

INSPECTION REPORT

MAYFIELD SCHOOL

Paignton

LEA area: Torbay

Unique reference number: 113641

Headteacher: Mrs J Palmer

Reporting inspector: Mr T Richardson
16500

Dates of inspection: 25 – 28 September 2000

Inspection number: 223666

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Special: severe and profound learning difficulties

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 2 - 19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: 170b Torquay Road
Paignton
Devon

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr C Sumner

Date of previous inspection: October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr T Richardson 16500	Registered inspector	Art; music	How high are standards; how well are pupils taught; how well is the school led and managed?
Ms L Barclay 9789	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils; how well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mr G Essex 1358	Team inspector	English; modern languages; physical education; English as an additional language.	
Ms C Richardson 22058	Team inspector	Mathematics; geography; history	
Ms J Taylor 17260	Team inspector	Science; information technology; equality of opportunity; special educational needs; children under the age of five.	
Mr I Tatchell 27243	Team inspector	Design and technology; religious education; personal, social and moral education.	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; how good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Mayfield is a community, mixed, special school for pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties. At the time of the inspection there were 82 pupils on roll, with twice as many boys as girls. Most pupils are of white European origin, one pupil has English as an additional language, and 29 pupils are eligible for free school meals. Almost half the pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and a significant number of pupils in the classes for pupils with severe learning difficulties also have additional needs such as challenging behaviour and autism. Class sizes are larger than the average for severe learning difficulties schools, contain pupils with a wide spread of ages and ability, and the classrooms and school site are cramped and over-crowded. The school serves the unitary education authority of Torbay and also admits some pupils who are resident in Devon.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Mayfield is a good school where pupils' standards of achievement are rising, particularly in literacy and numeracy. The headteacher provides very good leadership, morale is high and there is good teaching in almost every class. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Despite the restrictions imposed by the very poor buildings and school site, the school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Benefits from the very good leadership of the headteacher and senior managers that is very effective in raising standards and improving the school. Senior managers use self-evaluation effectively to know what the school does well and what could be improved.
- Promotes good standards of achievement in English and mathematics. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been adapted successfully to the needs of the pupils and implemented well.
- There is high morale and effective teamwork between teachers and within class groups, and this leads to good teaching in almost every class. High quality teaching is provided for the youngest pupils with PMLD.
- Relationships are very good, individuals are valued, there is a good focus on meeting pupils' specific learning needs, and this helps to promote higher standards, good behaviour and good attitudes to school
- Provides a good and improving curriculum, with clear planning and record keeping that shows clearly the progress pupils make over time. Pupils' academic and personal development is monitored exceptionally well.
- The school community works valiantly to do the best it can for the children within the limits imposed by the very poor buildings and school site.

What could be improved

- The achievements of pupils with PMLD in class 7 are not as high as in other classes.
- The accommodation is very poor and prevents the school from:
 - including pupils with PMLD in classes with other pupils of the same age;
 - organising classes by age and by key stage;
 - improving further the standards in a number of subjects, particularly physical education;
 - providing pupils with the outdoor play experiences they need; and
 - enjoying whole school assemblies and performances.
- The achievements of older pupils are insufficiently recognised with external accreditation and there is not a curriculum designed specifically for students over the age of 16.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection in October 1996. There has been very good improvement in the quality of teaching and in the variety of teaching methods and styles used. Also, there has been very good improvement in the quality of leadership and management and this is now driving the school forward. Good improvement has taken place in standards of achievement, the progress pupils make and their attitudes to school. Staff have worked hard to successfully bring about

good improvement in the roles of the senior management team, a much improved curriculum, clear and effective co-ordination of subjects, and an appropriate school improvement plan that is clearly linked to the budget. Standards are now high for the special needs of the pupils in English and mathematics and are rising in most other subjects. The school has accelerated its development within the last two years and has a good capacity for continued improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by age 19	Key very good A good B satisfactory C unsatisfactory D poor E
speaking and listening	B	
reading	B	
writing	B	
mathematics	B	
personal, social and health education	A	
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	

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

Standards in literacy and numeracy are good and above the level expected. This reflects the work done effectively by the school to meet its own targets for improving standards in English and mathematics. In many other subjects, standards are now improving. Pupils make good progress in geography and history, in physical education and in their singing. Standards are satisfactory in art, religious education, other aspects of music, and design and technology, with good provision now in place to promote improvement in all these subjects. Pupils enjoy French, but the subject is too new to judge standards. In science, pupils often make good progress in their lessons, but lack a coordinated curriculum and standards are lower than they could be. Good quality work is now developing successfully the provision for information and communications technology. Pupils are learning relevant skills with computers and switches but have lower standards in how to use computers and technology to the best advantage. Pupils make good progress over time against the targets set in their individual education plans. For example, one pupil over three years has progressed from understanding at a single word level to now using sentences and initiating communication with a symbol board. The school is most successful at promoting the personal and social development of pupils. They make very good progress over time, make friends and become mature and sociable members of the class. Pupils with complex needs and physical disabilities make very good progress in communication and learn to control equipment, and their environment, through operating switches. Children in the foundation years of their education make good progress in all the areas of their development. The group in class 1 has a larger proportion of higher attaining children than in other classes and some of these children make sufficient progress to go to other schools at the age of five. Standards of achievement for pupils with PMLD in classes 2 and 8 are high. Pupils are becoming increasingly alert, they show recognition of people, places and activities. However, pupils with PMLD in class 7 are not achieving to the same high standard. Temporary arrangements for their teaching are beginning to be effective and improvements in the pupils' achievements have already been noted.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and have good attitudes to their work.
Behaviour, in and out of	Good behaviour, with a very impressive lack of bullying, and no

classrooms	exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Good personal development and very good relationships. Pupils are valued, their dignity is respected and they learn to have good regard for the feelings, values and beliefs of others.
Attendance	Very good, much better than other severe learning difficulties schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	good	good	good	good

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

Good teaching is provided throughout the school. During the inspection teaching was at least good in 79 per cent of all lessons with 33 per cent of lessons having teaching that was very good or excellent. In total, 96 per cent of lessons were judged to have teaching that was satisfactory or better. The unsatisfactory teaching seen in four per cent of lessons was principally due to the lack of structure and expertise with PMLD pupils in class 7. Good teaching takes place in English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education. The school does well to promote successfully high morale. Learning support assistants are skilled and work well with class teachers so that pupils receive a consistent approach from all adults in the room. Very good teaching is provided for the youngest pupils with PMLD. High quality teaching is also provided for the oldest pupils with severe learning difficulties and this is helpful in preparing pupils for the next phase in their education. Teachers have a good knowledge of the learning needs of their pupils and use this to plan and present subject information in a relevant way. Basic skills are effectively taught and teachers use signs, symbols and pictures appropriately to enhance communication. As a result, pupils learn about words, phonics, reading, writing and numeracy at higher levels than expected. Teachers have high expectations. These are particularly evident in what the youngest pupils with PMLD are expected to achieve and, as a result, pupils work hard and make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good breadth, balance and relevance to pupils' learning needs. High quality provision for pupils with PMLD in classes 2 and 8. Older pupils lack opportunities to gain nationally recognised qualifications and students post-16 don't have a separate curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good provision overall. Satisfactory provision for spiritual and cultural development. Good provision for moral development. Very good provision for social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good provision for the care, welfare and safety of pupils. Outstanding monitoring of pupils' academic and personal development in individual portfolios.

Parents hold very good views of the school. Good links are maintained with parents and they make a sound contribution to pupils' learning at home and in their involvement in the work of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. There is a very clear direction for educational improvement and the school's aims are reflected very well in all developments. Most successful in encouraging teamwork and a shared commitment to continued improvement.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Good governing body. Fulfils all its statutory functions and plays a full part in helping the school to improve. Governors are currently working, with the local education authority, to seek a permanent solution to the very poor buildings and school site.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good quality monitoring and evaluation is now routine. The school and governors know clearly what they do well, and what should be improved.
The strategic use of resources	Good strategic planning and very good links between the school budget and the development plan. Best value is sought at all times and financial control is very good.

There are sufficient staff and learning resources. The accommodation, however, is very poor and prevents the school from: including pupils with PMLD in classes with other pupils of the same age; organising classes by age and by key stage; improving further the standards in a number of subjects, particularly physical education; providing pupils with the outdoor play experiences they need; and enjoying whole school assemblies and performances.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their children like school and are valued as individuals • the school has good teaching, good leadership and their children make good progress • there is good behaviour in school • the school is approachable, parents are well informed and work effectively as partners with staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the sub-standard buildings in which their children are educated

Inspectors endorse in full all the views expressed above by parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Standards in literacy and numeracy are good and above the level expected for the degree of special educational needs of the pupils. This reflects the school's emphasis placed on setting targets to develop English and mathematics, and the monitoring of provision to ensure consistency. Standards in many other subject areas are now improving and the achievements of pupils are higher than they were at the time of the last inspection. Pupils make good progress in geography and history, in physical education and in their singing. Standards are satisfactory in art, religious education, other aspects of music, and design and technology, with good provision now in place to promote improvement in all these subjects. Pupils enjoy French, but the subject is only recently included in the curriculum and it is too early to judge standards. In science, pupils are taught well and often make good progress in their lessons, but the school lacks a coordinated curriculum, pupils often repeat topics unnecessarily and standards overall are lower than they could be. Good quality work is now taking place successfully to develop the provision for information and communications technology, pupils are learning relevant skills with computers and switches but have lower standards in how to use computers and technology to the best advantage.
2. Pupils make good progress over time against the targets set in their individual education plans. For example, one pupil over three years has progressed from understanding at a single word level to now using sentences and initiating communication with a symbol board. Another pupil, over two years, has improved his reading and writing skills from using *Rebus* symbols as reading cues to now using a computer to type out his news. Some pupils make very good progress, for example, one who in one year has developed awareness from showing response to people to now listening to stories and anticipating familiar repetitions. The school is most successful at promoting the personal and social development of pupils through a well taught and good quality programme of personal and social education. Pupils make very good progress over time against the targets set for their personal development. For example, one pupil who entered the school three years ago with 'clumsy' movements is now well coordinated in physical education. Another pupil at the age of five was described as having very poor social skills. After 10 years in school she now has friends, shows concern when others are ill and upset and is a mature and sociable member of the class. Pupils with complex needs and physical disabilities make very good progress in communication and learn to control equipment, and their environment, through operating switches.
3. Standards of achievement for pupils with PMLD in classes 2 and 8 are high. Pupils are becoming increasingly alert, they show recognition of people, places and activities. Through high quality routines and well planned learning activities they are extending their knowledge and understanding of the world at a good rate for their degree of special educational needs. However, pupils with PMLD in class 7 are not achieving to the same high standard, nor at the same rate as in the other classes. New arrangements have been made this term. A supply teacher is taking the class, with regular support from the headteacher and the advanced skills teacher. These arrangements are beginning to be effective and improvements in the pupils' achievements have already been noted. For example, one older pupil who used to sleep for most of his day at school is now awake and active, with a marked improvement in his sleeping patterns at home. Another pupil with a very limited concentration span, attended with interest, during the inspection, to most of the story being told. Whilst new staff clearly have a lot to learn, their efforts are leading to rising standards and the school must now ensure that this momentum for improvement is maintained.
4. Children in the foundation years of their education make good progress in all the areas of their development. They benefit from good teaching and a good programme of well planned activities. The group in class 1 has a larger proportion of higher attaining children than in other classes and some of these children make sufficient progress to go to other schools at the age of five.

