

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **RODNEY HOUSE SCHOOL**

Burnage, Manchester

LEA area: Manchester

Unique reference number: 105616

Headteacher: Ms P Stanier

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Cook  
2351

Dates of inspection: 5 - 6 November 2001

Inspection number: 197902

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 Assessment

School category: Community Special

Age range of pupils: 2 – 7 year

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: 388 Slade Lane

Burnage

Manchester

Postcode: M19 2HT

Telephone number: 0161 224 2774

Fax number: 0161 225 5186

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Dr D Jellinek

Date of previous inspection: 6 October 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Rodney House is a day, mixed, special school for 48 pupils aged two to seven with severe learning difficulties who are admitted for a thorough assessment of their special educational needs. On average, pupils attend the school for about two years. At the time of the inspection, there were 65 pupils, 38 of whom were part-time, making 47 full-time equivalent pupils. Most are children of nursery and reception age (60) but five are aged between five and six. The term pupil will be used throughout the report unless specifically referring to children under compulsory school age. Twenty-four pupils are of ethnic minority heritage. Thirteen are from homes where English is not the first language. All these pupils are at an early stage of language acquisition. A high percentage (74 per cent) of full-time pupils are eligible for free school meals. Six pupils have a completed statement of special educational need, stage 5 of the Code of Practice and 20 are at stage 4. The pupils have significant delays in their learning and achievements when they enter the school and a few have very difficult behaviour. Most travel from the inner city areas of Manchester.

Since the last inspection, two specialised classes have been established, one for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), and more recently, a class for pupils with language difficulties.

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

This is a very good, very well led and managed and highly effective school. The particularly good quality of teaching, the teamwork of the staff and excellent relationships between the staff and the pupils ensure pupils do very well and develop very positive attitudes to their work. Value for money is very good.

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

- Excellent teamwork and very high quality teaching ensure that, overall, pupils make very good progress.
- Excellent relationships between the staff and the pupils lead to pupils developing very positive attitudes and becoming more outgoing.
- Pupils in the ASD class make extremely good progress in developing their communication skills.
- Parents are very well informed about school life and highly involved in the education of their children.
- Pupils' experiences are very effectively widened through use of the community and opportunities to work with children who do not have special educational needs.
- The leadership and management of the headteacher and deputy headteacher are very good indeed, driving the school on to meet the needs of all pupils and to raise standards.

There are no significant areas for improvement. One minor point regarding the attendance of a few children under compulsory school age is referred to in the commentary.

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

The school was last inspected in October 1997. All the issues raised in the report have been tackled successfully and very good improvement has been made since the last inspection. A working party was established and the accommodation difficulties resolved as far as possible. Arrangements for the access of transport have been improved and made safer. History, geography and religious education are now taught to pupils of compulsory school age. The governing body plays an effective role in the running of the school. They have undertaken training, set up sub-committees and participate in the monitoring of standards. In addition there have been significant improvements in almost all areas of the school's work including the quality of the teaching, pupils' progress and their attitudes. The commitment and involvement of the staff and the very high quality of the senior managers indicate a very good capacity to continue to improve.

## STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by Year R	by Year 2	Key	
speaking and listening	A	A	very good	A
reading	A	A	good	B
writing	A	A	satisfactory	C
mathematics	A	A	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	A	A	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A		

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

Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress as can easily be seen in the targets met on individual education plans for each subject area. They also do very well against targets set by the school in English, mathematics and art using divisions of the nationally recognised 'P' (performance) scales. Pupils make particularly good progress in improving their communication and language skills and those with ASD in the special class, do exceptionally well. The strong emphasis on teaching language is very effective in helping pupils with English as an additional language to make very good progress. Pupils make very good progress in the areas of literacy and numeracy because teachers are skilled in using appropriate elements from the National Strategies.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to learn and interested in what they are asked to do. Many become more able to concentrate and enjoy their time at school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils quickly learn what is expected of them and follow class routines well. The few pupils with difficult behaviour make very good progress towards learning self-control.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Through the exceedingly strong relationships between the pupils and the staff that work with them, pupils gain as much independence as possible. Pupils with ASD make great strides in relating to others.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

