

INSPECTION REPORT

THE BRIDGE SCHOOL

Erdington, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103624

Headteacher: Mr. S. White

Reporting inspector: Janet Bond
2642

Dates of inspection: 6 – 9 November 2000

Inspection number: 223673

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 Learning Difficulties)

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 2 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: 290 Reservoir Road
Erdington
Birmingham
West Midlands

Postcode: B23 6DE

Telephone number: 0121 373 8265

Fax number:

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. R. Crowley

Date of previous inspection: 3-5 March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Janet Bond	Registered inspector	Mathematics	Standards achieved
2642		Art	Teaching and learning
		History	
		Music	
		Special Educational Needs	
Susan Walsh	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development
13786			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			Partnership with parents
Mary Cobb	Team inspector	English	Leadership and management
25265		Religious Education	
		Personal and social development	
Graham Ingram	Team Inspector	Science	Curriculum
17768		Information technology	
		Design technology	
		Geography	
		Physical education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Bridge is a mixed primary special school for pupils with severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders. The school caters for pupils from three to eleven years of age, although currently there are only three pupils below the age of five. There are 32 pupils on roll and half of the pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties, which is high in comparison to similar schools. On entry, most pupils' attainments are at the very early developmental stages. It is, therefore, not appropriate to compare the attainment of the pupils with national expectations or averages. Most of the pupils travel to school in transport provided by the local education authority. Over half of the pupils come from ethnic backgrounds with English as a second language, much higher than is normally found but reflecting the community it serves. Over half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is high in comparison to most schools.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Bridge has many good features. Good leadership and teamwork create a school that is warm and welcoming and where pupils, parents, visitors and staff are valued. Teachers know the pupils well, pupils want to come to school and have good attitudes to their learning. The school has excellent links with, and is highly regarded by, local schools and the community. Pupils achieve satisfactory standards in their work. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Treats all pupils with respect and dignity. This contributes to pupils good attitudes to school.
- Has excellent relationships and links with parents. This supports pupils' very good personal development.
- Provides an excellent and extensive inclusion programme, and excellent links with the community which effectively enrich all concerned.
- Takes all opportunities to encourage and ensure pupils make very good progress in their social and personal development.
- Works very well with other professionals to contribute to pupils learning and well being.

What could be improved

- Lesson planning; by using information from assessment to more effectively plan lessons and write learning targets.
- Pupils' standards of achievement; by using available information to set effective school targets.
- Accommodation; by the LEA, to ensure pupils medical and therapy needs can be met

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 was last inspected in March 1997. All of the key issues except one, identified at the time of the last inspection, have been fully addressed and the areas significantly improved. The key issue to provide accommodation to meet the medical and therapy needs of pupils has still not been resolved by the LEA. Pupils' individual needs are clearly identified and staff are well deployed to provide effective support. The school development plan now has planned priorities linked to financial management. Appropriate procedures are in place to monitor the curriculum. Speech and language provision is now very effective, supports

teaching well and meets pupils' needs. A good behaviour policy is now in place. All pupils have equality of opportunity for home school liaison support. Statutory requirements are met.

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

Progress and achievements in personal, social and health education are very good because pupils are consistently encouraged to be as independent as possible, both in lessons and other school activities. Achievement in music is good because teachers are effectively supported by the coordinator in their planning and because music is used well to support many other subjects. Achievement in religious education is good because the cultural traditions of the pupil population are celebrated and because it is made relevant to the pupils. Progress and achievements in communication and physical education have improved because of the good shared planning and teaching between therapists and teachers. Because the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies is new it has not yet had an impact on the standards pupils achieve. In the majority of lesson plans, there is insufficient focus on what pupils will learn during the lesson to enable pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding to be built on and developed systematically over time.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy school and try hard with their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave and respond well to the encouragement and praise given by staff.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils take advantage of the many opportunities provided for them to be as independent as possible. The very good relationships formed between pupils and staff support their confidence in approaching new tasks and situations.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Pupils want to attend school but many have some

	absences due to ill-health.
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Pupils enjoy their lessons; they concentrate well and try their best. Because pupils behave well, lessons are rarely disrupted, which means that everyone can concentrate on their work. Pupils are confident to help and take responsibilities, such as taking the register to the office or helping put things away. Pupils are kind and considerate to each other and willingly share their toys or help their friends.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 5-11
Lessons seen overall	Good

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

Teaching for all ages is good in English, mathematics, science, art, music, physical education and religious education. It is never less than satisfactory in any other subject. During the inspection the quality of teaching was satisfactory in 98% of lessons. It was at least good in 68 per cent and very good or excellent in 20 per cent of lessons. In only 1 lesson was teaching less than satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teaching in lessons is good because teachers have a good understanding of the special needs of the pupils and make activities relevant to all of them. This enables pupils to be busy and interested throughout the lessons. In English teachers use a good range of strategies, including signing and symbols, to support pupils' progress in communication. The introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies is helping teachers plan more effective and appropriate activities to support pupils' learning. Although teaching of personal, social and health education is satisfactory, because it is very effectively enhanced by the school's ethos, which promotes independence and social skills well in all aspects of school life, pupils make good progress. The new approach to IEPs means that, appropriately, pupils' targets are focused on in all lessons, but currently many of the targets are too general to measure improvements. Although teachers make sure that activities are appropriate to individual pupils, in many lessons there is insufficient focus on the purpose of the activities, that is what pupils will learn, to raise standards. Teachers communicate well with parents and this supports the pupils' learning both in school and at home.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is well matched to the needs of the pupils and meets statutory requirements. A good start has been made to subject planning for each term to support pupils building on their earlier learning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils have good support and full access to language work.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Opportunities are consistently provided for pupils to make choices and decisions. The excellent inclusion programme effectively supports pupils' increasing social skills. Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very good, and effectively reflects the diverse cultural traditions

	of the pupils.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Staff have pupils' best interests at heart and work hard to safeguard their welfare and to promote their development.

The school has excellent and effective links with parents. They are kept very well informed and their involvement significantly supports pupils' positive attitude to school. Parents appreciate the very high level of support they receive from the school. Pupils benefit from an excellent inclusion programme and links with the community that enhances their learning. A very good range of extra curricular activities and visits, including residential experiences, further enhance the curriculum. The school has worked hard to link assessment to the curriculum changes it is making, but currently assessment is not sufficiently precise to support pupils systematically building on earlier learning. Termly subject planning is developing well but does not yet sufficiently specify what is to be covered. The good behaviour policy supports staff in managing pupils' behaviour well.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good leadership promotes very good team working by all directly concerned with the school. The school aims, values and policies are well reflected throughout the work of the school.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Governors are well informed and very supportive of the school. They are clear about the priorities for development and contribute to the school development plan.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good systems are in place for monitoring teaching and planning. However, the information from this is not brought together to identify whole school issues and inform whole school target setting, with a focus on improving standards.
The strategic use of resources	Accommodation and resources are used effectively to support pupils' learning. The school deploys staff effectively to support individual pupil needs.

The school is well staffed with teachers and support staff to meet pupils' needs. The attractive and well-maintained accommodation has been creatively used to ensure its best possible use, but the deficiencies in medical and therapy accommodation are still a cause for concern. Resources are satisfactory and support pupils' learning in all subjects. The headteacher, senior staff and governors work effectively together to a common purpose. Structured approaches to looking at how well the school is doing, particularly in raising pupils' standards of achievement are at an early stage of development. The school is keen to seek best value in purchases and tenders and takes careful steps to achieve this.