5. In English, the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has made a major contribution to higher standards. It has been adapted sensitively and skillfully to the needs of the pupils. As a result, achievements in English are good in all key stages. The majority of pupils are making good progress within the school's very effective scheme of "Baseline Assessment Items" for the subject and a number of others, from Key Stage 2 onwards, are working within National Curriculum Level 1 and, in a few cases, Level 2. However, the school is not making use of external accreditation to recognise these successes at the end of Key Stage 4 and for students post-sixteen. In speaking and listening, there is good progress in the attentiveness with which pupils listen and in the confidence with which they respond for an increasing variety of purposes. The school has developed a very effective policy of "total communication". Symbols, visual materials and, in particular, objects for pupils to match with words are used very effectively by staff to aid communication and to extend the children's vocabulary. There is a consistent emphasis on phonic awareness and pupils make good progress in skills such as matching sounds and letters. Pupils of all ages enjoy books. In both Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils are also recognising key words and characters from their stories with increasing success and in Key Stages 3 and 4 a growing number of pupils are reading aloud with confidence and good levels of understanding. There is clear evidence in pupils' written work of good progress through tracing, copying and independently forming letters with increasing accuracy and higher-attaining pupils are developing their ability to produce independent writing, for example in their diaries. The "Writing with Symbols" computer program is boosting the progress of most pupils in both reading and writing skills.
6. In mathematics, pupils achieve well in relation to their differing needs. The flexible introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has been carried out effectively and successfully. Younger pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2 count up to five and recognise and name the numerals consistently. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to place the numbers one to ten in order and count out teddies to match each number. In numeracy lessons, older pupils from Key Stages 3, 4 and post-16 work together in groups where activities are matched closely to their abilities and have an appropriate focus. These arrangements are effective and enable pupils to gain better understanding of concepts such as 'heavier' and 'lighter', to estimate numbers and begin basic addition. Higher attaining pupils are able to add ten to numbers up to 100 accurately in a rapid questioning routine. Pupils with PMLD achieve at a high level because of the total focus on learning in lessons and the teachers' high expectations of the responses their pupils should make. Very good use is made of the ultra violet room to reinforce pupils' understanding of number. They try hard to touch or point with their eyes to the correct answers, the situation and atmosphere helping them to focus on the numbers and objects that glow so appealingly in the dark.
7. In science, standards of achievement are in line with pupils' abilities in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils make good progress in lessons because they are taught well, and only satisfactory progress over time. This is due to the lack of a sequential programme of work, which means pupils can repeat topics unnecessarily as they move through the school. Standards of attainment and progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 are satisfactory overall with good progress in lessons and good teaching. However, there are significant weaknesses that lower standards. These are: the narrow programme of work; too much repetition of topics; poor resources; and the limited accommodation. Progress throughout the school is best in aspects of life and living processes and the early stages of experimental science.
8. Standards of achievement in information and communications technology are in line with pupils' abilities in Key Stages 1 and 2, but below this level for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. Progress is now satisfactory for most pupils in the school, but the standards demonstrated by the older pupils reflect a lack of previous experience and the rather narrow programme of work that was followed. Progress for pupils with PMLD is very good, due to the very careful attention given to individual needs and the creative, imaginative solutions provided for pupils to access and use technology.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils' attitudes to school are good, they benefit from very good relationships and there is a good focus on meeting their specific learning needs which helps to promote higher standards, good behaviour and good personal development. Pupils show good initiative and develop effectively their personal responsibility. This is a good improvement on the satisfactory attitudes and lack of opportunities for pupils to make choices noted in the previous inspection report.
10. The large majority of pupils arrive at school with very good enthusiasm for learning, clearly looking forward to the day and to starting work promptly. In their lessons they enjoy being stimulated and involved and the majority of pupils work purposefully and concentrate on their work knowing that their personal achievements will be valued. Pupils' good attitudes to work are supported by their very good relationships with staff. Pupils are interested and involved in their lessons and want to learn. They are actively engaged in a range of activities both in and out of the classroom. Pupils who attend a local Primary School have good attitudes and are keen to follow the mainstream school and class routines.
11. There is good behaviour throughout the school. Pupils behave well in class and have a good understanding of the impact of their actions on others. They respect their environment, handling books, equipment and resources with care. Pupils show due regard for each other, their teachers and all adults, having a good respect for others' feelings, values and beliefs. There is a very good absence of oppressive behaviour, bullying, racism or sexism. No bullying or harassment was seen during the inspection, and pupils and parents, rightly, have no concerns about this. There were no exclusions in the last recorded year and the rate is static. Pupils with additional special needs respond very well and make good progress in learning to control their behaviour through careful positive clear interactions with skilled adults. In all key stages, pupils with behaviour difficulties respond well to their individual behaviour programmes and are also helped by the consistent actions of all staff.
12. Relationships between pupils, with teachers and other adults are very good throughout the school. Pupils work well individually and co-operatively in pairs, groups and in the whole class. There is good collaboration. Older pupils show great care for the younger ones, they support them well in the playground and in the classroom when given the opportunity. Pupils take the responsibilities offered, although there are fewer opportunities for post 16 pupils to operate independent choice as they follow the same curriculum as younger pupils.
13. The pupils' personal development over time is good. Many examples were seen of increased confidence and real progress, for example when pupils in Key Stage 2 made their own way to their classrooms, chose an activity from a selection and Class 3 pupils worked independently on a computer with a minimum of supervision. The school encourages older pupils to become involved in the day to day running of the school, and in the wider community. For example pupils collect dinner numbers and a pupil with PMLD collected and delivered a parcel - with support from an assistant - from the school office to her class teacher. She manipulates switches on her wheelchair independently and uses a Big Mack communicator to deliver the message 'there is a parcel for you.' Pupils on paired work experience placements work alongside girls from the local grammar school. Pupils are welcoming to visitors, they enjoy sharing their work and are proud of their achievements.
14. Pupils' attendance is very good, and there is much less authorised absence than in other similar special schools. There is no unauthorised absence. Overall there is an improvement in the attendance rates recorded in the last inspection. Pupils are mainly punctual but there are some occasions when pupils arrive later than others due to the late arrival of their transport, when they miss some opportunities for social development. Lessons generally start and finish on time. Registers meet legal requirements in full and registrations are conducted efficiently and sensitively, promoting an orderly start to sessions.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school, and there is a high proportion of lessons where teaching is very good or excellent. During the inspection, 96 per cent of lessons were judged to have teaching that was satisfactory or better. This is a very good improvement on the previous inspection. Of more significance, however, is the improvement in the proportion of teaching that was judged to be good, very good or excellent. Teaching of this quality was observed in 79 per cent of all lessons with 33 per cent of lessons having teaching that was very good or excellent. The unsatisfactory teaching seen in four per cent of lessons was principally due to the lack of structure and expertise with PMLD pupils in class 7. The figures for the quality of teaching in the school match the judgements made regarding pupils' learning, except that there are more teaching grades at higher levels. This reflects the high level of input that teachers give and the lower response due to the severity of the pupils' learning difficulties.
16. The school does well to promote successfully high morale and effective teamwork between teachers and within class groups. Learning support assistants are skilled and work well with class teachers so that pupils receive a consistent approach from all adults in the room. This is beneficial to pupils' learning and leads to the higher standards of achievement seen. Very good teaching is provided for the youngest pupils with PMLD. The school has rightly identified an exceptional teacher as an *Advanced Skills Teacher* and is ensuring that her considerable expertise is helping other staff to improve their teaching. High quality teaching is also provided for the oldest pupils with severe learning difficulties and this is helpful in preparing pupils for the next phase in their education. In all classes, the relationships between adults and pupils are very good. Each individual is valued, there is a good focus on meeting pupils' specific learning needs, and this helps to promote higher standards, good behaviour and good attitudes to school.
17. Where the quality of teaching is excellent, teachers demonstrate enthusiastically their high expectations, generate excitement, and plan their lessons to match exactly the needs of the pupils. For example, in a literacy lesson in class 6, the teacher's lively style and really brisk pace led pupils to be very attentive and keen to show their knowledge about books. The teacher continued to 'whip up' an enthusiasm for learning that carried the whole class, with a buzz of excitement, into working as hard as they could to read and remember. In a communal singing session for the whole school, the teacher made very good use of signs, symbols and visual aids to help pupils understand the songs. She included successfully pupils with PMLD in building a multi-coloured arch to illustrate *Sing a Rainbow* and generated a brilliant sense of community. In lessons observed in class 2, the teaching was perfectly focused to build on each child's development and needs. The consistent use of realistic praise led to pupils showing excitement at their interaction and some demonstrated outstanding progress in their response to humour. From this, pupils made further gains in their awareness by anticipating when key words would be used. In particular, the whole experience for the children was aided considerably by the seamless teamwork between staff.
18. Throughout the school, teachers have a good knowledge of the learning needs of their pupils and use this to plan and present subject information in a relevant way. Most difficult behaviour is managed well so that lessons proceed according to plan. All staff treat pupils with PMLD with great respect, give them time to make choices and make great efforts to help them initiate communication. Basic skills are effectively taught and teachers use signs, symbols and pictures effectively to enhance communication. As a result, pupils learn about words, phonics, reading, writing and numeracy at higher levels than expected. Some staff sign well, but more consistency in the standard of adults' signing skills would be helpful. Lesson planning is very good, with clear objectives stated, and logical small steps detailed, which teachers follow to help pupils successfully learn what is expected by the end of the lesson. The topics and activities planned have a firm base in the targets set in pupils' individual education plans and are linked effectively with the curriculum planned in each subject's scheme of work. In this way, pupils benefit from a consistent learning experience and build on their prior knowledge as they move through the school. Teachers use classroom activities well to reinforce personal and social education. For example, registration time, assemblies and circle time are used well to talk with pupils about their experiences, resolve differences and deal with their feelings towards themselves and others in a positive way.

