

INSPECTION REPORT

COLNBROOK SCHOOL

Watford

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117670

Headteacher: Mr R Hill

Reporting inspector: Mr I McAllister
2593

Dates of inspection: 13th – 15th November 2000

Inspection number: 223619

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hayling Road South Oxhey Watford Herts
Postcode:	WD19 7UY
Telephone number:	0208 428 1281
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr B Bell
Date of previous inspection:	November 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Colnbrook is a community special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The attainment of pupils on entry into the school is low. The needs of the pupils being referred to the school are becoming more complex. At present there are eighty pupils on roll, all of whom have a statement of special educational need. The pupil population is aged between four and eleven years, and is made up of fifty-seven boys and twenty-three girls. Seventy-four pupils are in the main school, and six are in the autism base. Amongst those with moderate learning difficulties there is a significant number with additional social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are also twenty-three pupils with severe learning difficulties and twenty-seven with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is, at 22.5 per cent, low in comparison with the national average for this type of school. Nine pupils have English as a second language.

The school plays a wider role in the local authority's specialist provision. It is resourced to provide outreach support to local mainstream schools and is part of the local authority's initiative to reintegrate pupils with special educational needs as part of its inclusion policy.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Colnbrook is a very effective school. It has high, but realistic, expectations for its pupils and these, together with the excellent leadership and management and the very good teaching, enable the school to be successful in improving their achievements. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership which ensures clear educational direction for the work of the school and that, together with the senior management team and governors, the school's very relevant aims are successfully implemented.
- Very good teaching across both key stages and an appropriate curriculum, supported by very effective monitoring and assessment procedures, enable pupils to achieve well.
- Very high quality relationships and sensitive educational and personal support, encourage pupils to enjoy school and make very good progress in their personal development.
- Links with parents are excellent and the quality of information provided for parents is of the highest standard. These have a significant positive impact on the quality of learning of the pupils.
- The school promotes very positive attitudes to learning and behaviour is very good. This creates an atmosphere which supports the learning of the pupils.
- The school's monitoring and evaluation of its own performance is excellent and the management take effective action to improve where necessary. Throughout the school there is a shared commitment to improve and a marked capacity to succeed.

There were no significant issues identified for improvement. Four minor points relating to enhancing the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum*, further developing the role of the governing body in managing the curriculum, creating a sharper focus to the school development and improvement plan and developing the current use of 'circle time' to enhance the school's provision for personal, social and health education, are considered worthy of further attention. These areas for improvement are referred to in the commentary and will form the basis of an action plan prepared by the governors.

*N.B. The item marked * has already been identified as a priority within the school development and improvement plan.*

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school had a small number of issues to respond to following its last inspection in November 1996. It has been very successful in addressing them all. The quality of teaching has improved dramatically and is

now very good across both key stages. Agreed strategies are in place to address the more challenging behaviours of some pupils. The special educational needs policy has been reviewed and the school has a clear view of the range of special educational needs for which it caters. The curriculum has been reviewed with a view to more appropriately supporting the TEACCH approach (Treatment and Education of Autism and Children with related Communication Handicap). An extensive, rigorous and externally accredited programme of professional development and in-service training has been put in place for all staff.

STANDARDS

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

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

N.B: IEP's are Individual Educational Plans for children with special educational needs.

Denotes an aspect that was better than very good and judged to be excellent.

Because of the pupils' special educational needs it is considered inappropriate to report on standards in comparison with national expectations. All pupils achieve well or very well in all subjects, particularly in the areas of personal and social development and communication skills, which are priority areas in individual pupil plans. Pupils make good progress when measured against their levels of competence on entry.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils show enthusiasm for school. They are eager to learn and always try hard to do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Most pupils are positive and co-operative in class and during social occasions around school such as mealtimes and assemblies. As a result behaviour is very good overall. The pupils with challenging behaviours respond well to the behaviour management structures and systems within the school. Those with autistic spectrum disorder are coping well with the behavioural demands of the school. There were no permanent exclusions during the last school year.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The pupils have constructive relationships with staff and with one another. They are tolerant of each other's needs. Pupils are polite and friendly to each other and to staff and visitors.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance has shown a significant and consistent improvement over a number of years and is above national norms for this type of school. Pupils generally arrive at school on time.

The school has a strong positive ethos which encourages good behaviour and the development of sound relationships between all members of the school community. This makes a significant contribution to the learning of the pupils.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	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.