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 coming to school. • The school is approachable and very supportive. • There is a very good partnership between parents and the school. • Teaching is good and the school is well managed and led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A medical room to be provided to ensure pupils' dignity. • Improved car parking.

In responses to the parents' questionnaire and at the parents' meeting, parents were totally positive on all aspects of school life, except the issue of the medical room. "A lovely little school" was the comment of one parent and this was unanimously agreed by all present. Inspectors agree with the things that please the parents most and also agree with the need for a medical room and improved car parking.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The majority of pupils enter school with very low levels of achievement, particularly in their personal and social skills and communication skills. In both of these areas there has been an improvement in pupils' achievements since the last inspection. At all ages pupils' achievements in these areas are very good. This improvement is because of the very good provision made, particularly the excellent opportunities for pupils to work in mainstream schools. The ethos, atmosphere and community spirit of the school contributes effectively to the raising of standards in personal and social education.

2. There have been few significant changes in the standards achieved by pupils in other subjects since the last inspection. At all ages and in all subjects, except music and religious education, pupils' achievements are satisfactory and are as expected given the learning needs of the pupils. In the majority of lesson plans, there is insufficient focus on what pupils will learn during the lesson to enable pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding to be built on and developed systematically over time. In music and religious education, across both key stages, pupils' achievements are good. Music is used well to support other subjects and teachers are confident and well supported in their teaching and planning for music. Religious education follows the locally agreed syllabus and lessons effectively allow all pupils to participate at an appropriate level.

3. There is no significant variation in the achievement of boys and girls or of pupils from different cultural backgrounds. In both key stages, pupils, including those with more complex learning needs, make good progress in most lessons because teaching is good. However, progress over time is only satisfactory, because teaching and learning are not sufficiently focused to ensure pupils build steadily upon their achievements. Progress against targets in pupils' IEPs is satisfactory. The new system introduced this term is effectively helping to focus on individual targets in all lessons. The school routinely sets targets for whole school improvement and progress against whole school targets is good. While many targets do not provide a direct focus on raising pupils' standards in subjects, a good start has been made by the school's appropriate use of QCA "P" level assessment to set targets for pupils' achievements in the coming year.

4. Pupils of all ages, including those with more complex needs, make satisfactory progress in their learning in all subjects except music and religious education where they make good progress. All pupils, including those with more complex needs and those with English as a second language, have supported access to the full curriculum. A good start has been made in introducing the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and teachers are skilful in providing appropriate sensory approaches to ensure all pupils can actively participate in lessons. However, because they are new, the impact of these strategies on the standards pupils achieve and the progress they make, has yet to be seen.

5. The school is effective in developing self-esteem, promoting independence and encouraging social interaction. For example, pupils take responsibilities, such as taking the register to the office, with appropriate and varying levels of support until they can, if possible, do it independently. Lots of opportunities are provided for pupils to make choices and decisions, both in lessons and during social occasions. Pupils are confident to help in assemblies in front of other pupils and enjoy, for example, taking around objects for others to look at. This work successfully promotes very good achievements in pupils' personal and social development.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

6. Pupils' personal development is very good, they have good attitudes to school and work and their behaviour is good. In lessons most pupils try hard and work to the best of their ability. When teachers' questioning techniques are good, pupils think and respond well. For example, in a communication lesson very effective questioning by the teacher helped pupils communicate about what they had done at home the previous evening. When tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities they become totally involved and absorbed. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties respond well to the multi-sensory approaches to activities. For example, pupils gave good eye contact and concentrated well in a very stimulating music lesson, where different taped music was used well to create different moods and where actions and resources allowed pupils to use all of their senses in the activity. They enjoy the many tactile experiences planned for them, such as feeling fabrics in art lessons and they are pleased and excited by their achievements.

7. Pupils have very good relationships with staff and there is often a strong sense of fun and enjoyment in the classroom, clearly shown by pupils being happy and smiling during lessons. Through their learning they are beginning to form values and follow a moral code, for example, that they should be kind to each other and animals. Pupils become aware of each other's feelings in, for example, religious education lessons where this is effectively encouraged. There are some strong and rewarding friendships between pupils and many examples were observed of pupils sharing or helping their friends. For example, pupils will help their friends negotiate their wheelchairs, or share their toys to allow their friends to join in. Higher attaining pupils are able to work more independently and take responsibilities, both in the classroom and around the school. Pupils are pleased to be of help, such as when older pupils help to make the drinks at breaktime. Pupils are confident to take the many opportunities provided for making choices for themselves.

8. Pupils generally behave very well both in and out of the classroom. They are polite and respond well to the encouragement given by staff in this. Pupils behave well because they respond to the significant improvements in the management of behaviour by staff since the previous inspection. Although very occasionally a very small number of pupils exhibit challenging behaviour, it no longer disrupts the learning of the rest of the class.

9. Parents unanimously agree that their children want to come to school. Attendance rates are satisfactory. Although these rates are below average for pupils with severe learning difficulties, the school has a very significant number of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties who miss a significant amount of school time due to medical reasons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

10. The improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection has resulted in satisfactory progress now being made by all pupils, including those with more complex learning needs. During the inspection the quality of teaching was satisfactory in 98% of lessons. It was at least good in 68 per cent and very good or excellent in 20 per cent of lessons. In only 1 lesson was teaching less than satisfactory. There was no significant difference in teaching of pupils across the ages. Teaching is good in English and mathematics and has been effectively influenced, so that teachers are more knowledgeable about what pupils need to learn, by the introduction of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. During the inspection teaching was good in science, art, music, physical education and religious education because activities were made very appropriate to the full ability range. Support staff are well deployed to ensure all pupils actively participate in the

activities. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all other subjects. Pupils' personal development is supported very well in all lessons. Although teachers are skilful in planning effective activities for the pupils' learning needs, because the learning outcomes are frequently not specified in the planning, assessment is not focused on whether the pupils have achieved what was intended. This results in pupils not systematically building on earlier learning. Therefore, although teaching is good in the majority of individual subject lessons, because the standards and progress achieved by pupils over time is satisfactory, teaching is satisfactory.

11. Teachers have a good knowledge of pupils' special needs and plan an effective range of stimulating activities in the majority of lessons. Resources are well used and frequent changes of activity help pupils maintain their interest and concentration. The very good relationships between staff and pupils helps pupils have confidence in attempting new or difficult tasks. Where teaching is particularly good, lessons go at a good pace and there is appropriate challenge for all pupils. Support staff are clear about what they are doing and what the pupils will do. For example, in an excellent numeracy lesson with a group of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, very appropriate activities were carefully planned for each pupil to work with an adult. Throughout the lesson staff consistently used an appropriate vocabulary and reinforced the learning that had previously been planned with the teacher. The new system of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) is helping teachers and support staff focus on personal targets across all of their teaching. However, many of the targets are not sufficiently precise but staff are aware of this and are refining targets as they become more familiar with the system. In the majority of lessons good management of pupils ensures lessons are not interrupted by poor behaviour and all pupils can concentrate on the tasks.

12. Teaching is particularly effective in music, physical education and religious education. Focused joint planning in physical education and communication between therapists and teachers ensures activities are effective and appropriate and that all staff are clear about what they are trying to achieve. In music, lessons are planned to allow pupils to build on earlier learning. In religious education teachers use an effective range of resources and approaches. A special atmosphere is effectively created so that pupils know it is a special time. In all of these subjects, where teaching was good or better, teachers have high expectations of what the pupils will achieve. Appropriate challenge is given to which pupils readily respond. Lessons go at a good pace and no time is wasted.