Most pupils play independently, and gradually learn to share toys and equipment. A number of instances were seen of one pupil helping another without being asked by staff. Most pupils of compulsory school age attend well, but the overall level of attendance is adversely affected by two pupils who, despite the best efforts of the school and the education welfare service, have been absent a great deal. Also a number of parents of children under compulsory school age take them on holiday during school time.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2
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.*

The quality of teaching is very high and shows a marked improvement since the last inspection. Teachers plan their lessons very well to make sure that the special educational needs of all the pupils in their classes are met effectively. Support staff (nursery nurses and support workers) are very well briefed and the staff teams in each class work extremely well together. All staff have very good levels of expertise and know the needs of the children. Communication skills are taught exceptionally well by all the staff in each class. Where appropriate, signing or the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)<sup>1</sup> are used very effectively and pupils make very good progress in these areas. Many non-speaking pupils develop a repertoire of signs and pupils with ASD in the special class, learn to use PECS to make their wants and needs known. Personal and social education, literacy, language, numeracy and mathematics are taught very well. Scientific skills are taught effectively, often through the knowledge and understanding elements of the Foundation Curriculum. Pupils are very interested in their work and often concentrate for relatively long periods because activities are carefully chosen to gain their attention. Those with English as an additional language become involved in what they are doing and through the strong emphasis on teaching communication skills, they improve the acquisition of language very well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good. It caters for the wide range of needs in the school and includes, where appropriate, the Foundation Curriculum, the National Curriculum and religious education. The use of the Treatment and Education of Autistic-related and Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH) <sup>2</sup> approach and the PECS system in the class for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder is exceptionally good and extremely effective for these pupils. The community is used very well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. These pupils are taught very well. Good account is taken of their heritage when topics are chosen. Where appropriate, an interpreter is made available for meetings with parents.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils' moral and social development are promoted very well. The provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There is a good level of care and staff are concerned about the well-being of the pupils. Pupils are constantly assessed, their needs analysed and progress recorded to establish what works best for them.

<sup>1</sup> Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) – pupils are taught to give a symbol or symbols, such as written word or pictures, to an adult to initiate and express their needs.

<sup>2</sup> Treatment and Education of Autistic-related and Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH) – A programme of very structured teaching with a strong emphasis on the use of visual learning (cues) and reducing or eliminating distractions.

Opportunities are very good for pupils to integrate with mainstream pupils. A playgroup is integrated with class 2, which gives the children very good role models of behaviour, communication and independence. Children attended a mainstream nursery last year and this year there are links prepared with a local primary school for reception age children to join in sessions. The curriculum is enriched through visits including an excellent residential stay for four-year-olds. Parents are very involved in the education of their children and very well informed about their progress.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and deputy headteacher are extremely effective in driving the school forward. Appropriate and well-planned steps are taken to meet needs that are constantly changing. The whole staff take a positive role in improving standards. The school improvement plan is very effective.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body is very aware of the work of the school and fulfils its responsibilities well. There is a good programme of visits to gain firsthand information and good links with specific subjects.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is very good. There are very effective procedures to check how well the school is meeting its targets on the improvement plan. Pupils' progress is regularly reviewed and work on setting targets is continuing.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used extremely well, particularly the staffing.

A strong feature of the school is the emphasis on learning for the staff as well as the pupils. As would be expected from a school with Investors in People status, training undertaken by all members of staff ensures they are knowledgeable and skilled. As a result, pupils benefit and standards are raised. The accommodation is leased from the health authority so the school does not have a great deal of control over this aspect of their expenditure. In all other aspects great care is taken to achieve the best value for money.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• They are kept well informed about how their children are getting on and the school works closely with them.</li> <li>• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few parents are not happy about the amount of work to be done at home.</li> </ul>

The team agreed with all the positive comments made by parents. They did not agree that the amount of work to be done at home needed changing. Bearing in mind the age of the children and their tiredness at the end of the school day, there is a very good level of suggested activities. At the termly individual education plan reviews, staff specifically suggest things that parents can do to help their child at home. Where appropriate, books are regularly chosen and taken home to read with parents. Additionally, suggestions for work to continue at home are made in home-school books and in the daily class letters from time to time. Pupils in the ASD class take home a PECS book when they are ready to make good use of it.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

