

 $FTE\ means\ full-time\ equivalent.$ 

# Results of the survey of parents and carers

# Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	120
Number of questionnaires returned	24

# Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	88	8	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	67	29	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	58	38	0	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	29	25	0	0
The teaching is good.	83	12	4	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	79	17	4	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	88	8	0	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	88	8	4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	79	12	4	4	0
The school is well led and managed.	88	4	4	4	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	74	17	9	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	70	22	9	0	0