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

13. The quality and range of opportunities for learning for all pupils are good. The curriculum meets pupils' interests, their aptitudes and their needs. There is a satisfactory statutory curriculum in place in all subjects which includes religious education. The school is, appropriately, changing the way the curriculum is planned to be more responsive to changing requirements. For example, staff are considering how best to support pupils' access to the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies. The sensory curriculum is appropriately being considered as a means of pupils accessing subjects. All subjects have clear curriculum documents linked to the National Curriculum programmes of study. Planning ensures coverage and progression, and this is an improvement since the last inspection. However, the school does not sufficiently monitor the effect of the changes to the curriculum on pupils' learning and achievement. The health curriculum now appropriately includes a policy for sex education which was not in place at the time of the last inspection.

14. The school's provision for special educational needs is satisfactory. Statutory requirements regarding the annual reviews of pupils' Statements of Special Educational Need are met. However, the school is aware that many statements require updating through more rigorous annual reviews and that targets in annual reviews need to be more specific to support IEP target setting. The school now has an appropriate policy for special educational needs. The school benefits greatly from good working practices with the speech and physiotherapy services. Provision for pupils with English as a second language is good and is effectively supported by the speech therapy service.

15. A very good range of extra-curricular activities effectively enhances pupils' learning opportunities. These include educational visits. For example, looking at local buildings to support work in history, residential weeks on farms to provide opportunities for personal and social development, and to places such as the theatre and other cultural visits. In addition, the school and staff are involved in a number of fund raising activities, including an annual fun run when staff push buggies, containing children, on an 8 mile run. The school works hard to ensure equality of access to all aspects of school life in respect of ethnicity and gender. All pupils benefit from all the school provides. Visitors, such as artists in residence, enrich pupils' learning.

16. The school has excellent links with the community it serves. Many individual parents and local companies contribute to fund raising. In return the school also raises funds for local charities. Many members of the local community help in school, some of these volunteers have learning disabilities themselves. The school really values these volunteers and helps them to gain a sense of self-worth and purpose, encouraging them to develop into responsible citizens. The school has valuable links with local businesses and is an active participant in the local Business Education Partnership.

17. The school has excellent links with other local schools and educational institutions. Inclusion is central to the school's ethos and the school works hard to ensure that as many pupils as possible get some experience of mainstream school. The school has very good relationships with many local primary schools and the long standing partnership with the local primary school is especially valuable. Mainstream pupils also come into school and take part in lessons with pupils. The school works hard to ensure that mainstream pupils understand the needs of the pupils and also to develop lessons where both sets of pupils can make significant gains in knowledge and understanding. The school has very good links with other local special schools and there is often beneficial joint training and consideration of current issues and trends in education.

18. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils is good. The wide range of different religious beliefs within the school community is acknowledged and celebrated. There is a good contribution to this from both religious education lessons and assemblies. Time for reflection is planned for in many lessons and music is used well to set the mood for this to take place. Provision for the moral development of pupils is very good. Pupils are effectively taught to know what is acceptable and what is not and are given many planned opportunities to share, for example, pupils bring special toys to school and willingly allow their friends in class to look at and hold them. The school encourages the friends to treat these toys with appropriate respect. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to discuss responsibility towards animals and pets are sometimes brought to school and their care talked about. Staff provide good role models for pupils and they treat pupils with respect and dignity. This can be seen in the way that pupils are both communicated with and those with multiple learning needs are handled and moved. There is an effective use of stickers to praise good behaviour and a public display and celebration of this on the board in the hall.

19. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. There are very good relationships within the school. Opportunities for pupils to make a choice are built into every situation and occur as a matter of routine. Pupils are encouraged to help one another and work together whenever possible. Lunch times and other less formal occasions are used effectively to help develop social skills and the feeling of community and family. The school encourages pupils to develop their independence very well through the many opportunities provided, including getting equipment for lessons. Provision for pupils' cultural development is also very good. This is reflected across the work of the school and music and art play an important part in this. The school's diverse population is well reflected in all that it does. All major religious festivals are celebrated.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

20. Staff know individual pupils very well and are well aware of their physical and emotional needs. All adults show care and sensitivity to the needs of individual pupils, relationships are very good and pupils are always respected and valued. Staff have pupils' best interests at heart and work hard to safeguard their welfare. Child protection issues are taken very seriously. Staff work very well in partnership with health professionals and other agencies to ensure that pupils' welfare needs are met. However, the dignity of the pupils is compromised by the lack of a medical room, particularly given the high number of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and the attendant medical needs. Although staff care very much for pupils and overall health and safety requirements are satisfactory, a few procedures have become lax. The school's health and safety policy contains insufficient information about risk assessment and those risk assessments that have been carried out have not identified a small number of hazards.

21. The school has recognised that the previous arrangements for annual reviews were cumbersome with a large amount of repetitive information and that targets set in annual reviews were too broad to be used to accurately measure learning. Because the school is anxious to link targets in pupils' individual education plans with the provision outlined in the pupils' statement, a new and more effective approach is now being used. Although this is proving difficult, as many of the pupils' statements are out of date and do not reflect the pupils' current needs, teachers are using the approach well to change and update targets to make them more appropriate to individual pupil needs. Teachers are well aware of pupils' physical and emotional needs but assessment is not always well used to make sure that teachers know pupils' academic needs equally as well. At present learning targets in lessons are not always clear; consequently it is difficult to assess what knowledge or skills a pupil has gained during the lesson or inform the planning of following lessons and activities to ensure pupils gain new skills. Although pupils' personal development is generally well monitored there have been a few occasions where improving a pupil's behaviour has not been adequately planned for at the annual review.

22. The school's procedures to monitor attendance are good. The school uses the computerised registration system well to identify those children with attendance problems. It takes firm action when trying to resolve attendance issues and helps parents to recognise the importance of regular attendance at school.

23. The school has good procedures in place and very effectively promotes high standards of behaviour. The behaviour policy has been recently reviewed through consultation with all the staff. It reflects the school's positive ethos and attitude and meets the needs of the vast majority of pupils in the school. Although there are a very small number of pupils in the school with additional challenging behaviours, there are insufficient strategies to help teachers and support staff to have a consistent approach to these pupils. However, the school has made significant improvements in managing pupils' behaviour

since the last inspection and at no time during the inspection did the behaviour of any individual pupil prevent another pupil from learning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

24. The school's excellent links with parents effectively support pupils' learning. Parents are very satisfied with the school and appreciate all aspects of its work, especially the way the school supports them when they have problems relating to their children. The school always carefully considers the wishes and feelings of parents and carers and its excellent relationship with parents helps to promote high standards of care for pupils. Parents understand and are closely involved in the work of the school, particularly through the excellent parents' group, which in addition to hosting speakers who can give professional advice, forms a very effective nurturing and caring support group. The parents' group organises workshops, for example on signing, to promote continuity between home and school and the school is involving parents in the developing use of symbols to further support pupils' work. The parents' support group, and the school's ethos of really valuing parents and carers and listening carefully to their viewpoints, ensures that parents have a very positive impact on the work of the school and continue to be involved when their children have moved on to secondary school. The school consults with parents on a range of work, for example parents are asked for their contributions to the school development plan.