19. Teachers have high expectations. These are particularly evident in what the youngest pupils with PMLD are expected to achieve and, as a result, pupils work hard and make good progress. Teachers present challenges to keep pupils moving forward. For example, in a class 4 physical education lesson, the teacher set the challenge of pupils thinking of their own ideas for sequences of movements. This, along with the encouragement and coaching provided, led pupils to perform movements at a standard near to that expected for their age in mainstream schools.
20. Throughout the school, teachers use a very good range of teaching methods. They dramatise stories, use real objects for illustration, use songs, signs, demonstrations, discussions and so on. In this way, the many varied learning needs of pupils in the group are addressed. For example, in a class 7 literacy lesson, the teacher told the story *We're going on a Bear Hunt* with real grass, mud and water to simulate events in the tale. In addition a recorded bear's growl was provided which pupils could switch on as requested, and this added to the dramatic anticipation. In this way, pupils benefited from a sensory, and literary, experience. This was added to with a group task of looking at coloured objects in ultra-violet light, which enabled pupils to show their awareness of 'over' and 'under'.
21. Teachers make very good use of time, and seize all opportunities for learning. For example, they make good use of early arrival time to focus pupils on work while they wait for others to arrive on their transport. Resources are used very well and teachers are becoming increasingly skilled in making good use of computers to assist their record keeping, planning, and to enhance resources such as work sheets. Teachers compile a profile for each pupil, which shows clearly what each pupil knows and the progress they have made over time. These show that good use is made of assessment to plan lessons to build on pupils' prior learning although records of day-to-day assessment against learning objectives and IEP targets are not so apparent. There is satisfactory involvement of parents in continuing the work of the school at home, and a useful dialogue is maintained between teachers and parents in the home-school books.
22. Children in the foundation stage of their education are well taught and make good progress across the full range of areas of learning, benefiting from a good programme of well planned activities. The teaching of English is good, with notable strengths in the challenge and high expectations of teachers in lessons. These lead to the very responsive attitudes of pupils to the subject. In mathematics, teaching is predominantly good, and sometimes very good. Major strengths of the teaching are that teachers adopt appropriate methods that they know will enable pupils to succeed and their very effective management of behaviour. In science, teaching has greatly improved since the last inspection. It is consistently good in the primary department and very good for senior pupils. The subject coordinator has provided brief documents for each class based in the appropriate programmes of study for science. However, these do not give sufficient information or guidance on what should be taught, when it should be taught, or to what standard. The teaching of French is very good. In art, design and technology, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is good in art, design and technology, geography and history, music, and physical education. Teaching is very good in information and communications technology in classes for younger pupils with PMLD. In the rest of the school, the teaching of ICT is satisfactory. Religious education is taught satisfactorily.
23. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the new and temporary arrangements in class 7 result in some periods of time when pupils are not sufficiently engaged in purposeful activities and where support staff lack guidance on how best to organise their materials and teaching so that all pupils are involved appropriately.

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

24. The curriculum provided is of good quality. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Each class contains a wide age range, and the classes of pupils with PMLD are separated from the other classes. This is due to the restrictions imposed by the site and buildings. Students over the age of 16 are in classes with younger pupils and miss the opportunity to follow a curriculum specifically designed to help them enter college and the next stage of their education.
25. The school is committed to giving each pupil an appropriate curriculum and to providing work that is well matched to pupils' needs and abilities. The curriculum provided from the foundation stage to the end of Key Stage 4 is broad balanced and relevant with some good features in English and mathematics and personal development. The school is successfully committed to the National Curriculum and the 'Access Curriculum.' This allows teachers to teach programmes of study linked to National Curriculum but at an appropriate level to give enriching and relevant educational experiences to all pupils. The school has also effectively implemented both the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies. These initiatives have encouraged the teachers to plan the curriculum together. As a result there is increased cohesion between classes in the work and experiences provided for pupils. Information and communications technology is developing satisfactorily and is becoming increasingly included within the planning of many subjects.
26. The meeting of special educational needs and the promotion of personal and social skills is given a high priority. This is helped by the Access schemes of work which provide good quality planning and assessment opportunities. There is very good provision of specialist facilities for PMLD pupils of all ages who benefit from the use of, for example, a swimming pool, an independent mobility track and a range of specialist resources with switches for access. The quality of curriculum provided for pupils with PMLD in classes 2 and 8 is exceptionally high. Staff work very hard to provide successfully a stimulating learning environment where pupils are challenged to interact and increase their awareness at all times. However, the accommodation prevents these pupils from learning and playing alongside their peer group and they are denied the many incidental learning opportunities and friendships this brings. In other classes, good provision is made to meet the additional learning needs of pupils, for example, those with challenging behaviour or autism. Staff have worked effectively with speech and language therapists to develop total communication throughout the school. Pupils now benefit from the widespread use of signs, symbols and the recent introduction of the Picture Exchange Communication System. In addition, the school enriches the curriculum for pupils with additional needs by providing access to a range of alternative therapies, including shiatsu, reflexology and aromatherapy. The buildings, however, prevent equality of access for all pupils to all facilities. For example, the computer linked to the Internet is not accessible to pupils in wheelchairs.
27. The role of the senior managers and subject co-ordinators in monitoring the curriculum to improve the quality of teaching and learning is now securely in place. As a result, medium term planning and individual lesson plans are closely linked to the individual needs of pupils and the assessment of their achievements leads to improved monitoring of their academic and social skills. Subject coordinators have also worked effectively to provide detailed schemes of work for most subjects that show teachers clearly what to include in lessons and help to ensure that pupils build securely on prior learning as they move through the school. In this way, the quality of the curriculum content for each subject is improving. Work of this quality has yet to be achieved in science. Pupils within the Key Stage 4 and post 16 age groups, have little opportunity to study and gain relevant certificates of qualification in their final years at school. Each pupil leaves with a comprehensive National Record of Achievement and having studied some modules from the Accreditation for and Life and Living (ALL) scheme as part of their 'leavers' programme. However, as pupils' achievements are rising, it is a shame that their efforts are not better rewarded with nationally recognised qualifications. Students receive appropriate careers advice and guidance and benefit from well planned and effective work experience, but disappointingly, not all pupils have access into courses at local colleges. Younger pupils benefit from the opportunities provided to widen their experience through integration into local schools.
28. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. All pupils have individual education plans containing relevant targets for the communication and behaviour needed to access learning.

However, a whole school programme of sex education has yet to be agreed but this is included in the present school development plan. Specific sex education is currently taught to small groups or in a one-to-one situation. Other issues such as use of tobacco or alcohol are tackled as part of circle time. Management of intimate care is dealt with in accordance with national guidelines.

29. Provision for extra-curricular activities and the contribution of the community to pupils' learning are good and enrich the learning opportunities for all pupils. The wide range of activities include, for example, residential experiences ,the Ten-Tors challenge - a challenging long distance hike for older pupils and the visits to Paignton zoo. There are many visitors to the school some of whom provide additional extra curricular links, for example the aromatherapist and the barn owl trust. The school has developed effective links with other schools. Inclusion is arranged for individual pupils, where appropriate, in local primary schools. Pupils in Class 3 join others at a local primary school, which has had a big impact on the development of pupils' social skills and self-confidence. Paired work experience with students from a local grammar school is very beneficial for the oldest pupils.

Provision for spiritual moral social and cultural development

30. The overall provision for pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school has made satisfactory improvement in this area since the last inspection. Planning for the development of these areas does not, however, appear as routine in the plans made for each subject, but the experiences provided in personal and social education, religious education, humanities, art and music enhance effectively pupils' understanding and development.
31. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. There are whole school, departmental and class assemblies when pupils are encouraged to celebrate their own and each others' achievements. These assemblies and circle-times fulfil the requirement for collective worship and help to establish the very caring and purposeful school ethos. There are occasional examples of spiritual experiences in lessons when pupils are encouraged to experience wonder as in a class 7 religious education lesson when pupils seated around a table with a candle ,talked about what had happened to them during the day.
32. The school makes good provision for the moral development of the pupils. Pupils and students know right from wrong and the consistent and positive role model provided by all adults in the school encourages respect and consideration for each other. Each class has clear rules, and these are known by pupils and referred to effectively for guidance when necessary. Opportunities for pupils to make decisions and choices and the development self discipline are now part of lesson planning. For example pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 have a choice of activities on arrival each morning. Expectations for good behaviour both in school and on visits out of school are clear and staff foster values of fairness and sharing when pupils are working or playing games.
33. The school makes very good provision for social development, staff take advantage of many opportunities during the school day to encourage involvement from all pupils including those with complex needs and those diffident to be part of a group. The school makes very good provision for the development of social skills for pupils with PMLD, which is clearly seen when classes of very young pupils are enabled to combine for music where they communicate and work effectively as one class. Older students in the school participate in a variety of extra activities, taking responsibilities around the school and enjoy the paired work experience activities, however there are missed opportunities for post 16 pupils to take more responsibility for themselves due to the present limitations of accommodation and groupings of pupils.
34. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' cultural development. The religious education curriculum contains appropriate references to other religions, while geography provides a focus on life in other countries and pupils in Key Stage 4, for example, experience French café food and music during a French lesson. The oldest pupils study Macbeth experiencing the story scenario and characters as part of their English programme. Pupils learn about other cultures and lifestyles through the support they give to charities such as filling shoe boxes with presents for children in Romania. There have been visits from local musicians and theatre groups and the whole school

takes part in Harvest and Christmas celebrations. Pupils are made well aware of English culture through visits to local places of interest. Appropriate visits are arranged for pupils to visit museums, churches and concerts. However there are insufficient books in the library on other cultures and less attention is currently given to making pupils aware of the richness of life in multi-cultural Britain.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