**Excellent teamwork and very high quality teaching ensure that, overall, pupils make very good progress.**

1. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. A major feature is the excellent way staff work together. In each classroom every adult knows exactly what to do to ensure all pupils are learning effectively. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly using targets from pupils' individual education plans as well as the Foundation Curriculum and the National Curriculum and make sure they deploy staff to best advantage. They have regular, scheduled meetings with their teams of nursery nurses and support workers and discuss how pupils are progressing and who will do what in each session. For example, in one class of nursery children, two members of staff directly teach one or two pupils at a time whilst other staff oversee the 'play' activities. In this way pupils make very good progress in learning numbers and initial letter sounds, as well as learning through a very good range of other experiences. Moving from one activity to another is handled particularly well so that no time is wasted. Nursery age children learn to recognise that a change of activity is signalled through the use of song. They are then sent off in groups, some to play and others to work with staff who accompany them to the relevant areas. Children needing chairs or walkers to move are helped, if appropriate, or given the space to manoeuvre. Staff that are not directly teaching constantly check that all children are involved. They also intervene, for instance when two children wanted to use the same piece of equipment. Pupils' learning is extended when staff work with them and talk and question. Staff ask questions about the books pupils are looking at, guide them to do a matching puzzle, and help them to read the names of the children in the class, written on cards.
2. Children make very good progress towards the early learning goals of the Foundation Curriculum. They do particularly well in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Similarly, pupils in Year 1 do very well working on the early stages of the National Curriculum and they make notable progress in English and mathematics. This is partly because staff are skilled in adapting elements of the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies. For example, pupils enjoy listening to the Big Book and join in when they can. By the time they are in Year 1, most pupils can indicate the title and the author of a book. They enjoy listening to 'The Tiger Who Came to Tea' because of the exciting way the story is told by the teacher. Most remember key parts of the story and use initial letter sounds to identify words effectively. In a class largely of reception and nursery aged children, resources are chosen very well to capture the children's interest. For example, they are asked to count how many monkeys on the 'monkey mitt' and to repeat simple two colour patterns using construction blocks. The expertise of the teachers and the staff working with children with profound and complex needs is very high. They are skilled in recognising the small steps that contribute towards learning and know how to look after each child effectively. Objects are used to cue children into what is going to happen; for example, a raised circle on a card is passed to every child to indicate circle time, when children are seated in a circle, take turns and share experiences. Switches are well programmed and help children communicate at the appropriate time. Signing is consistently good with these children and in other classes, although other communication methods are used with the ASD class. Staff take time to ensure that pupils from homes where English is not the first language understand instructions. Because these pupils are at an early stage of learning language, vocabulary is gradually introduced often through signing words, for instance 'more' and 'thank you'.
3. Specific teaching to improve pupils' physical skills is done very well. Where pupils are identified as needing help to improve their co-ordination, sessions are arranged for activities with a nursery nurse. These sessions are very well planned and structured, no time is wasted as equipment is to hand and pupils move straight into practical activities. The enthusiasm of the nursery nurse is transferred to the pupils and they make very good progress. For example, they put pegs in boards, move items from one container to another with tongs and throw and catch balls. One pupil went some way towards conquering his fear of heights by balancing on a beam and, with

assistance, walking its length. Water skills are very well developed through specialist teaching and very good adult to pupil ratios ensuring learning takes place. It is clear from records that pupils learn to be confident in the water and a few are able to move themselves about the pool without adult support.