25. The school provides good written information for parents. Teachers complete home school diaries regularly and an effective dialogue between home and school is maintained. There are good quality newsletters and the governors' report to parents is very full. Informal communication is of a very high quality. The school appointed a second home school liaison teacher, which was recommended in the last inspection report, and both liaison teachers work extremely hard to ensure that parents have very good lines of communication with school. The school recognised the need to improve the written report that accompanies the pupil's annual review, and a new and more appropriate system is being used this term to involve parents more in target setting and the development of individual education plans.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

26. The headteacher provides good leadership and a clear direction for the work of the school. He has the full support of parents, staff, governors and other professionals who regularly visit the school. With able support from the deputy headteacher, he leads an effective staff team who are committed to professional development. To this end the school has recently achieved the Investors in People Award. The school's aims and values are effectively reflected in most areas of its work, including the school's the excellent links established with mainstream schools and the local community and the inclusive approach to education. The school has a commitment to good relationships. Interactions between the headteacher, staff, parents and pupils are very positive.

27. The good procedures in place for monitoring and supporting teaching has significantly improved the quality of teaching since the last inspection. These include observation of lessons, scrutiny of planning and fortnightly review meetings with teachers. Staff have clearly defined roles and job descriptions which include writing annual action plans for their subjects for the school improvement plan. However, the impact of these on improving pupils' learning and achievement is not evaluated. The school effectively sets targets for school improvement. Although a good start has been made in setting targets to improve the standards achieved by pupils, the school does not use all the information available to do this.

28. The school development plan is an effective and useful working document that helps the school move forward. In establishing the school improvement and development plan for the coming year, all closely involved with the school are consulted, so that a broad spectrum of opinion is brought to focus on the school's strengths and areas for development. This information is included within the school improvement plan, which is a comprehensive document that summarises priority areas and includes detailed action plans. The improvement plan appropriately details staff responsibilities and resource implications. The headteacher has recently initiated a written termly update to support governors in monitoring progress on the plan. The improvement plan details information for the coming year with spending clearly linked to priorities. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Although the amount of money carried forward from previous years is large, the purpose for this, to balance an otherwise deficit budget, has been agreed with the local education authority.

29. Governors have a sound sense of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, are well informed and are aware of school developments and local and national priorities. They are committed to, and very supportive of, the school. The sub-committees meet regularly and appropriately report to the full governing body termly. Governors are effectively involved in setting whole school targets and are in the early stages of monitoring how well the targets are achieved and the impact of the targets on the standards achieved by the pupils. Governors are becoming more active within the school; for example those governors allocated to literacy and numeracy have been into school and observed lessons. Subject co-ordinators are invited to governors meetings, as policies are reviewed on a two to three year cycle, to ensure governors are well informed. Governors meet their statutory responsibilities; this is an improvement since the previous inspection.

30. The school's day to day finances are managed efficiently and effectively by the senior management team, the administrative officer and the governing body. There is effective teamwork to ensure that the budget will be able to pay for all the developments and on-going costs that have been identified for the coming year. The spending is appropriately controlled by the headteacher and administrative assistant and monitored by the governors. A recent report by the auditors was largely positive about the overall management of the school's finances. Strategies have been identified for addressing the points raised in the auditors' report. The school makes good use of new technology for administration purposes. Specific grants are appropriately planned for, allocated and used well to support school developments. A Finance Policy effectively details the school's arrangements for managing the budget. The school appropriately purchases additional support and advice from the local authority to support the schools financial management. The principles of best value are well applied in purchases.

31. The school is generously staffed with teachers and support assistants for the number of pupils on roll. However, given the very complex needs of many of the pupils' staffing is appropriate. The school has an effective induction system for new staff and provides very good support and deployment of students to support pupils' learning. There is a very comprehensive professional development programme linked to whole school priorities and individual staff needs.

32. The school makes very effective use of the accommodation available. There are a number of special facilities for pupils, which make a good contribution to their education. For example, good use is made of the sensory room, which provides a stimulating environment, particularly for pupils with more complex needs. A small library has been constructed in a corridor to provide a quiet area for pupils to sit and enjoy looking at books. However, the school accommodation is not adequate to fully meet the needs of the pupils. There is no medical room and visiting therapists do not have a room to work with individuals or to talk

with parents. Although the authority has had plans for a new medical room drawn up and put out to tender, the situation currently remains unsatisfactory.

33. Resources are satisfactory overall and are effectively used to support learning. The school has an appropriate range of equipment and approaches to help meet the communication needs of pupils. Good use is made of switch activated communicators for the pupils with the most complex needs. The school makes very effective use of the local community to support learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

34. In order to continue to improve the quality of education and pupils' progress, the headteacher and governors should:

- (1) Specify clear learning targets for each lesson (36,38,44,49,53).
- (2) Assess pupils' progress towards the targets and use the information to inform lesson planning (22,44,49,56,62).
- (3) Use the information gathered from monitoring to set whole school targets that will directly impact on the standards achieved by pupils (28).
- (4) The governors and the LEA should carry out planned improvements to the accommodation as quickly as possible (33).

The following should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Ensure the risk assessment is fully completed and health and safety issues are resolved (21)
- Ensure annual review targets support setting measurable targets in IEPs (15).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	38
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	42

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	18	48	29	2	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	34
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	16

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	15

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	10.58	School data	3.24

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	1
Pakistani	14
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	14
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	1	
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 – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	4.8
Average class size	6

Education support staff: YN – Y6

Total number of education support staff	9.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	79

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	413961
Total expenditure	443738
Expenditure per pupil	12678
Balance brought forward from previous year	62859
Balance carried forward to next year	53630

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	34
Number of questionnaires returned	18

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	95	0	0	0	5
My child is making good progress in school.	89	11	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	84	11	0	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	66	21	0	0	13
The teaching is good.	89	6	0	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	83	17	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	100	0	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	89	11	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	94	6	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	95	5	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	72	23	0	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	89	6	0	0	5

Other issues raised by parents

Only 2 issues raised by parents at the parents' meeting or through the questionnaire – the need for an examining room for medicals instead of using the H/T office and the need for more car parking for parents.

Parents overwhelmingly supportive of the school – the 100% return on being comfortable about approaching the school and the summary by parents “a lovely little school” sums this up.

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

ENGLISH

35. At all ages pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve standards as expected for their particular learning difficulties. The school's adaptation of the National Literacy Strategy has had a positive impact on teachers planning a more appropriate range of experiences for pupils. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. In the best lessons teachers make use of a wide range of teaching strategies and resources to capture the interest of all pupils and provide appropriately differentiated activities and challenges. The improvement in teaching since the previous inspection has not, as yet, had a significant impact on pupils' progress. This is largely because many lesson plans do not include learning targets against which to measure progress and inform future lesson planning.

36. Because of effective teaching, younger pupils can communicate in a variety of ways. For example, in one lesson a pupil unable to speak chooses a favourite poem about a rainy day by selecting an umbrella from a box and in another lesson a pupil chooses a toy to play with by pointing to a photograph of the toy. Skills of turn taking and developing eye contact are encouraged and reinforced through familiar routines, for example during the "Goodbye song" when pupils respond well and with enjoyment to the teacher's insistence on eye contact when it is their name sung. Communication develops well because staff use a range of strategies appropriate to the needs of the pupils, including signing, symbols, photographs and objects of reference. Teachers' high expectations mean that higher attaining pupils learn letter sounds, can recognise Letterland characters and refer to them when writing their names. They enjoy selecting words related to the story of "The Wizard of Oz" and matching them to the appropriate picture. Pupils who are able to do so, are encouraged to hold a pencil crayon correctly and colour pictures within outlines. Teachers use an effective range of sensory experiences to encourage pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties to communicate. For example, in a lesson about "Our Favourite Things", one pupil smiled when a furry rabbit glove puppet tickled her cheek and another pupil turned and gave good eye contact to a real rabbit. In another lesson a pupil is effectively encouraged to eye point to select a toy between a choice of two that are placed in front of her.