35. The school's procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are good and reflect the caring ethos of the school. The statutory requirements for child protection are fully met, although training for the staff in identification is overdue. However, the school development plan currently includes provision to remedy this. Staff and pupils have positive relationships with each other and adults show good respect for the dignity of individuals at all times. A full range of visiting professionals contribute effectively to the provision for all pupils, including speech and language therapy and physiotherapy. The school makes good use of their time in assessment and programme setting. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy, backed by clear procedures. There was a full external audit of health and safety in July 1999 and all the issues identified have been addressed. The caretaker makes a valuable contribution by dealing with hazards and completing the necessary electrical checks on appliances. Fire drills are held each term. Teachers are diligent in observing safe practices in lessons such as swimming where pupils must enter the pool by the ramp. The school continues to try to obtain nursing support for the significant number of pupils who have serious medical conditions. Nursing functions are currently carried out by trained classroom support staff who consequently have less time to perform their proper educational role. The nature of the site, however, continues to make the arrival and departure of transport a potential for risk and restricts the opportunities for pupils to mix with one another during lessons and break-times.
36. There are very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour, and for eliminating oppressive behaviour. Teachers know the pupils very well. Staff meet regularly to discuss pupils' behaviour particularly if a pupil is exhibiting new challenges or unusual behaviour. The shared team approach ensures that there is consistency in dealing with individuals in a planned way. As a result the pupils feel secure within the school community and there is an impressive absence of bullying. There is a comprehensive behaviour policy that includes systematic monitoring of specific behaviour problems. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own behaviour against the simple rules displayed on their classroom walls and this helps them effectively to know which actions are right or wrong. The school policy and practice is to emphasise and reinforce appropriate behaviour with positive praise and rewards and keep sanctions to a minimum. This represents significant progress since the last inspection when this policy was in its infancy. There are satisfactory measures to promote attendance despite the current lack of formal monitoring of registers. Pupils and their families communicate effectively so that absence is not a problem and the whereabouts of all pupils are always known. Monitoring will be facilitated as the school moves over to computerised record-keeping in the course of this school year.
37. The school makes excellent provision to monitor the academic performance and personal development of pupils. Comprehensive, detailed records of academic and personal development are maintained on each pupil. These are of high quality and demonstrate clearly what pupils can do in each subject, what they should do next to improve, and how much progress has been made over time. There is a clear, logical link between the targets set and what teachers plan to include in lessons. In addition, parents are provided with detailed and thorough annual reports and annual reviews so they are also aware of what their children can do, and what they should learn next. At a whole school level, the use of assessment information to raise standards and to set all pupils challenging targets is excellent. Good use is made of routine assessment in each subject for teachers to know on a daily basis what has been learnt, and this information is used effectively to plan future lessons. However, it is not always recorded as clearly as annual assessments, though its effect is clear in the continued good progress that pupils make.
38. There is good provision for the educational and personal support and guidance for pupils. The personal, social and health education programme makes a significant contribution to the pupils'

personal development. Sex education is introduced on an individual basis. Personal independence for pupils with PMLD is enhanced significantly by good use of the track, where pupils use switches to steer, for themselves, their chairs around the school site. Although there is satisfactory provision for careers education and guidance, the careers opportunities for the post-16 students are very limited. The Careers Officer visits the school twice a term to give advice to the older pupils in class 6. The Careers Education curriculum is based on the Steps Portfolio issued by Careers Enterprise and is offered to pupils over a three year period during which each pupil develops a personal profile to encourage self-awareness and an understanding of the world of work. This includes work experience placements in the local community. However, links with the local FE colleges are not well developed and there are currently no link courses which would benefit the post-16 students.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39. Parents are very supportive of the school – more so than at the time of the last inspection. They value the contribution that the school makes to their children’s academic and personal development, and appreciate the support the school gives to the family. The school is rightly perceived as very approachable. Any concerns are dealt with quickly. Parents are particularly pleased with the happiness of their children and the relationships within the school where everyone is known and valued. The inspectors agree with this view of the school.
40. The impact of parents’ involvement on the work of the school, and their contributions to learning, are satisfactory. The home school agreement defines clearly the nature of the partnership between school and home. Parents use the home-school book to share issues of concern with the school. Parent governors are very committed. Because many of the children’s homes are a long way from the school, few parents help in the school. The parent-teacher association is also affected by the difficulties of distance and child-care, but it is being revived this year with coffee mornings and other social events designed to raise funds for the school.
41. The annual meetings with parents, when their children’s individual education plans are reviewed, are well attended. This involvement of the parents in setting targets enables them to contribute to their child’s progress towards the targets at home. When the school is considering the introduction of new policies or practices, parents are consulted. They are invited to respond to their children’s annual reports using a reply slip at the end of the report. These are well used with most parents expressing their thanks to the school and the teachers for the progress made by their child over the past year. Parents’ suggestions are welcomed and acted on: for example, the annual reports to parents are now word-processed as a result of parents’ complaints that some teachers’ handwriting was difficult to read, and the school uniform has been changed. The school’s aim to establish a working partnership, based on mutual respect, has largely been achieved. There is one area where parents are dissatisfied, which relates to one class in the school where pupils with PMLD do not do as well as in other classes. The school is doing its best to address these concerns.
42. The quality of information provided for parents is good. Most parents feel they are kept informed. The information provided about pupils’ progress, both academic and personal, is outstanding: the pupil profiles are imaginatively presented (with delightful photographs showing the children’s newly accomplished skills) and give full, clear accounts of their development. There are regular brief newsletters. The home-school books and the escorts who accompany the children on the school buses provide effective daily communication between school and home. The information in the school prospectus, however, is not as accessible as it could be.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

43. The school benefits from the very good leadership and management provided by the headteacher who is ably supported by two senior members of staff. The headteacher has vision, drive and determination and sets a very clear direction for educational improvement. Very clear aims for the school have been successfully established and these are reflected very well in all developments. The headteacher and senior managers are most successful in encouraging a team spirit and,

throughout the school, there is a shared commitment to continued improvement. The result of this is seen in the desire of the school community to get better at what they do, so that teachers and non-teaching staff are raising the quality of their work, and pupils are trying harder to achieve more.

44. The governing body is of good quality and governors work together well with school staff to promote higher standards. They fulfill appropriately all their statutory functions, know clearly what the school does well and what could be improved and play a full part in establishing the strategy for continued development. Through relevant sub-committees, governors keep up to date with all facets of school performance and life; and, with the local education authority, are doing as much as they can to find a solution to the school's accommodation problems.
45. The headteacher and advanced skills teacher have successfully completed training in school self-evaluation. This training has been very beneficial, with the effect that good quality monitoring and evaluation of teaching is now routine. Senior managers confidently advise teachers of what they do well and how to bring about any improvement. This work has a major impact on the quality of teaching, which has improved significantly, and on the professionalism of teachers. Since the last inspection, a number of significant staffing changes have taken place and the headteacher and governors have taken every opportunity to appoint staff of high quality. The senior management team has a clear view of what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve. As a result, relevant priorities for action are detailed in the school improvement plan. Appropriate targets for school improvement are set, and the school community works hard to address them. The school has accelerated its development within the last two years and has a good capacity for continued improvement. The impact of this work is seen in the improvements made since the last inspection in October 1996.
 - Very good improvement has been made in:
 - the quality of teaching;
 - the variety of teaching methods and styles used; and
 - the quality of leadership and management.
 - Good improvement has taken place in:
 - the pupils' standards of achievement, particularly in English and mathematics;
 - the progress pupils make;
 - pupils' attitudes to school;
 - the roles of senior managers and subject leaders;
 - the curriculum provided;
 - the coordination of subjects;
 - the quality of the school improvement plan; and
 - budget-setting to finance the priorities for improvement.
46. Good delegation of roles and responsibilities now takes place. There are sufficient qualified and experienced adults in every class, with fewer teachers than expected for the number of pupils, but more learning support assistants to balance this. Teachers' responsibilities are now more clearly specified through job descriptions than at the previous inspection. The very skilled and experienced learning support assistants work well with teachers as members of a strong and highly effective team. This has a significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning.
47. Since the previous inspection the school has developed good systems for performance management and appraisal, including annual professional reviews for all staff. The school is up-to-date with current initiatives in education and appropriate procedures for formal performance management are ready for implementation. Good arrangements for inducting new members of staff are in place and the school can provide very effectively for the training of new teachers. The advanced skills teacher provides an excellent model of good practice with pupils with complex learning difficulties and very effective support to teachers, especially those new to the school. There has been a planned programme of training to help staff meet the additional needs of the pupils. This has included strategies to deal with challenging behaviour and aspects of alternative and augmentative communication. This should now be included in induction programmes and a

rolling in-service programme to ensure that all teachers and learning support assistants learn and maintain these skills.

48. Very good financial management takes place and there is good strategic planning for the use of resources. School administration is effective and day-to-day operations are handled smoothly by an administration team of good quality. Good use is made of new technology to assist office procedures, and also by teachers to prepare materials and keep records. Specific grants, for example, the standards fund, are used well and for relevant items. Governors, senior managers, subject coordinators and administration staff are effective in ensuring best value in all they do. Satisfactory resources for learning are provided to support the curriculum, with some good quality resources being purchased, particularly for pupils with PMLD. Given the low income per pupil, the dreadful accommodation and the limitations of the site: standards are rising; teaching is much improved; and, the school has made very good improvement since the last inspection. This represents very good value for money.
49. The school's accommodation, however, is very poor despite the improvements that have been made since the last inspection, notably the building of "The Bungalow" which provides very good facilities for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school has also done what it can to improve storage space in the main building by altering several rooms and changing the function of others. The caretaker and his staff provide good quality care and maintenance of the buildings and the school does its best to overcome the inherent disadvantages of its site. These include problems of circulation, particularly in the main building where the hall is used as a thoroughway to the detriment of physical education lessons, and the exposure of pupils to the elements as they move to and from the swimming pool. Classrooms are much too small, there are no specialist teaching areas, apart from a small food technology space that is difficult to access, and outside play areas are inadequate. These and other drawbacks, not least of which is the unattractive external appearance of most of the buildings on the site, have an adverse effect on the day-to-day operation of the school and on the range and quality of the curriculum provided. They seriously restrict the school's ability to group its pupils more flexibly and effectively, particularly in its efforts to increase opportunities for the inclusion of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. They also cause major difficulties for activities such as assemblies and performances by pupils, the curriculum for post-sixteen students and recreation at break-times. The local education authority is fully aware of this problem and is currently seeking to remedy the problems by proposing the relocation of the school to a new site. In the meantime, the school's accommodation remains a key issue, as reported in the last inspection, and is a limiting factor on developing further the quality of education provided.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50. To continue improving the school, governors, senior managers and staff should now:
- a) Raise the standards of achievement of pupils with PMLD in class 7 (paragraph 3) by:
 - Ensuring the quality of teaching matches the same high standard to be found in the school's other classes for PMLD pupils
 - Making sure pupils are engaged in purposeful activities at all times
 - Providing a curriculum for this class, with relevant assessment and planning, to match the high quality found in the rest of the school
 - Enabling staff to improve their specialist communication skills to match the needs of the pupils
 - b) With the local education authority, ensure that pupils and staff are accommodated in buildings of sufficient quality, and with enough external space (paragraphs 49, 57, 114) to enable:
 - Pupils with PMLD to be included in classes with other pupils their own age
 - Pupils to be better grouped in classes
 - The requirements for physical education, and other subjects, to be met
 - The outdoor play needs of children and pupils to be met
 - c) Recognise the achievements of pupils with an appropriate range of external accreditation, and provide a relevant curriculum for students post-16 (paragraphs 24, 27, 38).
51. In addition, governors, senior managers and staff should also consider raising the standards in science through providing subject leadership to match the quality found in other subjects (paragraphs 7, 73-80).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	67
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	33

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	27	46	16	4	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	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	82
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	29

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	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	4	School data	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	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	1
Indian	1
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	80
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: YN – Y14**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	8.54
Average class size	10.25

Education support staff: YN – Y14

Total number of education support staff	27
Total aggregate hours worked per week	761

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	687643
Total expenditure	677036
Expenditure per pupil	8909
Balance brought forward from previous year	27474
Balance carried forward to next year	38081

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	78
Number of questionnaires returned	30

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	73	23	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	63	27	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	43	3	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	17	3	7	10
The teaching is good.	77	17	3	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	63	37	3	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	77	17	7	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	20	7	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	70	20	7	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	77	13	7	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	27	3	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	20	3	3	10

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

52. Children in the foundation stage (under five and reception class) are in Classes 1 and 2, Class 2 being for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The youngest pupils attend on a part-time basis. Most of the pupils remain at Mayfield, but some come for assessment and move on to other schools in the area. Consequently the group is not typical of Mayfield pupils, and has a larger proportion of higher attaining children than in other classes. Children are well taught and make good progress across the full range of areas of learning, benefiting from a good programme of well planned activities. This aspect of the school's provision was not reported on in the previous inspection.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

53. Children make good progress and achieve well through cheerful and consistent messages from the adults around them. They show that they enjoy coming to the nursery and most children relate well to each other and to the staff. Children that find it hard to share space with other people often make very good progress over time and become more responsive to both adults and their peers. Adults work hard to engage the children in productive activities, and strike a careful balance between completing a planned activity and encouraging them to follow their own interests and explorations. Older children work independently for significant periods of time, for example, when painting or when looking at books. The children are secure in class routines, for example sitting on their chairs after physical education and getting dressed together or during story time. Children develop good self-help skills, recognizing, for example, when they need to wash their hands or go to the toilet. Many children make significant progress in independent feeding and drinking, helped by the well-organised feeding programmes.