4. Classrooms are organised and managed well. Apart from the ASD classroom, which is deliberately kept at a low key so pupils are not distracted, classrooms are bright and vibrant places, full of colour and interest. There are often specific areas for potentially messy activities, such as the sand tray, water play and painting. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world are increased and creative development improved through working in these areas whether independently or with staff guidance. Exciting scenarios are set up to illustrate topic work, currently on food, such as a pretend café, and children are making play-dough vegetables to sell in their 'greengrocer's shop'. This encourages conversation and develops co-operative working. Pupils' work is celebrated and displayed. For example, carefully drawn and coloured pictures of vegetables and splatter paintings of spiders' webs are attractively displayed with titles and pupils' names on their work. A block graph shows clearly the results of each pupil's work deciding which colour jelly they like best. There are colourful paintings illustrating simple rhymes, for instance 'a frog in a bog'. A few pupils are able to indicate which work they did. The limited space in the smallest classroom does, on occasion, make it difficult for the teacher to give pupils enough room to work alongside without disturbing each other.
5. The school is very good at assessing and meeting the diverse, and often very complex, needs of all of the pupils. All staff play a role in assessing and often recording responses to get a clear picture of how well the pupil is doing. The school is flexible, because the results of assessment may lead to alternative approaches being necessary. For example, a pupil may start in the ASD class but not thrive sufficiently and need to be moved to a class where there are different ways of working. A pupil's individual education plan (IEP) is invaluable in setting out exactly what they will learn wherever they are taught. They are constantly under review to ensure the best progress is made.

**Excellent relationships between the staff and the pupils lead to pupils developing very positive attitudes and becoming more outgoing.**

6. Staff very quickly build strong relationships with the pupils. Parents comment that their children enjoy coming to school. This is evident at the beginning of the day when warm welcomes are given to each individual pupil whose faces light up as they greet their teachers and support staff. Praise is used very well to reinforce appropriate actions, for example choosing a book and for doing something well. Pupils are constantly prompted to attempt new things or to try harder. This creates a very positive atmosphere in classrooms. Nursery aged children were encouraged successfully to operate their Big Macks (electric switches that have pre-recorded messages), to push down to get the response. Staff commented, "well done, that was really good" and "can you push a bit harder?" Where necessary, time will be taken waiting so that a pupil can respond. Pupils are aware that staff listen to what they have to say or indicate, and as a result they feel valued and more prepared to answer. Using information in the home-school books, what pupils have been doing at the weekend is discussed. This reinforces links between the home and the school for the pupils, and demonstrates the importance staff place on their experiences.
7. Pupils' confidence is improved and they become very involved in what they are doing. For instance in one class, reception aged children dressed up, some as customers and others as those who cook and serve in burger bars. For a considerable period, in response to prompting and questions from a member of staff, they took orders, 'cooked' food, put it on the plates or in special bags and gave it to customers, who 'ate' their food. They worked well together in the confined space of the burger bar, beginning to share equipment.
8. There is a strong bond of trust between the pupils and the staff. For example, in the swimming pool, nursery aged children with considerable difficulties relax and float as staff move them up and

down the pool. They move from side to side like fish and laugh with pleasure. In another instance, pupils were given different foods to taste illustrating a story they were reading. All went well with the ice cream and different types of chocolate. However, when they were given a slice of lemon it was evident that for some it wasn't just the taste that they did not like. Their belief that the staff would always give them pleasant things to do was upset. It appropriately made them cautious about anything else the teacher might offer them! As a result, they were reluctant to try banana and strawberries without considerable encouragement.

9. Pupils are proud to be given jobs to do to help their teacher. The 'class helper', who is identified each day, takes the register to the office. They may be helped, for example, those in wheelchairs are taken by a member of the support staff, but they all have a turn. This serves to widen the number of adults they meet as well as developing a sense of responsibility. Often the class helper assists with preparing for snack time. A reception aged child put out mats and beakers and helped to take round the choice of drinks. A Year 1 pupil helps to prepare for the class writing activity by putting out the pencils and the paper. Pupils are encouraged to help tidy up after activities, which they do willingly.
10. Strong relationships are also developed between the pupils and the midday supervisors. Lunchtimes are calm. In the dining area, pupils sit in groups around tables with an adult. They are well guided to develop appropriate table manners. Pupils are at ease with the school nurse and pleased to see her when she comes into the classroom.