37. Older pupils continue to develop their communication skills because teaching is mainly satisfactory and sometimes good. Pupils' ability to communicate is enhanced through the use of communication folders which are used well for pupils, parents and staff to talk about things, such as who they played with or what they did. Laminated symbols and photographs are selected by pupils and attached to cards to communicate information about activities in which they have taken part. These folders, used at home, provide effective opportunities for parents to reinforce their child's communication skills. Teachers take many opportunities, such as registration, to encourage pupils to respond appropriately within a social context. Pupils enjoy these opportunities and take it in turns to shake hands with the teacher and say "Good Morning". They use a Big Mac switch if they are unable to vocalise. Reading records indicate that higher attaining pupils are able to read simple texts from the reading scheme. However, during lessons observed, the emphasis on activities rather than learning targets restricted opportunities for these pupils to reinforce or extend their reading skills. Teachers use Big Books effectively to enhance pupils' enjoyment and participation in stories and poems. All pupils are actively involved because teachers use drama and sensory experiences that interest them. For example, when using the book "Big Bad Bill", a support assistant and a pupil disguise themselves as characters in the story. Other pupils are then

given “valuable” jewellery to hold until they are “stolen” by Bill. Pupils enjoy these activities, are interested and sustain their concentration well. When writing, higher attaining pupils hold a pencil correctly and write recognisable letters. Some pupils hold a pencil and colour in shapes, others at the early stages of development explore a range of textures through touch, for example, finding objects in a tray of sand. Drama is successfully used for all ages to motivate pupils and encourage them to communicate. Pupils respond enthusiastically to staff dressed as characters in stories or as historical figures and also enjoy dressing up and participating in role-play activities.

38. Since the last inspection significant improvements have been made in speech and language provision. The therapist meets all teaching staff individually each term to discuss pupils’ communication programmes. These programmes are delivered in the classroom by school staff with input from the therapist as appropriate. Recent developments include staff training on the use of objects of reference and collaboration with the two English co-ordinators to develop a Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum and teaching guidelines. These developments have supported teachers well in planning for individual pupil needs.

39. A literacy audit conducted earlier this year identified that although the school has adopted some elements of the National Literacy Strategy it has not yet put in place reading and writing strategies for higher attaining pupils. The co-ordinators have appropriately targeted this area in the English action plan for the coming year. The two English co-ordinators have observed literacy lessons and have advised and supported staff, for example in choice of resources and learning activities. There is a good range of Big Books including stories and poems. Resources are appropriately matched to ages as well as abilities of pupils, for example a mobile for a pupil at the end of Key Stage 2 includes a mirror, hair band and brush. The school has used the very limited space it has effectively to create a library and quiet area. However, fiction and non-fiction books are mixed together on storage racks in a restricted space which makes it difficult for pupils to make choices and select information books.

MATHEMATICS

40. All pupils achieve satisfactory standards in mathematics. When starting school many pupils are unable to give eye contact or reach out for an object and a number are unable to listen to instructions. Although within each class group there is a very wide ability range, because activities are well planned to be appropriate to all, pupils make satisfactory progress. This is an improvement since the last inspection when a number of pupils with more complex needs failed to make satisfactory progress. Appropriately, the school has recently introduced the National Numeracy Strategy. However, because it is relatively new there has been insufficient time to see the impact of this on pupils’ achievements.

41. Teachers of younger pupils know the special needs of their pupils very well, and plan effective sensory activities to ensure all pupils can actively participate. This supports pupils in making satisfactory progress in developing their early number and mathematical skills. In a Year 2 numeracy lesson, for example, pupils with more complex needs enjoyed using a range of appropriate activities to develop their early number skills. They posted shapes into the clown’s mouth for his face to light up, matched shapes into a board and built and knocked down stacks of bricks. In all these activities staff introduced and reinforced an appropriate mathematical vocabulary by counting with the pupils and talking about the shapes they were using. Teachers are becoming more effective in applying the whole class counting session at the beginning of the numeracy lesson by using resources that capture the pupils’ interest and attention. By using action songs that involve counting and large velcro numerals, pupils begin to count in sequence and higher attaining pupils point to the numerals or, with help, stick the correct numeral on the number line. They enjoy these

activities and are very pleased with their own achievements. Because they find the activities interesting they behave well, and because the activities are frequently changed they hold their concentration.

42. Older pupils continue to make satisfactory progress because teachers continue to use effective resources and approaches to capture the pupils interest and attention. For example, in a Year 3 lesson pupils counted to 10 and took 1 away while singing number songs and using large resources that they enjoyed handling, such as big iced buns and sizzling sausages. Good classroom management and effective deployment of support staff helps all pupils in joining in at a level appropriate to them. For example, one group enjoyed matching large coloured cups and saucers, ensuring there was a cup for every saucer. Another group counted to 3 and matched their objects to the large numerals and then had great fun making the correct number of playdough sausages for the frying pan. One worked on counting to 10 and putting the correct number of objects and the numeral. This was given added interest by the use of large photographs of school staff to “give” numbers of objects to. Pupils are enthusiastic about there learning and respond very well to their teachers praise and encouragement.

43. Teachers’ lesson planning is very good in choosing appropriate activities for the pupils’ interest, concentration span and level of development. The very good relationships that are in place between staff and pupils, supports pupils wanting to participate and please. However, in most lesson plans insufficient focus is given to the purpose of the activities. Because the learning outcomes are frequently not specified in the planning, assessment is not focused on whether the pupils have achieved what was intended. This results in pupils not systematically building on earlier learning. The very good opportunities provided by the use of effective resources and approaches, by the very good deployment of staff and by the very good attitudes of the pupils, are not fully realised.

44. Planning for mathematics is developing well and is helping to ensure that all areas of mathematics are covered by each class each year. Teachers receive appropriate guidance from the co-ordinator to help them plan consistently to promote numeracy. Resources are satisfactory and good use is made of teacher-produced resources to support learning. The annual action plan for the subject informs future developments and is appropriately included in the school development plan.

SCIENCE

45. In science pupils’ standards of work are satisfactory and as expected given their learning needs. Pupils make satisfactory progress because teachers plan a good range of activities that interest and involve them. Pupils learn about a wide range of science topics in practical ways, such as feeling the changing properties of materials, making objects move and touching the parts of an animal. Because pupils are actively involved they make good efforts to learn.

46. Younger pupils appropriately access science through a sensory approach. Well planned activities enable pupils to experience objects with a variety of textures, purposes and shapes which they enjoy feeling, smelling and listening to. Pupils are provided with first hand investigations, for example through gluing “feely” materials and seeing how the shapes can change. They handle a variety of materials and begin to learn about their different textures. Scientific learning is effectively taught and reinforced through a number of subjects. For example, in physical education and in action songs pupils learn to name and point to parts of their body. Because they find mirrors fascinating they hold their attention well to name and point to their own body parts by looking in the mirror. During their visits to the riding centre they compare the external body parts of human beings and

animals while also learning how to treat animals with care and dignity. Higher attaining pupils make progress in learning how animals, including humans, move, feed, grow and use their senses. Good teaching ensures planned activities are very clearly related to a theme, for example, light and sound. In a lesson about sound as vibration, the teacher, using drums and cymbals, effectively interested the pupils and captured their attention. Pupils' learn there are a variety of sound sources, and where a sound source and photographs are used together, pupils are helped in identifying the correct sound source. In another lesson the introduction of the contrast between light and dark is effective and pupils attend well when the teacher uses both candles and torches as a light source. These activities provide good opportunities for pupils to be involved and to enjoy, for example, using torches.