Language and Literacy

54. The teaching of communication and early literacy skills is good. Adults provide good role models for children. They listen carefully, and are sensitive to any communicative gestures. This is especially evident for pupils in Class 2 where great efforts are made to interpret gesture and expression and to develop consistent responses. The speech therapist works in close collaboration with the teachers and this helps them to plan appropriate and relevant activities for the children. Symbols, photographs and objects of reference are used very well and are kept close at hand. For example, children choose what they will have for dinner by discussing and picking from a selection of symbols. The Picture Exchange Communication System has been recently introduced for some pupils with autism and teachers and parents are collaborating effectively on this. Some children are very interested in books. They turn pages carefully and have their favourites, joining in with repeated phrases. Most recognize pictures of their friends and people in the school.

Mathematical development

55. Children make good progress in early mathematical understanding and use of number. Several higher attaining children can name and match colours and shapes, rote counting to 5 with adults, recognising some numbers and beginning to understand the concept of 'some' and 'all gone'. Some begin to use the language of comparison and measurement, such as 'full and empty' when they play with sand and water. They become familiar with the vocabulary of mathematics and even when they make mistakes are using words from the right area. All members of staff take opportunities to develop these skills throughout the school day, for example, counting children, singing numbers songs during play and reinforcing the vocabulary of colour, position and shape during collage, play-dough and sensory games.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

56. Staff are skilled in ensuring that children become increasingly aware of their environment and develop interesting and well resourced activities, using single switches, symbol and photographic materials as well as real objects such as fruit. On occasions excitement and wonder are generated such as when they use an electric juicer to make apple juice, or squeeze an orange segment. Some children are able to communicate about things that happened yesterday, and guess at things that might happen in the future showing that they are developing a sense of time. Even young children with complex needs show that they understand the routines and predict when, for example, it will be time for drinks or going home. Children recognise places around school from photographs and comment on them – one child said ‘no buses’ with surprise when seeing a picture of an empty car park at the front of the school! Older children, having been shown photographs, were also able to take adults to the office and swimming pool. They play appropriately with construction sets and bricks making, for example, a road and train track. They also have good access to a computer and several use a large trackerball in conventional early learning activities such as picture matching.

Physical Development

57. The provision for physical play for lively children is seriously hampered by the poor accommodation, so that all opportunities for this have to be planned carefully (for example the daily session in the hall or ball play) and there are too few resources such as large wheeled toys to provide the range of experiences to which young children are entitled. Teachers and support assistants, however, work very hard to ensure that they compensate for the poor facilities and consequently children make good progress in their physical development. Where appropriate, physiotherapy exercises and skilled positioning are an integral part of their daily work. Class 1 has a daily physical education session with large climbing apparatus in the hall. All the children climb and balance confidently with some having skills in line with other children of the same age. Some climb quickly to the top of the window bars and touch the ceiling and other invent different ways of travelling along a raised bench. Most children are aware of others around them and a few develop interactive turn taking games with a partner. They also learn to throw balls and bean bags with reasonable accuracy.

Creative Development

58. Opportunities for creative development are well integrated into topic planning and children make good progress. They experiment with paint, sand, water, construction toys and music. They learn the conventions of tearing up paper for collage and putting paint brushes back in the right pots. The youngest child watches others with fascination when they are using scissors and begins to open and shut them in imitation. Some activities demonstrate high expectations, such as when children are shown the work of Archimbaldo when making faces from dried fruit. Most children took little notice but one was enthralled, looked at the picture for a long time and communicated through gesture and expression that this was ‘definitely weird’. Songs are used throughout the day to motivate and engage children, and to link activities effectively. Older children begin to join in with nursery songs and a few sing very tunefully, able to fill in the gaps in familiar melodies.
59. Assessment is of good quality and is done skilfully. Careful observations noting attainment and progress are kept during every session, and this clearly informs day-to-day planning both for individual and group sessions. The curriculum is well planned in line with the school’s documentation, and activities are very well designed to meet the needs of children at very different stages. This planning would be made easier if Class 1 were to adopt the published national schemes for children in the foundation stage. This would better reflect the learning needs of higher attainers and can be adapted, as is the case with the school scheme, to meet the needs of other children. It would help the teacher make even better use of her good links with other schools and nurseries, and help coordinate provision with other schools when children move on.
60. Parents are appropriately involved through regular dialogue in home-school books, visits to school and telephone calls. Regular coffee mornings are well attended. There are useful plans to

develop the induction process for children new to the school. Good information is passed on from other pre-school services but more formal ways of gleaning the detail and breadth of children's lives outside school (for example, the names of toys and pets, what calms/excites them, where Grandma lives etc.) are not yet in place.

ENGLISH

61. Achievements in English are good in all key stages. There is a broad range of attainment in each class. The majority of pupils are making good progress within the school's very effective scheme of "Baseline Assessment Items" for the subject and a number of others, from Key Stage 2 onwards, are working within National Curriculum Level 1 and, in a few cases, Level 2. However, the school is not making use of external accreditation to recognise these successes at the end of Key Stage 4 and for students post-sixteen, and this is unsatisfactory.
62. Pupils' records contain ample evidence of good progress towards their personal targets in all areas of the subject. In speaking and listening, for example, pupils in Key Stage 1 are steadily increasing the number of words and signs that they can understand and use. From observations of lessons across all key stages and all areas of the curriculum, there is clearly good progress in the attentiveness with which pupils listen and in the confidence with which they respond for an increasing variety of purposes. The school has developed a very effective policy of "total communication". Symbols, visual materials and, in particular, objects for pupils to match with words are used very effectively by staff to aid communication and to extend the children's vocabulary. Signing also plays an important part in this process but not all staff are using it consistently. There is insufficient emphasis on its use by older pupils with PMLD, for example, and as a result their ability to communicate has not developed as it should. Generally, however, staff are implementing the policy very effectively and are using a variety of resources and teaching methods to promote communication well at all levels. This approach is also used to very good effect in the teaching of reading. Acting out scenes from "Big Books", for example, with costumes and sound effects produces an enthusiastic response from pupils. At the same time, there is a consistent emphasis on phonic awareness and pupils make good progress in skills such as matching sounds and letters in the early stages.
63. Pupils make good progress in reading. In both Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils are recognising key words and characters from their stories with increasing success and in Key Stages 3 and 4 a growing number of pupils are reading aloud from stories in the reading scheme used with confidence and good levels of understanding. Pupils of all ages enjoy books. They are keen to use the school library and to choose their own books. They talk confidently about their favourites and these often include non-fiction books on a wide variety of subjects. The school has greatly improved its stock of books both in the library and in the classroom. Good progress is made in writing. Books are used very skilfully by staff to promote a more varied range of writing by pupils. Simple book reviews begin to appear in the files of higher-attaining pupils from Key Stage 3, for example, and, in Key Stage 2, dialogue in a "Big Book" is used to practise the writing of sentences with speech marks and other elements of punctuation. There is clear evidence in pupils' written work of good progress through tracing, copying and independently forming letters with increasing accuracy and higher-attaining pupils are developing their ability to produce independent writing, for example in their diaries. For most pupils, the "Writing with Symbols" computer program is boosting their progress in both their early reading and writing skills.
64. The teaching of English is good, with notable strengths in the challenge and high expectations of lessons. These are demonstrated in the excellent adaptation of plays of Shakespeare for pupils with PMLD in Class 8 and for pupils in Class 6. Very good relationships with pupils, the lively pace of lessons and the imaginative use of a variety of resources are major factors in the confident and very responsive attitudes of pupils to the subject. There is very good teamwork between teachers and support assistants who provide high quality support to pupils, particularly when reading. When teaching is less effective, communication skills receive insufficient emphasis and planning is inadequate. In general, however, teachers' planning is very good. Individual teaching programmes break down attainment targets into clearly defined and graded skills and are used very effectively as a basis for the assessment of pupils' progress in basic

literacy. In this, as in other areas of teaching, the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has made a major contribution. It has been adapted sensitively and skilfully to the needs of the school. The subject's co-ordinator has provided very effective leadership during this important development which has brought many improvements in the subject since the last inspection. Achievements are now good in all key stages, there is a much better balance between the different elements of the curriculum, there is more variety in the teaching methods used and a greater range of work is now being achieved in reading and writing. Signing remains an area where more consistency is needed, and this is recognised by the school as an area for further development.