**Pupils in the ASD class make extremely good progress in developing their communication skills.**

11. The provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder in the special class is very good. A very high level of staff expertise in using the TEACCH approach and PECS is a major factor in helping the pupils to make excellent progress with their communication skills. Pupils become more settled and confident through using the structure provided. Obsessive behaviour becomes less dominant and learning takes place. Support staff are very well briefed by the teacher and extremely well organised. They offer very good role models to the pupils and manage difficult behaviour well. The consistency in the way pupils are dealt with underpins the routine and strengthens pupils' understanding of how they are expected to work. Staff are patient but firm. They repeat instructions clearly and succinctly using the pupil's names followed by the instruction so the pupils understand. For example, a pupil left his seat during a group session. He was led back to his chair and immediate praise was given when he sat down.
12. All pupils use PECS, within the TEACCH structure, very well so that, prompted by staff, they move from one activity to another smoothly. They take their card to the schedule and swap it for the next. Play cards are returned to the posting box. By intervening at appropriate moments, staff encourage pupils to use their special books to communicate their wants and needs. Pupils make very good progress, improving the number of picture/symbol phrases they put together. For example 'I want Three Ducks'. Staff make sure the necessary cards are in each pupil's book and introduce new ones effectively.
13. Due to lack of space in the school itself, the class is based in a demountable building in the grounds. Although not desirable, the temporary building is very well organised. The use of space in the room is carefully thought through to make the best learning environment for the pupils. Areas are clearly designated as play and work. There is a whole-class space and a screened area (bay) for individual work. This ensures pupils are able to work without distraction. Work within the bay is very well arranged. Trays for each activity are prepared before each session and the pupils systematically work through a series of trays of individual tasks. The content of what is being taught is very well chosen to ensure the activity is exactly right for the level of the pupil. These activities are kept short to maintain interest. Good account is taken of the National Curriculum and, where appropriate, the Foundation Curriculum within the TEACCH framework when planning work. Literacy and numeracy are taught very well and as a result pupils make very good progress. They learn to match words in sentences and practise reading them. They match

shapes and colours and compose sentences, for example to identify the colour of the toy car to be sent down a complex ramping arrangement. Staff are very aware of the needs of the pupils. Individual education plans are detailed and provide excellent guidance on what pupils will learn.

14. Communication skills are taught very well during circle time. With effective support and encouragement from staff, pupils gradually learn how to behave within a group. For instance, to wait for their turn and to listen to what others have to say. Songs and photographs are very effective to cue pupils into what is expected and the routine is carefully followed. Excitement is generated and interest raised through well devised activities. For example, when pupils are asked to choose an item from a bag questioning in a suitable tone of voice raises their interest "What is in the bag?", "What is it?", "Which one?" "..... (name of pupil) choose". The item then has to be passed to another pupil. Opportunities are taken to read with pupils and to help them form the letters of their name.

**Parents are very well informed about school life and highly involved in the education of their children.**

15. There are very good arrangements to ensure the parents are involved in the education of their children. Very good systems are in place to begin to develop a partnership before children start at the school. A playgroup for children with special educational needs and their parents takes place each Tuesday. This provides an excellent opportunity for parents to talk with professionals, for example physiotherapists and the school nurse, and to talk with each other. Not all the children join Rodney House, but the parents of those that do speak highly of the help they receive. Before a pupil is admitted, the headteacher, often with another teacher, visits the home and a meeting is held for all the professionals and the parents to establish what would be best for the pupil.
16. A clear home-school contract shows exactly where responsibilities lie: what the school offers and what parents are asked to do in response. Home-school books are used very effectively and provide a two-way dialogue between the home and the school for each child. An excellent innovation is the daily letter each class teacher sends home. This provides parents with detailed information about what their child's class has been doing, what they have learnt and what they had for lunch. This is very much appreciated particularly by parents of children who do not speak well. Opportunities are also taken to point out where work can be continued at home. For example, looking for fir cones and conkers and working on the sign for 'more'. Parents are encouraged to look at books and where possible, read with their children. Staff arrange for pupils to choose the books they will take home with them. Where it is appropriate, pupils with ASD take their PECS books home to use.
17. Following the initial meeting with parents an individual education plan (IEP) is written. Almost all parents attend the review meetings, two short ones and one long one each year, to discuss the progress made. During these meetings, suggestions are made to parents about activities they can do at home to help their child. For example, to pair socks or match cutlery. Copies of IEPs are sent to parents and they are able to comment and make suggestions for the next targets to be worked on. On occasion, parents ask for specific targets to be included, for instance on toilet training. Reports on pupils' progress are very detailed and provide very clear information about the achievements and the progress of the pupils.
18. The school responds very well to parental requests for information. Teachers are very happy to talk with individual parents. The school also provide workshops. For example, a recent parents and professionals day was well attended. Presentations were made by the local authority statementing officer and the speech and language therapy service. This term 'Pumpkin Day' was celebrated with workshops in the morning for parents and they enjoyed pumpkin soup for lunch, made to the same recipe that the pupils had used. In the afternoon, the pupils demonstrated what they had been doing towards Pumpkin Day.