In 96 per cent of lessons seen the teaching was at least good, and in 35 per cent of the lessons seen the teaching was judged to be very good or excellent. Scrutiny of pupils' work strongly suggests that teaching is more often very good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. The National Literacy Strategy has been successfully adapted to meet the needs of the pupils, and as a result the pupils sometimes make excellent progress in speaking and listening, very good progress in reading and good progress in writing. The teaching of mathematics through the National Numeracy Strategy is equally good and the pupils make good progress. Teaching and support for pupils' personal, social and health education enable them to make good progress and to develop confidence and raise self-esteem. There has been a marked improvement overall in the quality of teaching across both key stages since the last inspection.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. It is a reflection on the quality of the curriculum that pupils who are integrated into local primary schools are able to participate fully in those settings. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of visiting specialists.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good overall. In particular, the curriculum meets the needs of those pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and those with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder very well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school has particular strengths in moral, social and cultural development due to the positive effect of the ethos of the school and the excellent role models provided by the staff. The pupils' spiritual development is well promoted throughout the curriculum and is enhanced by excellent assemblies.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Staff know the pupils very well. They are helped in this by very high quality assessment and recording systems which enable teachers to write accurately targeted individual education plans that concentrate on appropriate priority needs for each child. All staff show, in the way they relate to the pupils, that they have high regard for the pupils' welfare and health and safety.

The curriculum meets all statutory requirements. The school's links with parents are excellent and play a significant part in the successful learning outcomes for the pupils. The very high quality information provided for parents enables them to make an active contribution to the children's learning both in school and at home. The school uses the wider community effectively to supplement the curriculum. Relationships with other schools are good and the outreach support provided is well managed.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides excellent leadership. He is well supported by his deputy, working closely with all other staff. There is a shared vision for the school and all staff participate in the process of continuous professional development in order to improve their practice. Development planning is clearly linked to good financial planning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are very supportive of the work of the school. They are strong advocates for its effective future role within the local education authority. The chairman in particular is thoughtful and knowledgeable about school issues. He gives strong strategic guidance to the headteacher in managing the school. Governors monitor the work of the school closely, including classroom observations where appropriate, and this assists them in evaluating the progress being made by the school towards its aims. However, they do not monitor the curriculum sufficiently well and they are hampered in fulfilling this role by the lack of a curriculum committee.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring of all aspects of the school by the senior management in order to evaluate the school's performance is excellent. This enables the school to successfully identify its strengths and areas for development and to target appropriate training activities for staff. The school has high expectations for its performance and sets ambitious targets for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good use is made of staff, time and resources to meet the needs of the pupils. In particular, the learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning of the pupils. The accommodation has been adapted appropriately to meet the needs of the pupils and is very well maintained. Outside areas have been developed to provide a range of activities including a secure play area for the under-fives. The financial planning is thorough and expenditure is directed appropriately to support the work of the school.

There are sufficient teaching and non-teaching staff in the school. Staff are generally well qualified, but are offered excellent in-service training opportunities which enhance their capacity to fulfil roles within the school effectively. The school is very well led and managed and applies the principles of best value for the services it uses.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colnbrook is a very friendly school. Their children are happy at school and make very good progress, because of the school's individualised approach to teaching them. They are made to feel welcome and are offered sensitive support. They are encouraged to work in partnership with the school. Staff are open and reassuring. Information about their child's progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework Activities outside lessons

The inspection team fully supports parents' very positive views about all aspects of the school's work. A significant minority of parents who returned the questionnaires expressed concern about homework. It was possible in discussion at the parents' meeting to clarify some of the concerns about this. It became clear that there is a range of views about what homework is and about how much should be offered. The view of the inspection team is that the school's approach, which focuses on encouraging a partnership between home and school to reinforce approaches to, for example, language development and managing difficult behaviour, is appropriate. It is generally well received and supported by the great majority of parents. A very small number of parents expressed a lack of knowledge about the range of activities offered outside the lessons. The inspection team found that there is a wide range of activities offered, during lunchtimes in

particular, and that many pupils take up the opportunities offered to them. The school will seek to inform parents more effectively about activities on offer outside lesson times.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The headteacher provides excellent leadership which ensures clear educational direction for the work of the school and that, together with the senior management team and governors, the school's very relevant aims are successfully implemented.

1. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and this gives strong direction to the work of the school. The deputy head and the rest of the senior management team ably support the headteacher, and this helps the rest of the staff to achieve an excellent shared commitment and to improve the achievements of the pupils. The excellent leadership has succeeded in creating a learning environment where relationships are very good and pupils feel that staff care about them. The headteacher is very clear about what he expects from everyone in the school and does all that he can to support and encourage them to achieve the aims of the school very effectively. This is the basis of the very clear ethos of the school which has a positive impact on learning and achievement.
2. The management of the school have responded well to the last inspection and a number of significant improvements have been made. All the key issues from the last inspection have been addressed successfully.
3. The school knows its strengths and areas for development. It has its own, well developed strategy for improvement. A particular strength is the staff development programme, which is rigorous and externally accredited, and helps staff to meet the needs of the pupils more effectively. The school has constructed a comprehensive school development and improvement plan. Whilst the headteacher and governors have a small number of clear priorities that drive the school forward in the medium term, these main priorities are not clear from the plan and this detracts from the focus that is needed if the school is to maintain its drive for improvement.
4. The governing body are very active in their support of the school. Governors visit the school regularly and observe the working of the school on a day-to-day basis. There is a particularly constructive relationship developing between the headteacher and the new chairman of governors, who has a very clear understanding of the work of the school. This ensures that strategic decisions determine educational and financial planning.
5. The governors do not yet monitor the curriculum sufficiently closely. They are hampered in carrying out this role by the absence of a curriculum committee. Teachers are unable to keep the governors fully up-to-date through regular presentations at their meetings.

Very good teaching across both key stages and an appropriate curriculum, supported by very effective monitoring and assessment procedures, enable pupils to achieve well.

6. Scrutiny of teachers' plans and records, as well as samples of pupils' work, indicated that the quality of teaching is very good overall. This was confirmed during the inspection, when 96 per cent of all teaching observed across all subjects of the curriculum was at least good, often very good and sometimes excellent. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching in most of the literacy lessons was very good and, as a result, pupils made very good progress in reading and sometimes excellent progress in speaking and listening. Pupils made good progress in writing. The effective introduction of Makaton signs and symbols into the curriculum have helped in this area.

7. The high quality of teaching is achieved through very careful planning, which is consistently very good. Planning reflects not only the aims and objectives of the lesson, but also how activities will be differentiated for all pupils. There is a good balance of activities in lessons and this, in addition to the range and quality of resources, helps achieve a good match between tasks set in lessons and the needs and abilities of the pupils. The very good teaching is informed by good assessment information. Well structured schemes of work enable teachers to set focused targets for individual pupils to work towards, and these are incorporated into high quality individual education plans. All staff take every opportunity to assess pupils' progress towards these targets, and teaching approaches and differentiation within lessons are adapted to take account of what this information tells them about pupils' achievements and difficulties. As a result work is carefully matched to the assessed needs of the pupils. Where teaching is excellent this approach is very evident, as in a literacy lesson when there was a variety of expertly focused strategies that created significant gains for all pupils. Within this context, the learning support assistant worked very effectively in partnership with the teacher and was able to offer appropriate help and guidance to the pupils. This was typical of the successful partnership working observed throughout the school. The learning support assistants make a valuable contribution towards the quality of teaching and the achievements of the pupils.
8. Current provision and practice in the area of information and communication technology has been significantly improved by investment in resources and changes to the curriculum. The school needs to consider how to train staff to make best use of the new situation, and to create better plans and assessment systems which are more precise about how to teach and assess the different ability groups among the pupils.
9. All the teachers have very high, but realistic, expectations of the pupils. This was very evident in an excellent literacy lesson in Key Stage 2, where the teacher was ambitious about the level set for many pupils to achieve. They had to consider different aspects of using text and communicate to others what a story meant for them. Pupils had to think hard about the clarity of meaning of what they wrote.
10. The school's very relevant curriculum is broad and balanced and focuses on improving the pupils' basic skills. In addition, the well balanced timetable provides pupils with very good opportunities to improve their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and provides them with a range of relevant experiences that they would have in a mainstream setting. This increases the self-esteem of all pupils and helps prepare the more able pupils for possible integration into mainstream schools at a later stage. There are good links with local schools, such as the art project with Watford Girls' School, where the older students help Year 6 pupils with their art work through sharing specialist facilities and resources.

Very high quality relationships and sensitive educational and personal support encourage pupils to enjoy school and make very good progress in their personal development.

11. Very good relationships are established between pupils and between staff and pupils. This has a very positive impact on learning and on the very good attitudes of the pupils. The school has a very strong positive ethos that supports the pupils in their learning. All staff are sensitive to the needs of the pupils. Those with autistic spectrum disorder find it hard to communicate their feelings, and they are helped to learn the necessary skills to participate successfully in social activities as well as working appropriately in the classroom. There is a well structured programme of personal, social and health education which underpins much of the work of the school. The school provides opportunities in the timetable for 'circle time'. Currently, this consists mainly of a chance to give the pupils a drink and a biscuit in a structured social context. Insufficient use is made of the valuable

opportunities that this time provides, for planned interventions that will further enhance the personal development of the pupils.