MATHEMATICS

65. There have been significant improvements in teaching and learning in mathematics since the last inspection, when progress in one-third of lessons was unsatisfactory. This is no longer the case. Pupils throughout the school, especially those with complex learning difficulties, achieve well in relation to their differing needs and undertake a much wider and more relevant range of activities. The flexible introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has been carried out effectively and successfully.
66. Younger pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2 count a group of objects up to five and recognise and name the numerals one to five consistently. They learn to recognise coins, helped by the use of large numbers made by the teachers and the interesting presentations of counting tasks. Pupils enjoy these. All pupils are involved in the singing of number rhymes through adults' good use of verbal and signed prompts. They are excited by the "whoosh" in the song about the flying saucers. The teachers and learning support assistants work well together to provide pupils with work that is matched well to their abilities, but has sufficient challenge to develop them further. For example, higher attaining pupils are beginning to place the numbers one to ten in order and count out teddies to match each number. Most pupils reinforce their understanding of one to five through activities such as giving a badger puppet cherries from a cake, adults rewarding success with praise and encouragement to lead pupils to attempt the next step. With gentle support, lower attaining pupils match cups with saucers.
67. In numeracy lessons, older pupils from Key Stages 3, 4 and post-16 work together in groups where activities are matched closely to their abilities and have an appropriate focus. One group for example, needs a strong emphasis on the acquisition of important basic mathematical vocabulary and early number work. They increase their understanding of "heavier than" and "lighter than" through the use of attractive and interesting weights made by the teacher in practical work with scales. The consistent use of signing and simple questions emphasise the words the teacher wants the pupils to learn. This helps them to develop their understanding of what is meant when one pan on the balance goes up and one goes down if an object is placed on it. Several pupils in the group show growing confidence and consistency in the use of the balance whilst others gain greater understanding that the weights are different. Most pupils make good efforts at placing labels "heavy " and "light" on the scales correctly.
68. In a lively oral session, the second group of pupils are relaxed and confident as they reinforce their understanding of how to estimate numbers. They benefit from the teacher's carefully phrased questions. These pupils reinforce their growing mathematical vocabulary and this makes them want to contribute more to the lessons. Work is matched well to the abilities within the group and staff use simple but effective resources, such as number lines and pictures of the pupils, to attempt simple addition problems. Some pupils are familiar with plus and equals signs. Higher attaining pupils add numbers from one to ten and show an understanding of the addition process when using a computer program with a good level of independence. One pupil is beginning to count on in twos and work on addition problems to 20. All pupils consolidate their previous learning well because of the high quality of the activities offered and the adult support provided. In the whole group session at the end of the lesson pupils show good speaking and listening skills as the teacher asks questions around the group.

69. The group of higher attaining pupils are very keen to start work on counting on to 100. The mental number session at the start of the lesson is much enjoyed because of the lively approach of the teacher and learning support assistants as everyone moves their arms up and down, counting in tens to 100 and back again. The physical movements reinforce their counting well and most pupils show that they are able to add ten to numbers up to 100 accurately in a rapid questioning routine. Pupils respond quickly, sensibly and proudly because of the very supportive manner of the staff. All adults work hard to give pupils the confidence to give the correct answers and the pupils, in turn, value their support. Pupils are delighted with other pupils' success and the very good relationships within the group lead them to applaud or praise them warmly. During the lesson, pupils' understanding of the patterns on the 100 chart increases and most acquire better knowledge of the difference between tens and units. They look forward to playing the games the staff have made for them to improve their ability to add numbers quickly and accurately. They learn well in this happy atmosphere and make good progress, writing their own additions down on a worksheet. Some pupils form numerals incorrectly, but they are able to correct them and usually see their own mistakes. Pupils move confidently from the early levels of numeracy to working within Levels 1 and 2 of the National Curriculum.
70. Pupils with PMLD achieve at a high level because of the total focus on learning in lessons and the teachers' high expectations of the responses their pupils should make. Teachers use motivating equipment that is visually stimulating, has a range of interesting sounds, or feels exciting. These items create very good awareness and involvement of the pupils. Staff use opportunities to respond to any indications of communication and to allow pupils to initiate contact very well. For example, monkeys on sticks accompany a song about five monkeys jumping on the bed and the shopkeeper puts pupils' pennies into the till in exchange for buns during "Five currant buns." These activities give regular opportunities for pupils and staff to interact with each other and heighten awareness of the actions of other people. Pupils give eye contact, smiles and show awareness of what they are trying to do, encouraged by the lively style of the teachers. Teachers and learning support assistants extend pupils' tasks and have high expectations that they will show a preference and make choices. All opportunities to develop the idea of exchange, number recognition and rhythmic counting are taken well. Lessons are very well planned with a firm base of knowledge about what each child can do and what they should do next.
71. Group work is well organised and songs are presented confidently so that pupils anticipate change and try to count the number of objects left, are aware of links between numerals and the objects they see or hold. When pupils change from one activity to another this is accomplished quickly with good regard for pupils' dignity and safety so that stimulation continues wherever the next part of the lesson takes place. Use of numbers, which they can touch and feel the shape of because they are all quite different, are used to reinforce all activities. Very good use is made of the ultra violet room to reinforce pupils' understanding of number. They try hard to touch or point with their eyes to the correct answers, the situation and atmosphere helping them to focus on the numbers and bottles that glow so appealingly in the dark.
72. Teaching is predominantly good, and sometimes very good. Teachers' understanding of the subject, particularly the way in which activities need to be modified is particularly good. This, together with their extensive knowledge of the pupils, has a significant impact on pupils' achievement and the positive response they make. Major strengths of the teaching are that teachers adopt appropriate methods that they know will enable pupils to succeed and their very effective management of behaviour. They do this with sensitivity and success. Learning support staff make a significant contribution to mathematics lessons. They understand the lesson targets and they work very effectively as a team with teachers. The use of Pupils Annotation Sheets to check and record pupils' learning is exemplary. The subject is efficiently and effectively managed and is well placed for further improvement.

SCIENCE

73. Standards of achievement in science are in line with pupils' abilities in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils make good progress in lessons because they are taught well, and satisfactory progress over time, due to the lack of a sequential programme of work, which means pupils can repeat

topics unnecessarily as they move through the school. Standards of attainment and progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 are satisfactory overall. There is good progress in lessons and good teaching, but significant weaknesses in the narrow programme of work, too much repetition of topics, poor resources and the limited accommodation. This restricts progress over longer periods of time and results in pupils achieving levels on the 'Access' science assessments that are lower and show less improvement than in other subjects. Progress throughout the school is best in aspects of life and living processes and the early stages of experimental science.

74. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have developed some good descriptive language when exploring fruit. Many can name colours and some talk about the properties of fruit that they feel in a feely box, modifying their guesses as the activity continues – for example from a pear to an avocado. Pupils with less spoken language observe closely and enjoy feeling, tasting and squeezing, clearly differentiating between different fruit.
75. By the end of Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils can name some internal organs, with a little support. One says that teeth crunch food into little bits and the tubes that these bits go through are 'insects' (intestines). They understand that bones need to be straight and strong to hold us up, and investigate their own limbs using useful descriptive language. They use magnifying glasses appropriately and observe very carefully when, for example, comparing germinated and non-germinated seeds.
76. By the time that they leave school, most students can say what conditions are needed for plant growth. Higher attaining pupils have an appropriate vocabulary of experimental science using words like 'prediction' and 'compare' appropriately, and make sensible suggestions about how to see whether plants need light to grow. They draw diagrams to show how they have set up their experiment and offer advice to their friends about how to improve these. Pupils with complex needs helped to make bread. They all expressed clear decisions about whether or not they wanted to taste it. Several explored the texture and warmth of new bread using a variety of touching, tapping and scratching movements.
77. Teaching has greatly improved since the last inspection when a third of lessons were unsatisfactory. It is consistently good in the primary department and very good for senior pupils. Lessons are well planned with a variety of appropriate activities that keep pupils motivated and thinking about the concepts that they are learning for the full session. When pupils were learning about bones, they looked at a skeleton, sang a song about bones, made legs from different construction materials with careful reference to their own legs. They were therefore using the correct vocabulary and thinking about the purpose of bones for a significant period of time and made very good progress with this. Planning and learning objectives are shared with, and well used by, support assistants, so adults work as an effective team promoting high standards. Teachers are secure in their knowledge of plants and human biology. They generate an enthusiasm for learning and show excitement at pupils' discoveries, such as when a pupil observed tiny roots growing from a seed under a magnifying glass. This encourages pupils to work hard and enjoy learning too. Behaviour is well managed and many pupils who have difficulty joining in or controlling their own behaviour are well included in lessons, often diverted by interesting activities. In the best lessons, pupils are also encouraged to consider wider aspects of the topics they are studying and excellent links are made to global citizenship. Pupils followed a path of thought from conditions for growth, to drought and deprivation in other parts of the world showing some insight and empathy.
78. The subject coordinator has provided brief documents for each class based in the appropriate programmes of study for science. However, these do not give sufficient information or guidance on what should be taught, when it should be taught, or to what standard. For example, for Class 1 where many of the pupils are still under five there is simply a heading "Electricity" with no further explanation. Teachers collaborate informally but do not feel secure that they are building on pupils' previous knowledge and experience. They have tended to opt for the elements of the curriculum where they feel most knowledgeable, so the programme, as a result, is unbalanced with an over-emphasis on human biology and plant growth. There are no systems for accrediting work in science, and no distinct programme for the students after the age of sixteen. This is

unsatisfactory. There are no whole school methods for tracking experiences or progress in science on a day-to-day basis although some teachers keep useful records for their own use. The use of 'Access' levels at the end of the year is useful in documenting overall attainment and the rate of progress, but gives too little detail of what pupils can actually do or understand in science.

79. There are not yet policies or documents in place that help teachers deliver a full programme of work to build knowledge, skills and understanding as pupils move through the school. Most teachers need a greater degree of support than is currently available to deliver all the appropriate topics. The lack of specialist accommodation limits the range of activities that can be undertaken and also depresses overall achievement. The school's resources for learning are generally poor, badly stored and inadequate to teach much of the science curriculum. Most teachers, however, bring and make their own very useful materials and borrow books and artefacts from the authority's resource centre. All classes make use of the nearby seashore but few other visits or visitors make a contribution to the science programme.
80. The school staff has the enthusiasm and motivation to teach a good science programme. They require subject leadership to the standard found in other subjects, a fully documented scheme of work, appropriate resources and professional support to develop and maintain the necessary subject knowledge and help the pupils to raise the levels of their achievements.

ART

81. The pupils' work seen in lessons, and on display in classrooms and corridors throughout the school, is at the standard expected for their degree of special educational needs. Pupils with PMLD explore colour and texture effectively and use their fingers and hands to spread for example, glue, paint and sand over paper to reinforce the colour orange. Higher attaining pupils mix powder paints together carefully to produce shades of colour to match, for example, the skin of a plum. They paint effective self-portraits that show facial features, hair style and skin tone and make colourful three-dimensional representations of intestines to illustrate their science lessons. There are some examples of pupils working at higher standards than expected. These are mainly when specific projects take place, such as the annual art week and making, cooperatively, an attractive clay-tile panel in the style of Miro.
82. Since the last inspection, standards have improved, particularly for younger pupils. There are now sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop skills with a wide range of materials and tools, although there could still be more emphasis on pupils developing creatively their own ideas. The subject has improved leadership, the curriculum now meets all requirements and the activities provided for pupils are monitored effectively so that everyone has a broad and balanced variety of experiences over their time in the school.
83. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers go out of their way to stimulate pupils with PMLD and provide them with exciting experiences. For example, in one lesson, all the adults present dressed in orange, pupils experimented with orange paint on gold paper, and were given opportunities to work with fluorescent orange paint under ultra-violet light. The range of methods used really highlighted the importance of colour and helped pupils to realise the significance of their lesson. Other pupils are challenged to think carefully about what they do and to improve their skills. For example, having previously mixed light and dark shades of primary colours and looked at some still-life paintings by Renoir, pupils were challenged to mix colours to match exactly the fruits provided. Their teacher and assistants gave good advice that helped pupils successfully to learn for themselves how to lighten and darken their paint and mix secondary colours. Around the school there are good displays of pupils' art work. Teachers arrange this work effectively, for example, using the seed patterns created by pupils to form fields in a larger landscape to represent harvest time. Teachers also illustrate effectively other subjects with art work and enhance the environment with colourful items to read and count. However, there are some occasions when lessons are unsatisfactory due to learning support assistants having insufficient guidance from their teacher on how best to organise their work.