47. Older pupils with more complex learning needs continue to use a sensory approach to explore textures, vibrations and cause and effect. Pupils had great fun using the train that was propelled by dropping balls down its chimney and enjoyed repeating the action and watching the train move. Higher attaining pupils make progress in understanding changing states. They do this, for example, by combining ingredients when cooking and by using materials such as 'mudrock' in art, which is soft in use and then becomes hard. Some are able to make observations, but many find it difficult to sequence events. At this key stage pupils increase their understanding about living things. They begin to realise that plants need certain conditions to grow and, through the use of observations and photographs, how living things, such as frogs, grow and develop.

48. Pupils behave well in science lessons because they are interested and involved. They wait their turn well and take the many opportunities provided to make choices. Opportunities are effectively taken to reinforce learning in science in other subjects. For example, the science focus for older pupils for the term is the earth, moon and sun. This theme was very successfully incorporated into a physical education lesson where the movement activities were based upon the planets and space travel.

49. There is a clear science curriculum and also an appropriate action plan for the development of the subject. The curriculum is referenced to the National Curriculum and effectively lists activities linked to the skills to be developed. The school has two co-ordinators, one of whom has worked closely with a local mainstream school to produce the good curriculum document. This co-operation has improved the already good inclusion work between the schools. Although the range of science activities is good, the monitoring of the pupils' learning in the subject is not systematic. There is insufficient assessment and recording of what pupils know, understand or can do to ensure they build on earlier learning. The science allocation is one session per week per class and is supplemented by cross curricular work. It is, however, difficult to quantify this 'extra' as the topic planning does not always clearly identify these links. Science is delivered through six topics per year on the basis of two per term. The school now has a good range of well organised resources. The improvement in the subject since the last inspection is good. This is due to better teaching and learning, a clearer curriculum focus and improved resources.

ART

50. At all ages pupils make satisfactory progress in art and achieve standards as expected for their learning needs. Although the majority of pupils have difficulties with holding and handling tools and with co-ordination of movements, they make satisfactory

progress because planned activities ensure pupils experience a wide range of media and techniques and because there is good individual support.

51. Teachers know the learning needs of the pupils well and appropriately plan for younger pupils to experience a range of activities they can respond to by using their senses. They enjoy feeling and smelling a range of materials, for example when doing balloon prints they felt the balloon and gave good eye contact as staff blew up the balloons and let them go. All opportunities are given by staff and taken by pupils to make choices, such as which colours they will use or how they will place their balloons to make a print pattern. Good physical support and guidance is given to pupils to enable them to use a range of tools such as glue spatulas, or to rip paper for effective collage work. This enables pupils to be confident in new work and supports the development of early skills. Appropriate opportunities are provided for pupils to explore new ideas and to make models, for example, baskets from 'mudrock' and models of different forms of transport from junk materials.

52. Older pupils continue their sensory experiences of a wider range of materials and making of patterns, pictures and artefacts. Through effective support and encouragement they become more independent in using tools such as paintbrushes and scissors. Pupils are confident to use a wider range of brushes to obtain different effects and many can attempt colouring within a boundary. Pupils enjoy mixing colours to produce different shades and tints and explore making different textures in their paint and using paint on a variety of surfaces. Teachers effectively plan a good range of experiences for the pupils, including using computer programmes to experiment with line and colour. The work of known artists is discussed and pupils learn techniques that enable them to work in a similar way. They give good attention and many try very hard to work using similar colours and designs. For example, pupils looked at pictures and crockery in the art deco style and attempted similar designs, and another group looked at portraits in the style of Andy Warhol. Effective opportunities are provided for pupils to work co-operatively, for example on large class pictures.

53. Teaching in art is good, and pupils make good progress in the work they are doing in lessons. Lesson plans cover a good and rich range of appropriate activities that pupils enjoy and work hard in. However, planning does not always focus sufficiently on the skills and techniques to be learnt which means they do not always build on earlier learning. Assessment over time is satisfactory and good use is made of visual record sheets to show pupils what they can do. Planning is developing to ensure an appropriate range of art work, such as modelling, ceramics and textile work is covered by each class. Resources are good and well used. Pupils' experiences are further enriched by opportunities to work with artists brought into the school. The result of this collaborative work, beautifully decorated class banners, is very effectively displayed in the school hall. Art work is displayed well and contributes to the attractive school environment. It also shows pupils their work is valued. There has been an improvement in assessment and recording over time in art since the last inspection.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

54. In design and technology pupils achieve satisfactory standards of work and make satisfactory progress because teaching and planning is satisfactory. In food technology, younger pupils enjoy experiencing mixing, stirring and combining ingredients when, for example, they make biscuits. Pupils are interested in feeling the range of textures and smelling the range of smells of the ingredients. Teachers ensure appropriate attention is

paid to hygiene and safety. Because teachers deploy support assistants well to assist the pupils, particularly those with additional needs, all pupils can actively participate in the activities. They use and identify simple kitchen tools and take great care when using, for example, cutters to cut out biscuit shapes. Effective teaching provides opportunities for pupils to choose, for example their own shape for a biscuit from three cutters provided. Pupils build on these enjoyable experiences by looking at packaging for biscuits and by deciding which biscuits they like the taste of best. Pupils begin to build and construct, with adult help, using a range of appropriate construction toys.

55. When they are older many pupils can select the tools they need to shape and assemble materials. For example, when making sandwiches they choose the correct knife for differing purposes, such as cutting and spreading and when making models they use a glue spatula correctly to stick the pieces together. Higher attaining pupils follow simple instructions and sequences to join things together, for example with sellotape, and show increasing independence in their work. Insufficient detail is paid to the closing activities of some lessons and pupils complete tasks unrelated to the main elements of the lesson. Teaching makes appropriate use of cross curricular opportunities, for example pupils were able to practice their counting skills when measuring ingredients.

56. There is a clear design and technology curriculum which effective collaboration with other schools has helped develop. It is referenced to the National Curriculum and effectively lists activities linked to the skills to be developed. Appropriate and useful design and making record sheets, linked to what pupils can do, have been developed. However, these are not yet in full use and the monitoring of pupils' performance in the subject is not fully developed. Appropriately, monitoring has been identified as an area of focus for the subject. To be more appropriate to pupils' learning needs the subject is taught to younger pupils in cross curricular topics and as a discrete subject to older pupils. Resources are satisfactory and good photographic evidence is well used. The co-ordinator is new to the subject and is overseeing new developments well. Planning for design and technology has improved since the last inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

57. As few geography lessons were observed during the inspection, judgements are based on evidence from pupils' records and work on display. In geography pupils achieve satisfactory standards of work and make satisfactory progress because teaching is satisfactory. Appropriately, pupils learn about their near environment, the school, and then widen their experiences by looking at the local community. Effective use is made of other cultures to support pupils' geographical learning.