19. Despite the overall very good relationships between the school and parents, one area presents a continuing difficulty. A few parents of children of nursery and reception age take their children on holiday during school time even though the school asks them not to. This means they miss valuable experiences and it unnecessarily lowers the school's published attendance figures.

**Pupils' experiences are very effectively widened through use of the community and opportunities to work with children who do not have special educational needs.**

20. The school makes very good use of the community to help pupils in their learning. Every effort is made to bring relevance into their work. Pupils visit local supermarkets where, for example, they learn about fruit and vegetables. They make very good paintings of fruit and vegetables, paying attention to colour variations, create a collage demonstrating texture and shape, and using play-dough model effectively the items for sale in the 'Rodney House Fruit and Vegetable Shop'. A visit to Larkhill Place, a museum showing how houses and streets looked in Victorian times, for classes 3 and 5 during the summer term was very successful. Pupils developed an understanding of how people lived during this time. Further work comparing houses from different periods during walks away from school helped pupils to recognise old and new features. An outstanding event, which leads to a great improvement in the personal and social development of pupils, is an annual residential visit to an adventure farm. This is organised very well indeed and involves children aged four in what is often their first stay away from home. All pupils join in the visit as the rest of the school has a picnic at the farm on the Wednesday when the first group of children go home and the second group arrive to stay. As a result pupils learn about the countryside and where appropriate, improve their physical skills using the adventure equipment.
21. Visitors are invited into the school and very good use is made of their expertise. For example, the local fire brigade visited and gave pupils a wonderful time trying on uniforms and sitting on the fire-engine. Pupils gained an insight into the role of firemen. This contributed towards older pupils knowing which people help them to be safe. Pupils widened their musical experiences when 'Live Music Now' visited the school in July.
22. A playgroup joins one of the nursery classes each day. This is very beneficial as these children offer good role models, particularly in communicating and use of language, to the children in the class. Opportunities are taken for pupils to attend mainstream schools. Last year several pupils attended sessions at a local nursery. This year, once new pupils have settled in to a local primary school, it is planned for a few children from Rodney House to join the reception class. Once the assessment procedures are complete and arrangements have been finalised for a pupil to move on to another school, very good links are made with the staff. The pupil gradually builds up time from a short visit to a day per week, increasing eventually to a full week. This ensures the transition is as smooth as possible.
23. There are good links with the medical and therapy services. The school has bases for therapists and provision for clinics and medical examinations. Time is therefore not wasted travelling for these facilities and parents are more comfortable with appointments at school. The full-time school nurse has a very good knowledge of the needs of the pupils and assists during medical consultations and attends reviews where appropriate.

**The leadership and management of the headteacher and deputy headteacher are very good indeed, driving the school on to meet the needs of all pupils and to raise standards.**

24. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a very clear vision of an inclusive school and are very effective indeed in making very good provision to meet the often changing needs of the pupils. For example, a group of pupils with ASD needed specific specialist teaching. Funding was

gained for a project from the health authority to establish a special class with specially trained staff. This is now well established, the pupils are doing very well and funding has passed to the school. Recently a group of pupils with specific language needs were identified and a class has been set up to meet their needs. The headteacher recognised that parents of pre-school age children with special educational needs in the area did not have any means to get together or to meet with professionals such as physiotherapists and speech and language therapists. A Tuesday morning playgroup set up for these parents is well attended and parents value the facilities offered.