84. The subject is well led and the coordinator has worked hard to ensure the quality of the curriculum and to provide interesting additional opportunities, such as the annual art week now linked to the Torbay Festival of Visual Arts, and experience of the art of other cultures. Clear plans are in place for further development of the subject and these are based securely on a good knowledge of current resources and practice and what should be done to improve them. The accommodation limits the further development of the subject as there is no potential for specialist facilities and pupils are limited to what can be achieved in their classrooms.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

85. Very few lessons were seen during the period of the inspection. Judgements are based on a scrutiny of pupils' work, discussions with teachers and observation of pupils' records. Pupils' achievements and progress are satisfactory in all Key Stages. Very good progress was seen during a lesson in food technology for pupils in Key Stage 4 however, progress for all pupils is limited due to the lack of specialist technology facilities, equipment and related teaching strategies to challenge them further.
86. Improvement in the subject since the last inspection has been satisfactory, especially in the development of a whole school scheme of work and in the now effective monitoring of teaching and learning. This has led to improved standards across all key stages.
87. Pupils in Key Stage 1 can, with help, cut and stick a range of food packaging to create a collage using a variety of glues. The highest attaining pupils in this class can create images of buildings using a computer program and make various structures using large construction blocks. Pupils with PMLD in class 8 experience how foodstuffs change during mixing and cooking whilst learning how to make bread. They rely on the support of teachers and assistants to mix the ingredients, but nevertheless show keen interest when given the opportunities to sample, for example, the smells and textures of dough. Pupils in Key Stage 3 design T shirts. They discuss and plan designs and use potatoes to make printing blocks and apply their designs to paper templates. Pupils develop their skills appropriately as they move through the school. By the end of Key Stage 4, they are able to work more independently on their designing and making activities. For example, pupils in Year 11 are able to plan and make a model irrigation system, using clay, as part of a topic on the use of materials. They are able to evaluate their design and suggest appropriate ways of improving its effectiveness.
88. The attitudes, responses and behaviour of pupils are good. They enjoy making things, working with food, and generally collaborate well together. They are very enthusiastic, listen carefully to their teachers and most concentrate well for relatively long periods of time. Relationships are very good which helps the pupils to benefit from the assistance given by teachers and support assistants when making and designing products, for example when groups of Key Stage 4 pupils made and enjoyed eating their ham and cheese on toast.
89. In the majority of lessons seen, teaching is good and effectively supports pupils' learning. In these lessons, planning is very good and the learning outcomes are effectively planned for. Teaching methods and strategies are very appropriate to the range of pupils' learning needs, enabling all pupils to participate and progress at an appropriate level. A strong feature of teaching in Key Stage 4 is the challenge and inspiration of the teachers and good use of support assistants to lead group work enabling pupils to maximise the learning opportunities offered to them.
90. The co-ordination of the subject is currently by the headteacher. This is a satisfactory arrangement, pending the appointment of a new co-ordinator. Whole school planning and monitoring are effective in ensuring all aspects of the curriculum are covered and pupils build appropriately on previous learning. Assessment of how well individuals progress lesson by lesson needs further development. However, assessment at the end of the year is good and pupils' records show they make satisfactory progress over time. The curriculum is enriched by a series of visits, for example, harbour, local shops, and places of interest in London.

91. Resources are satisfactory and have improved since the last inspection, however the lack of facilities in the school is limiting the curriculum opportunities particularly for older Key Stage 4 pupils and students post 16, which is unsatisfactory. Although the design and technology curriculum has improved since the last inspection, this has yet to include opportunities to reward the achievements of older pupils with nationally recognised accreditation.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

92. Geography and history are taught as alternate units of study throughout the year. During the inspection, therefore, it was possible to observe only two distinct geography lessons and one in history. However, through scrutiny of planning, photographs and displays, good coverage of both history and geography was identified. Pupils make good gains in their learning in both subjects.
93. The youngest pupils look with great interest at well-chosen photographs of places around the school and identify them, encouraged to look closely by the teacher's careful questions. Pupils take the teacher to some of the places, enjoying, for example, the warm welcome in the office after the walk in the rain. Pupils go to shops nearby and contrast the new shop buildings with the beautiful old building, Oldway Mansion. Opportunities to link history and geography are taken well. Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils enjoy an overnight camp and travel around the area on a steam train. They produce very interesting writing, with symbols, about their journey. They learn more about features of castles such as dungeons and windows with no glass, in their history lessons. Good planning by teachers, with thoughtful links with day, and residential, visits show that the school makes very good use of the local area. This is a strong feature of the programme for both geography and history.
94. In all key stages, pupils learn to look at the weather and climate. Teachers reinforce their understanding by imaginative use of attractive materials and role-play. Some Key Stage 3 pupils have learned that it is hotter nearer to the equator and becomes colder as you move further away from it. They know that the world is not flat like a map, but round like a globe and have an awareness of the characteristics of the seasons. In a carefully prepared and well-taught lesson, pupils have activities that are matched well to their abilities to reinforce their understanding of "near" and "far" very successfully. All pupils explore the area well and teachers are developing appropriate orienteering programmes to increase pupils' understanding and reading of maps. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils produce accurate plans of the classroom, with a key, and locate the town and school on scaled maps. They plan routes around the town and use conventional symbols on maps and plans.
95. Teachers provide pupils with PMLD with effective opportunities to heighten their awareness of their immediate surroundings and the site. Adults develop pupils' independence by accompanying them as they happily use the track, practising their driving skills, for example, as they take the register back to the office. In literacy lessons, pupils deepen their understanding of directions and positioning by placing pictures on, under and behind a stool.
96. In the history lesson seen, pupils give their immediate reactions to a picture of Henry VIII. The teacher's skilful questioning and use of signing enables pupils to make very perceptive observations. From the arrival of a member of staff dressed in a costume similar to the one in the picture, pupils begin to understand that they are learning by looking at replicas of things from the past. Throughout the school, pupils' develop an appropriate awareness of the structure of the day and week through the use of symbols and timetables. Teachers reinforce well the pupils' learning about time through photographs and signs. Pupils use time lines, recalling their work on Egypt and mummification and that BC means "Before Christ." The good teaching over time helps pupils to recall facts and realize that many events fit together.
97. The co-ordinator has ensured that the subject has been developed well since the previous inspection and makes sure that teachers and policies are regularly updated. As a result of this work, geography and history are both improving steadily over time as topics are reviewed.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

98. Standards of achievement in ICT (information and communications technology) are in line with pupils' abilities in Key Stages 1 and 2, but below this level for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. Progress is now satisfactory for most pupils in the school, but the standards demonstrated by the older pupils reflect a lack of previous experience and the rather narrow programme of work that was followed. Progress for pupils with PMLD is very good, due to the very careful attention given to individual needs and the creative, imaginative solutions provided for pupils to access and use technology.
99. By the end of Key Stage 2, a number of pupils have very good mouse skills, know their favourite programs and carefully follow on-screen or spoken instructions. Occasionally, they experiment with pull-down menus if not sufficiently challenged by the activity in hand. They are proficient with programs that support their learning in numeracy and literacy, and use simple art programs. Pupils with physical disabilities use effectively the school's mobility track. This allows them to travel along a prescribed route, with their wheelchair on a buggy, controlling it independently with a single switch. They show awareness of the different places that they pass as they move from one building to another and some pupils have their favourite people and places where they stop on each journey. All the younger pupils use single switches to control electrical equipment such as fans and juicers.
100. By the time that they leave school the highest attaining pupils are familiar with a *Windows* environment and are confident to load chosen programmes, save and print their work. They use the basic facilities of a wordprocessor, using capital letters and spaces, and deleting mistakes as they go. They produce recognisable, simple pictures on a painting program and choose tools, such as stamps, flood fill and shapes, from the icon bar. They use the Internet, with support, to find pictures and information for projects such as the Tudors, which they are studying in history. They learn to use a variety of equipment such as tape recorders, videos and digital cameras. They also experience some control work in mathematics and take part in creating bar charts. One pupil with severe physical disabilities uses a single switch to match pictures, showing an ability to wait and then anticipate the highlighting of a correct answer. He is developing successfully new skills using two switches. Others show that they are aware of creating changes on the screen and show familiarity with the programs that they use. Several pupils attempt to draw staff into their activities, creating a very useful situation in which to develop communication and shared attention.
101. Teaching is very good in classes for younger pupils with PMLD. The very good resources are used particularly effectively – such as the mobility track when pupils take the register to the office and return with post and parcels. Switches with recorded messages are also used effectively to include pupils with little spoken language in classroom routines. Activities and rewards are carefully tailored to individual needs and interests so that each pupil is motivated and engaged. These motivate adults as well as pupils so that everyone remains engaged even when tasks are very simple and repetitious. All sessions are carefully recorded and assessed, with future work planned from this basis. Teachers have high expectations, and this is reflected in the way that they involve pupils in their own learning and discuss the activities with them.
102. In the rest of the school teaching is satisfactory. The best features of the teaching are excellent relationships and very good management so that pupils, even those with difficult behaviour, remain on task and interested for long periods. Too much teaching, however, is done away from the class by support assistants so that teachers do not see what pupils are doing and do not have first hand knowledge of the activities or pupils' performance. In some classes, pupils spend too much time consolidating basic operational and access skills and too little time applying them in appropriate contexts.
103. Good work has been done to produce a developmental checklist of the ICT skills pupils can learn in different subjects. This is well used, particularly for pupils with the highest support needs and helps provide access to communication, leisure and learning activities. There is also a comprehensive list of opportunities for delivering ICT across the curriculum. The use of this is inconsistent. The school still needs to develop documentation showing what experiences will be

given to pupils in each class as they move through the school, so that everyone has the opportunity to experience a broad programme which builds on what they have learned previously. The checklist is used to track progress, but this does not give a full picture of what pupils can do or what they have experienced.