58. Younger pupils develop a sense of location through understanding where they are in the classroom and where people and places are located in school. Teachers make effective use of large photographs of school staff, so when, for example, pupils are finding the office the photograph reminds them of who they need to look for. Pupils enjoy the opportunities, frequently with staff support, to find their way to different parts of the school. They are confident to explore although a number do need considerable prompting to travel in the right direction. Many pupils become increasingly independent in finding, for example, the toilets and the school hall. Older higher attaining pupils begin to develop skills in comparing places. Through stories and pictures they hear about and see how other people live. Teachers appropriately use sensory approaches, such as food from other countries, to interest pupils, who begin to understand that people in different countries eat different foods.

59. There is a clear geography policy and curriculum that is referenced to the National Curriculum. Although the range of planned activities is good, the monitoring of the pupils'

learning in the subject is not well developed. Learning outcomes for lessons are not clearly stated. Where possible opportunities are taken to make visits in the local community or further afield to help pupils develop their geographical skills, knowledge and understanding. There is an emphasis on approaching geography through story and the school has a satisfactory range of resources to do this. Since the last inspection the level of resourcing and curriculum planning have improved.

HISTORY

60. Judgements of pupils' achievements and progress in history are based on evidence from a small number of lesson observations, scrutiny of work, planning and record sheets and annual reviews. Overall all pupils make satisfactory progress in history and achieve standards in line with their learning needs.

61. Younger primary pupils develop an understanding of chronology through the sequence of the daily activities in their class. This helps them to understand changes in their own life during the course of the school day. Teachers make good use of symbols to indicate activities, and the class timetable is shared with pupils at the beginning of each morning and afternoon. Many pupils recognise the symbols and express their pleasure in anticipation of the activities. Stories of people from the past contribute to pupils' development and concept of long ago, and appropriate use is made of visitors into school, for example grandparents, to talk about life when they were young. Older primary pupils' experience and compare changes in lifestyles through active experiences in school. For example, a teacher dressed up as an early Viking and let the pupils feel his helmet, beard and hair. This captured the pupils' attention and they responded well to his questions and prompts. Through effective questioning he allowed the pupils to talk about the transport they used and compared this with the transport he used. For pupils at both key stages, good use is made of the local community, for example in looking at different buildings and comparing the differences between those that are older to more modern homes. Good use is also made of artefacts, for example toys from the present compared with toys from the past.

62. Teachers plan lessons well to ensure activities interest the pupils and are appropriate to help their understanding. However, there is insufficient focus on the skills, knowledge and understanding to be gained in each lesson, to support assessment of pupils' learning or to record their progress over time. Medium term planning is developing to ensure appropriate aspects of history are covered by each class every term. Recording is being developed to link with the new curriculum but is not yet in place. New curriculum orders have been put in place since the last inspection and the school is planning appropriately for this, otherwise there has been no significant change in history since the last inspection.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

63. In information and communication technology pupils achieve standards as expected for their learning needs and make satisfactory progress. Information and communication technology is no longer taught as a discrete subject but is taught across the curriculum as the needs of the subjects or cross curricular topics dictate. During the week of the inspection only limited examples were seen and it is not possible to make a judgement about the teaching in the subject, although judgements can be made on what pupils know, understand and can do. All pupils have access to a range of ICT equipment, including bubble tubes, audio tapes, CD's and computers.

64. Younger pupils experience a range of switches to produce different outcomes. Equipment such as “Big Mac” has helped pupils with more complex communication difficulties join in whole class activities, such as the good morning sessions. Because teachers provide effective individual support many pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties can use a touch screen, although a few are limited by access difficulties caused by their seating apparatus. They can, however, use a touch pad although not always with discrimination. Through the use of touch pad and pressure pad switches pupils recognise changes as a result of their actions. Teachers make the tasks interesting to pupils so that pupils are encouraged and keen to try. For example, in one lesson pupils gave very good attention and eye contact when, using a pad, a car moved out of the box and travelled across the floor. Because they enjoyed this activity, the action was repeated to allow all to share the fun.

65. Older pupils, often with adult support, use computers in English, mathematics and art lessons. Because teachers choose appropriate programmes pupils’ learning is supported both in the subject and in their ICT skills. They are very excited and approach the computers in a confident and enthusiastic manner. Clear instructions from staff support higher attaining pupils using a mouse, the arrow keys on a keyboard and the space bar. Some pupils also use switches to control images and sound as well as continuing to use a touch screen, for example, to create art work. Good planning provides all pupils with opportunities to operate cause and effect toys and use the switches in the sensory room. For example, they are keen to operate switches to make lights and equipment such as bubble tubes work. Pupils enjoy these activities and give good attention and eye contact to what they are doing. Teachers ensure that all opportunities are taken for pupils to use their skills, for example, a number of pupils use switch technology to operate electrical equipment, such as tape recorders, in the classroom and microwave ovens when cooking. In mathematics the learning of pupils is helped through their use of computer matching and counting programmes, whilst in art pupils use, for example, a drawing and colour programme to create pictures.

66. There is a clear information and communication technology curriculum that meets statutory requirements. Although the planned range of activities for pupils is good and appropriate, the monitoring of the pupils’ performance in the subject is not sufficiently developed. Because the learning purposes of the activities are not clearly stated, assessment of pupils’ achievements is limited. The co-ordinators have produced an appropriate action plan for ICT, which is a priority area for development in the school development plan. Linked to good financial planning there is a clear plan for the development of the subject, for improved resources and a plan for their strategic use. The plan has also recognised very appropriately staff training needs and incorporated these into planning. Resources are good with new PCs in four of the five classes. A sound beam has recently been purchased and staff are enthusiastic about using this in creative ways to further support pupils’ learning. The school has made satisfactory improvement in this area since the last inspection. The policy and curriculum are clearer. It has replaced the old equipment with new and improved the software. Although planned for, the use of ICT is not yet firmly established in all curriculum areas as outlined in the policy.

MUSIC

67. Across both key stages pupils achieve good standards in music and make good progress because teaching and planning are good and because music is effectively used to support other subjects. Through effective support from the co-ordinator all teachers are now confident to teach music to their own class, and medium term planning enables all aspects of music to be appropriately covered. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

68. Younger primary pupils are very interested and excited by the good range of percussion and other instruments available. Good teaching ensures pupils know the names of the instruments and how to hold and use them. Pupils enjoy making choices as to which instrument they will play, and are confident to play individually and ensemble. They show a very good level of looking and listening because the instruments are interesting and they are appropriately supported in holding and playing them. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to experiment with the instruments before their attention is required. Because the activities planned by the teacher are appropriate, pupils are motivated and their interest is sustained. Pupils learn to stop and start playing when instructed and respond very well to this. Older primary pupils enjoy learning to play faster and slower, and good use is made of a wide range of taped music and singing to support pupils' participation and learning. Pupils are very pleased with their achievements and respond well to new experiences, for example when hearing resonating instruments. Very good teamwork and planning with teachers, physiotherapists and volunteers, support pupils with more profound difficulties, in actively participating in music lessons. For example, in a lesson in the hall, coloured materials were effectively combined with music to create different moods. Lively music was used for the dance section which pupils really enjoyed. The lesson had a good pace with an effective range of activities that held the pupils' attention and interest.

69. Planning is good and is effectively monitored and supported by the co-ordinator. An action plan for the subject appropriately supports continuing developments in music and also contributes to the school development plan. The good range of appropriate resources are well used and the school makes effective use of space to provide a small resource room. Medium term assessments are in place and monitor pupils' progress over time.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL EDUCATION

70. At all ages pupils' achievements and progress in personal and social education are very good. Although teaching in discrete lessons is satisfactory overall, pupils achieve so well because this area is also incorporated into all areas of schooling.