12. The staff provide excellent role models for the pupils. In lessons the pupils learn to listen respectfully to each other's contributions, as in a music lesson when the group were able to listen carefully to the performance on the xylophone of each member of the class in turn. They value other pupils' efforts and take turns appropriately. One boy with autistic spectrum disorder was very successfully guided by the teacher and the learning support assistant to watch and listen carefully. He was able to take his turn and make a positive contribution to the lesson.
13. Most pupils are polite and friendly to each other and to staff and visitors. A small number of pupils, because of their learning difficulties, do have considerable difficulty in managing their own behaviour and this is often challenging to staff and other pupils. Following the last inspection the school improved its policy and strategies for managing inappropriate and challenging behaviour. The school is very successful in meeting the needs of these pupils who now enjoy school. Through well targeted individual plans, that guide staff towards a consistent approach to meeting pupil need, these pupils are making good progress in their personal development.

Links with parents are excellent and the quality of information provided for parents is of the highest standard. These have a significant positive impact on the quality of learning of the pupils.

14. The school recognises the crucial role that parents have in the education of their children and a great deal of effort is put into nurturing this relationship. The high return of questionnaires and the responses contained within them, as well as the comments at the parents' meeting prior to the inspection, present an extremely positive view of the school and its work. The parents value the work of the school very highly.
15. The quality of information provided for parents is excellent. The school provides regular newsletters for parents, which update parents on pupils' activities and achievements.
16. In spite of the efforts of the school, some parents are still unaware of the range of activities offered to the pupils especially at lunchtimes.
17. Parents are provided with an excellent range of information about pupils' progress, including detailed information on key targets. This enables parents to assist with the education of their children at home in both academic and behavioural aspects, and enhances the sense of partnership between home and school. The involvement of parents in the work of the school has a very positive impact on the learning of the pupils.

The school promotes very positive attitudes to learning and behaviour is very good. This creates an atmosphere that supports the learning of the pupils.

18. Attitudes, personal development and relationships are very good. Children under five have good attitudes to school life and are beginning to develop independence. They are becoming aware of the needs of others and what is right and wrong.
19. Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils are eager to come to school, have very good attitudes to learning and are well motivated. Relationships are very good. Pupils listen attentively, both to teachers and their peers, and their behaviour is good.
20. The school has a clear behaviour policy which promotes a consistent approach to the management of behaviour in the school. Pupils who present challenging behaviour have

individual targets which are regularly reviewed. This enables staff to manage the pupils effectively and minimise the disruption caused to learning.

21. Pupils respond well to the school's provision for their personal development and enjoy the opportunities provided for them to assume responsibility. Older pupils are given the chance to help look after the younger ones and this increases their self-esteem.

The school's monitoring and evaluation of its own performance is excellent and the management take effective action to improve where necessary. Throughout the school there is a shared commitment to improve and a marked capacity to succeed.

22. Monitoring of all aspects of the school is excellent. This is particularly evident in the monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher and the deputy. The governors monitor the teaching by visiting the classrooms during the school day and they observe displays by holding their meetings in classrooms after school.
23. The school successfully identifies its strengths and the areas for further development, and it targets staff training appropriately. Staff respond well to the opportunities offered and there is a culture within the school of always looking to succeed in meeting new challenges. This enables the school to respond positively to meet the changing needs of the pupils.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

24. There were no significant issues identified during the inspection that require improvement.

Four minor points are considered worthy of attention and should become part of the governors' action plan:

- (1) enhancing the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum;
 - (2) further developing the role of the governing body in managing the curriculum;
 - (3) creating a sharper focus to the key priorities within the school development plan;
- and
- (4) further developing the use of the current 'circle time' to enhance the school's provision for personal, social and health education.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

25. In order to build on the already very good achievements and progress of the pupils, the headteacher, senior management team and governors of the school should:

- improve the use of information and communication technology in order to enhance the learning of the pupils across all areas of the curriculum;*
- improve the role of the governing body in monitoring and managing the curriculum by the establishment of a curriculum committee;
- create a sharper focus to the school development and improvement plan by clearly identifying the key priorities for development;
- improve the use of 'circle time' to enhance the personal, social and health education of the pupils.

* This issue is already included in the school development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

23

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

14

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	26	61	4	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	87
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	87
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	87

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.2
National comparative data	8.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	3.0

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	6
Indian	5
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	62
Any other minority ethnic group	3

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

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	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.5
Average class size	9

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	559

Number of pupils per FTE adult	2.7
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
	£
Total income	898,139
Total expenditure	898,005
Expenditure per pupil	10,441
Balance brought forward from previous year	28,228
Balance carried forward to next year	28,362

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	87
Number of questionnaires returned	57

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	77	19	2	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	63	32	0	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	68	25	0	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	30	14	2	16
The teaching is good.	84	14	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	79	16	2	0	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	86	12	0	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	79	21	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	79	14	2	0	5
The school is well led and managed.	89	9	0	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	65	30	0	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	56	18	4	0	23