25. There are very good procedures to monitor and evaluate the work of the school, which leads to improved standards. The headteacher systematically monitors the quality of the teaching through watching lessons and discussing them with the teachers. Planning is scrutinised weekly and staff formally report on the success of their work on a regular basis. All teachers have time away from their classes. This is used very effectively: for example, co-ordinators are able to watch other staff teach their subject and spend time working on resources. They provide a written report on the work of each class. A very good example by the religious education co-ordinator made clear suggestions for improvement for each class.
26. The school improvement plan is very good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher ensure that all the staff and the governing body contribute. They judge the success of the previous year's targets and work on what future targets will be. Responsibilities are allocated and tasks organised to ensure the priority will be met. Progress towards achieving plans is carefully checked and reported on at each governors' meeting. Where important areas for improvement are identified during the year they are also dealt with. For example, points raised following a monitoring visit from OFSTED in January looking at the development of the literacy strategy are being addressed. The consistency of signing, for instance, has improved considerably.
27. Pupils' progress is constantly assessed. However, it became clear that published systems for assessing progress did not have the small steps necessary for many of the pupils, particularly those with the most complex needs. The headteacher is leading some exciting work setting targets for each child based on simplified 'P' (performance) pre-National Curriculum levels called the 'Rodney House Linear Curriculum'. Although in the early stages, it is already providing very useful information in English, mathematics and art.
28. The school gained Investors in People status in 1998 and is praised for the way the training and development of employees is emphasised at each review. The headteacher ensures that the best is drawn out from the staff because training is closely linked to priorities and to individual staff needs. For example, midday supervisors have been well trained in feeding techniques, dealing with pupils' behaviour and basic signing. This makes a strong contribution to the calm and friendly atmosphere at lunchtimes.
29. Staff consultation is seen as very important. There are very good patterns of meetings to ensure all the groups of staff have chances to meet and discuss their work. Midday supervisors meet once a week and are joined by the headteacher once a month. 'Peer group' meetings of groups of staff, the nursery nurses, the support workers and the teachers meet on a half-termly basis. Class teams meet three weeks out of four and the whole staff meet once a month. This provides very good channels of information and is in addition to the weekly meetings for all staff involved with school improvement activities.
30. Specific appointments are made to help staff and raise standards. For example, a resources co-ordinator is responsible for the storing, repairing, preparing and ordering of resources. This person also substitutes for support staff who are absent. Two part-time members of staff are employed as 'floating teachers'. They take lessons for teachers who are absent. Additionally they teach classes on a regular basis so that teachers can carry out their co-ordinator roles, attend in-service training or review pupils' progress. This is excellent staff deployment because the staff know the pupils well and vice-versa. As a result they continue to make very good progress and there is no need to employ supply staff.

### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

31. There are no significant improvements needed.

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

32. Although there are no significant issues, the governing body may wish to take steps to:
  - Discourage parents from taking their children on holiday in term-time. (Paragraph 19)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	18
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	8	6	3	0	0	0
Percentage	6	44	33	17	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 five percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	65 (Equivalent of 47 full time pupils)
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	20

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	13

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	31
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

### Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data (school age)	6.6	School data (school age)	0.7
All pupils	8.5	All pupils	2.4

*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	6
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	7
Chinese	0
White	43
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	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: N – Y2**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.9
Average class size	9.6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: N – Y2**

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	443

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	511451
Total expenditure	510066
Expenditure per pupil	11335
Balance brought forward from previous year	38627
Balance carried forward to next year	40012

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	65
Number of questionnaires returned	36

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	86	14	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	69	25	0	0	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	58	33	0	0	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	19	8	8	31
The teaching is good.	69	28	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	86	11	0	0	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	22	0	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	31	0	0	8
The school works closely with parents.	78	17	0	0	6
The school is well led and managed.	86	11	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	69	25	0	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	56	22	3	3	17

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents were very complementary about the work of the school and no other issues were raised.