104. Coordination of the subject is skilled and enthusiastic. A very positive ethos has been developed, expectations of teachers have been considerably raised and they have responded by making very good use of ICT in their own development of materials, use of symbols and symbol supported text, planning and report writing. Good connections have been made with people in the local education authority and with voluntary agencies. The coordinator has been responsible for obtaining considerable funding and equipment both for the school and for individual pupils. She has also ensured that switches with recorded messages and switch access to electrical equipment are available and used appropriately throughout the school.
105. There has been satisfactory improvement of ICT provision since the last inspection when the development of the subject was a key issue for action. Staff skills have improved considerably and the quality of subject co-ordination is now good. Acceleration in subject development is now taking place and there is good capacity for future improvement. There is, however, still work to be done in ensuring that the very good practice is reflected in every classroom, that all pupils have access to their full curriculum entitlement and that pupils build progressively on their ICT experiences as they move through the school.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

106. French has been taught to pupils in classes 5 and 6 since the beginning of the Autumn Term 2000, and the subject is still at a developmental stage within the curriculum. A satisfactory policy has been issued but planning is incomplete and there is no scheme of assessment. Learning resources, in addition, are not yet sufficient. It is not possible to make an overall judgement about pupils' achievements on the basis of the evidence seen but, in the two lessons observed, teaching was very good and elicited a lively response from the pupils. The two groups for French, containing both Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils, are organised on the basis of prior attainment. Those in the higher-attaining group have made a good start in the subject. They are using brief phrases in French and are keen to practise their pronunciation of the new vocabulary to which they are introduced. Lower-attaining pupils also display a very positive attitude to the subject. Teaching in both groups makes very good use of role-play and of situations in which French is used for real purposes, for example, ordering food and drink in the classroom's "café". Despite the inexperience of the two class teachers in the teaching of French, there is clearly the potential for the subject to become a very popular and valuable part of the curriculum when the necessary development work has been done.

MUSIC

107. Pupils achieve standards in singing that are higher than expected for their degree of special educational needs. In other aspects of music, such as listening to recorded music and playing percussion instruments, pupils do as well as expected. The reasons for the higher achievement in singing are the strong emphasis placed on song throughout the curriculum, and the enthusiasm generated by the coordinator in whole-school singing sessions. Pupils also achieve well in special musical events. For example, they performed with a steel band during last year's music week and the excitement and quality of sound produced is still remembered by pupils. In class groups, and as a whole school, pupils love singing together. They have an appropriate repertoire of songs, such as *Bananas in Pyjamas*, which they sing with tuneful gusto and animation. They are confident to sing to greet one another in class and to take part in front of the whole school to, for example, make a large display of coloured ribbon to illustrate *Sing a Rainbow*. Through singing, pupils also achieve success in learning new signs to use in their communication. Pupils with PMLD learn to recognise when they are involved by listening to their songs, and those of others. Numeracy is significantly enhanced by the consistent use of counting songs and these are very

well presented indeed with excellent visual aids to demonstrate the meaning of each song. For example, young pupils with PMLD take a 'penny' to the 'shop' to buy one of the *Five Currant Buns* in their song, then count how many remain. When pupils play percussion instruments, they handle them with care and try hard to produce a good quality sound, and to start and stop on cue.

108. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Pupils are more confident to have fun making music, and teachers have gained confidence and skills to lead their lessons. The subject now benefits from good leadership and has a good capacity for sustained improvement.
109. Throughout the school the quality of teaching is now good. However, where lessons are taken by music specialists, the quality of teaching is consistently very good and often excellent. For example, in a whole school singing lesson, the enthusiasm of the teacher and the skilled keyboard accompaniment encouraged pupils to sing of their best. New songs were introduced with clear signing to emphasise the lyrics and the meaning reinforced by pupils holding up, for example, berries and apples each time they were mentioned in the song. The teacher's skill in song writing was evident in one lesson where the pupils responded well to the songs that had been written for routine actions, such as handing out instruments, making every part of the lesson a strong musical experience. In a lesson for older pupils with PMLD, the teacher used a song about 'tickling' most effectively to stimulate interaction so that one pupil, who is usually inactive, looked round to her assistant and reached out to tickle her with a feather duster. Very good use was made of resources in this lesson, particularly when the teacher used a large umbrella to encase herself and the pupil involved in the song, as this really focused pupils on giving eye contact and extended their awareness of interaction. In other lessons, teachers continue to use very good methods of stimulating interest. For example, in a lesson with the youngest pupils, kitchen utensils were used as percussion instruments to good effect so that pupils experimented with sounds by banging rolling pins together and rattling spoons in pans. The whole school singing sessions generate a good sense of community and provide effective opportunities for all pupils to be included. The youngest pupils escort their peers with PMLD from their classroom, into the nursery, for a weekly joint singing session. This also adds considerably to the feeling of inclusion and leads the pupils with PMLD to show excitement and recognition at the regular contact with others.
110. The subject benefits from good coordination and this is effective in making sure that the curriculum provided is broad and relevant to the pupils' needs. Good plans are being implemented effectively to develop the subject and improve the resources provided. There is a very clear vision for continued improvement and, at the time of the inspection, the school was beginning a new initiative to enable individual pupils and small groups to benefit from additional musical tuition. The hall, however, has very poor acoustics and is cramped. This restricts the full enjoyment of performances and whole school singing sessions.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

111. Physical education is a subject, which pupils enjoy and in which they achieve well. Pupils with PMLD show good progress towards their individual targets such as, reaching for and grasping objects, sitting unsupported, stretching and relaxing. Pupils in Class 8 respond very well to aromatherapy, showing good co-operation with staff. Growing independence and mobility were shown by one pupil in this class when she brought a parcel from the school office to the classroom with the minimum of support, manipulating the controls of her wheelchair with confidence and accuracy. In the swimming pool, pupils from Class 7 move confidently in the water and respond well to support. They kick and splash with enjoyment and although in the lesson observed the objective for pupils to interact was not achieved, they did achieve other individual targets such as making eye-contact and holding up their heads. The lesson planning included a reference to the implementation of an individual physiotherapy programme but this was not carried out with sufficient purpose or expertise by the learning support assistants who were taking the lesson. Physiotherapy is not currently provided in the pool by the physiotherapist or her assistant but there are plans to reinstate this in the future. Physiotherapy is carried out on a one to one basis and the therapist makes no direct contribution to the school's physical education programme. The school's co-ordinator of physical education is not involved in the

subject for pupils with PMLD. The range and variety of physical activities to which these pupils have access are limited as a result of these two factors.

112. In other classes, Key Stage 1 pupils enjoy their work on the apparatus in the hall. They climb and jump with good balance and control. They lack the ability to extend their skills into a sequence of movements without support but try hard to vary their shape, speed and direction when encouraged to do so by staff. Class 4 pupils in a similar session show that they have made very good progress in these skills. They are challenged by very good teaching to put together a performance on several different pieces of apparatus and they respond with confidence and enthusiasm. Higher-attaining pupils are achieving good turns in their jumps, showing good balance and flexibility and are finishing off the exercise with accomplished forward and backward rolls. In Key Stage 3, good progress is also apparent in pupils' ability to vary their movement in response to music. They think about their body shape, direction and speed to indicate varying emotions, for example, in stalking an imaginary animal.
113. The teaching of gymnastic activities is good and sometimes very good. Pupils are challenged to perform tasks of increasing difficulty with as much independence as possible. Very effective support is provided when needed. Control and management of pupils are good and pupils are learning the importance of discipline, awareness of others' safety and the need to listen carefully in the gym. Good teaching is also a feature of the swimming programme which benefits from the specialist expertise of a learning support assistant who plans the programme and provides effective tuition. Again, control and management of pupils are very effective and the grouping of pupils according to ability is used well to match pupils' needs with the levels of skills taught. Pupils listen well and follow closely staff demonstrations of what is required. They show enthusiasm in practising various skills and most pupils are very confident in the water. Progress is good. Attainments vary considerably throughout the key stages but many pupils are swimming a width of the pool, with higher-attainers progressing to longer distances in the award-scheme operated by the school.
114. Planning shows a good range of other activities in the subject and there are valuable links with local clubs and other providers. There is no standard scheme of assessment for the subject and the quality of assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' progress is inconsistent as a result. The subject suffers a major disadvantage in the poor quality of the accommodation, particularly in the absence of adequate outside play areas. Despite this, it has maintained the high standards noted in the last inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

115. Progress and achievement are satisfactory in all key stages. During the period of the inspection, only a limited number of lessons could be observed. However, discussions with pupils, teachers and scrutiny of teachers' plans and pupils' work in books and displays, enable relevant judgements to be made.
116. Well planned and appropriate topic work is delivered by teachers that enables pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2 to make satisfactory progress. Themes appropriate to the topic are effectively linked to the Devon agreed syllabus and the school's 'Access' curriculum. Pupils increase their knowledge of stories and festivals from different religions when learning about Christianity and Judaism. For example, pupils in Year 6 experience some of the joy associated with the Jewish festival of Sukkoth, celebrating the harvest, communicating thanks for God's gifts through speech, signs and symbols to the sound of music and the sight of burning candles. As they move through the key stages, pupils develop an appropriate understanding of famous and special people such as Moses and Jesus, and during their work and role play discuss feelings and events.
117. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 make satisfactory progress in the modules of work they follow. Themes appropriate to the agreed syllabus and 'Access' curriculum allow pupils to improve their knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs, teachings and lifestyles which encourages them to ask and respond to questions about beliefs, purpose and values. Pupils consolidate and develop their knowledge of different religions, learning the different ways of worship and celebration

within those religions. For example, Key Stage 4 pupils have some understanding of the Islamic faith and made very perceptive comments when handling a number of Islamic pictures and artefacts. They develop their understanding of beliefs and relationships and some relate the similarities of special buildings, books and prayers to their own experiences. The work is well planned to link with other subjects, for example pupils in Key Stage 3 reflect on saying thank you and create, with the support of the teacher, prayers which are talked about, agreed and 'written' in words and symbols using the computer. The school has links with local churches who encourage visits from pupils. This ensures that when talking about the role of the church and its special features, it is made more relevant to pupils who can see and feel particular aspects, for example a large bible, or the baptism pool. Linking to personal and social development, pupils learn about feelings such as wonder, joy or sorrow and PMLD pupils show a sense of calm and relaxation when soothing music is played.

118. There has been a satisfactory improvement in religious education since the last inspection and the new co-ordinator is working hard to develop a good curriculum. The use of the new 'Access' curriculum is becoming established and planning between the key stages is now firmly co-ordinated and more relevant to the pupils. All classes now have religious education on their timetable and the co-ordinator ensures good progression through the school. However, consideration still needs to be given to enable pupils to visit places of worship for other religions to support the programmes of study and complement visits to the local church.
119. Teaching of religious education is never less than satisfactory and often good. In the best lesson seen, learning was very good, pupils were interested and fully involved due to the well organised work which was planned to meet individual needs and captured their interest through good use of appropriate resources. Visits and artefacts such as the prayer mat and compass used by Muslims to pray towards Mecca are used well to add interest and boost pupils' learning.
120. The curriculum is well planned, however, the assessment of pupils' progress is not sufficiently developed particularly in relation to assessing and recording what pupils have learnt in lessons. Co-ordination of the subject is good, although opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in lessons, whilst part of the subject's development plan, have yet to be implemented. The subject makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, raising their awareness of self and the feelings of others. Themes appropriately include the importance of relationships, special events, choice, and the right to say 'yes', 'no' or 'maybe'.