71. The best examples of pupils making good progress in personal and social skills occur when they are specifically targeted as, for example, in some Individual Education Plans. These targets are displayed in the classrooms and addressed throughout the school day in all lessons. Progress is recorded on the IEP and this information is transferred to pupils' Health Education recording sheets on a termly basis. The school works very hard to ensure pupils have many opportunities for choice, decision making and independent work. For example, during lunch time the majority of pupils enjoy the responsibility of choosing and collecting their own meals from the serving hatch. They are effectively encouraged to eat their food using appropriate cutlery. Higher attaining pupils feed themselves using a knife and fork, and most pupils use a spoon and fork. Eating programmes for individual pupils are well planned jointly by teaching staff and speech therapists and are displayed in the dining hall to ensure all helpers know what is required. During registration, pupils value the opportunity to greet the staff and each other and share information about events at home, using communication folders. The good relationships that exist between staff and pupils and pupils and pupils is evident in their enthusiasm for hellos and hugs. Pupils are actively encouraged to become more independent, for example, where possible they collect their own coats before going out at breaktime, take turns in taking the register to the office and make choices between different toys and activities. In all aspects of school life teachers and support staff use praise and encouragement effectively to encourage pupils to try their best, and they respond well to this.

72. The co-ordinator has written a comprehensive Health and Sex Education Policy. She has appropriately carried out an audit to investigate how the subject is taught throughout the school and monitors the effectiveness of the curriculum by monitoring Health Education recording sheets annually. However, most subject medium term plans do not make specific reference to personal, social and health education so restricting opportunities for the subject to be planned effectively across the curriculum. A good range of resources is available and is used well, including those that are loaned from the Health Education Unit. Since the last inspection a policy has been produced and monitoring of planning is being developed.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

73. In physical education, at all ages, pupils achieve satisfactory standards and make satisfactory progress. Good and appropriate support from the physiotherapists informs teachers' good planning and teaching, and good direction from teachers to support staff ensures all pupils participate in an appropriate way.

74. Younger pupils are confident to work in the larger space of the hall and enjoy the many activities provided. Through a good range of well planned activities, pupils enjoy experiencing movements and become more aware of their own body in relation to others, to apparatus and to space. For example, in one lesson pupils responded well to a ball being moved over them, and many tried hard to reach out and touch the parachute as it moved up and down over their bodies. Because adults effectively encourage pupils in improving their movements, and because there is a keen sense of enjoyment by all, pupils respond to the physical challenges very well. They listen well and try very hard to do what is required. For example, they wait a turn, go up and down on apparatus with help and change height in their dance activities. When swimming, pupils are confident in the water, understand and follow the routines and enjoy the planned range of water activities. Pupils listen and respond well to instructions, and through effective use of support staff in the water, they are confident to blow bubbles, splash themselves and walk across the pool. Good use is made of floats and other equipment to encourage pupils in their movements in the water. Pupils make good progress in their horse riding skills which are recorded on their certificates from the riding centre.

75. Older more physically able pupils use space and direction well. For example, they run avoiding obstacles and ride a range of tricycles and bicycles. Teachers use demonstrations and verbal prompts well to support pupils participating and achieving. Pupils show a greater understanding and control of their movements. For example, many can throw a ball in a specified direction, catch a ball that is thrown to them, and roll and kick a ball. Teachers have high and appropriate expectations of what pupils will achieve, for example, pupils begin to remember, link and sequence simple actions. They can perform a short sequence of movements including making a shape, rolling and jumping, spinning and turning. Although all pupils are supported in taking part in team activities, higher attaining pupils can act independently as part of the team and follow simple rules.

76. Teaching in physical education is good in lessons. It is satisfactory over time because learning intentions and outcomes are not always sufficiently focused to raise pupils' achievements and progress over time in a consistent way. Lessons are well planned and pupils are provided with a clear range of activities linked to their physical development. Support staff and volunteers are well informed and deployed, and are used very effectively to encourage pupils' movements which is especially effective with non-ambulant pupils. In order to maintain the interest of pupils lessons go at a good pace with good warm up activities and appropriate winding down sections where music is often used to good effect to help pupils relax. At Key Stage 2 there is some grouping of pupils by physical ability which enables more physically able pupils to combine with pupils from a local primary school for

their lessons. This gives pupils the opportunity to watch other pupils and attempt to copy their movements and actions, so raising their expectations of what they can achieve. In Key Stage 2 lessons with the less physically able pupils, teaching is very good because there is a very appropriate use of language and a good use of the sensory approach to the activities. Effective teaching enables pupils to explore movements related to their bodies and encourages them to move independently, which is something they do not often do spontaneously.

77. There is a clear physical education curriculum reflecting National Curriculum requirements. The curriculum is currently being reviewed and a greater focus on the needs of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is, appropriately, being planned for.. Although the range of activities is good, learning outcomes are not sufficiently specified to allow accurate assessments of achievement. Monitoring of pupils' achievements has, appropriately, been identified as an area of focus for the subject. At Key Stage 1 pupils are taught physical education by the class teacher. At Key Stage 2 there is some use of the co-ordinator across the upper age range where the pupils are grouped by ability. This is very effective in supporting planning and learning at an appropriate level. Physical education supports other subjects well, for example linking to science in using the solar system as the focus for movements. Resources are satisfactory although the hall is limited by size in its use for physical education and is also a thoroughfare. Pupils have access to a soft play area and a jacuzzi within the school and use a range of off site facilities, including swimming baths, hydrotherapy pool and an indoor riding centre where the pupils are taught by experienced instructors. There are a range of certificates, which record their progress in both swimming and riding. Improvement since the last inspection has been good because the planning of the subject and teaching has improved.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

78. Overall pupil achievements and progress are good because teaching is good. Resources are used effectively and work is well planned to allow all pupils to actively participate. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and appropriately reflects the local authority agreed syllabus.

79. Pupils learn about a number of themes such as Living Together, Expressing Meaning and Belief and Value and how these relate to Christianity and other world faiths. Pupils have opportunities to think of themselves as an individual and as a member of larger communities. During the inspection week, pupils were experiencing Buddhism in religious education lessons. This was also planned for during the daily assemblies, so that pupils' learning was effectively reinforced and developed. Teachers are confident in their knowledge of the subject and have access to an excellent range of resources, including religious artefacts. The clear structure of lessons, introduced with multi-sensory experiences such as music, candles and incense, engages all pupils immediately. Lessons are well planned to be appropriate to the pupils, for example, having established a quiet and special atmosphere by the use of music and candles in a lesson, the teacher introduced the idea of 'My favourite things'. Through relating the activities to the pupils, values such as kindness to animals, plants and other people is effectively reinforced. For example, pupils have the opportunity to be "kind" to a plant by giving it water, to a rabbit by stroking it gently and to people by offering sweets to everyone during assembly. Pupils respond very positively to the experiences that are offered to them; they handle artefacts such as statues of Buddha, temple bells and chime trees carefully and sit very quietly and calmly during times of reflection and meditation.

80. The subject co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and has invested a large amount of time and effort in acquiring appropriate resources and advising and supporting teachers. Pupils'

learning experiences are effectively enhanced by celebrating different festivals, including those that reflect the backgrounds of the pupils. Religious education makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development.