

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **OAKGROVE SCHOOL**

Heald Green, Cheadle

LEA area: Stockport

Unique reference number: 131887

Headteacher: Ms A Copley

Reporting inspector: Mrs P Potheary  
21765

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> July – 6<sup>th</sup> July 2001

Inspection number: 230086

Full inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Matlock Road Heald Green Cheadle Stockport
Postcode:	SK8 3BU
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Arnold
Date of previous inspection:	Not applicable

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21765	Mrs P Potheary	Registered inspector	Science Music Physical education Religious education Modern foreign languages Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9619	Mr R Miller	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
18498	Mrs D Morris	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Geography History Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
23733	Ms A Anderson	Team inspector	English Art and design Design and technology	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Oakgrove is a day community special school for 28 pupils aged five to eleven years who have a statement of special educational need for emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are 23 pupils on roll, 22 boys and one girl in Year 4. Two pupils are of black ethnic origin and the rest are of white UK heritage. There are no pupils with English as an additional language. Twelve pupils (52 per cent) receive free school meals. The headteacher manages the Primary Behaviour Support Service, which is on the same site. The school was opened in September 1999 and has had no previous inspection. All pupils have been under achieving on entry to the school and many have difficulties with basic skills. Pupils come from the Stockport area. No pupils have been in the school for more than two years and seven (25 per cent) are new this academic year.

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

Oakgrove is a very good school where difficult and vulnerable pupils are helped to find considerable success in their work and begin to relate very well to others. The overall quality of teaching is very good enabling pupils to achieve very well in a wide range of subjects. The quality of leadership and management is excellent in guiding very good school development and building a strong staff team. The school provides very good value for money.

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

- The overall quality of teaching is very good, enabling pupils to achieve success and make very good progress in the majority of subjects.
- The curriculum is good and offers a host of interesting opportunities to help pupils develop a range of very good skills, understanding and personal growth.
- The school cares very well for pupils, keeping them safe and providing excellent support to help them behave very well.
- Leadership and management by the headteacher and deputy headteacher are excellent, providing a clear sense of direction. They set very high standards and have built a strong team who are committed to the school aims and to achieving the goals set.

#### **What could be improved**

- Opportunities to help pupils learn about different cultures, their achievements, festivals, religions, traditions, values and beliefs are too few. This means that pupils are not fully prepared for life in a multicultural society.

*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**

Oakgrove is a new school, in its second year and there have been no previous inspections. Since the school opened there has been a rapid improvement with regard to the objectives set in the school development plan, particularly in the quality of teaching and learning, curriculum development and the management of pupils' behaviour.

## 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 5	by age 11	by age 16	<b>Key</b>  very good      A good              B satisfactory      C unsatisfactory   D poor                E
Speaking and listening	N/a	A	N/a	
Reading	N/a	A	N/a	
Writing	N/a	A	N/a	
Mathematics	N/a	B	N/a	
Personal, social and health education	N/a	A	N/a	
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	N/a	A	N/a	

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

Pupils achieve very well overall and make very good progress in the majority of subjects. Pupils who have additional learning difficulties also achieve very well. When they enter the school pupils' learning is well behind their peers in mainstream schools, several have missed schooling and all have difficult behaviour, which has affected their learning. The school has focused its targets on raising standards of achievement in the core subjects of English, science, mathematics, information and communication technology and personal and social education. It has been very successful in achieving these targets in these first two years. In English pupils make very good progress especially in speaking, listening and reading, where they particularly gain in confidence. By the age of eleven, three out of five pupils reach levels of attainment in line with national averages in the Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs) in English. In mathematics pupils make good progress, improving their ability to do mental calculations, present data and use different measures. By the same age, three out of four pupils reach national averages in the SATs for mathematics and they all reach national averages in science. Very good achievement and progress is also evident in information and communication technology, music, French and personal and social education. Progress overall in art, design and technology, physical education and religious education is good and in geography and history it is satisfactory.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy school very much, they work hard to improve themselves and do their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour by the majority of pupils is very good. The school is an orderly community where pupils show considerable respect to others during lessons, in the dining hall and around the building.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils develop mature personal skills based upon strong positive relationships with staff and other pupils at the school.
Attendance	Attendance is very good compared to similar schools.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching is very good throughout the school, resulting in very good learning and progress in the majority of lessons. This is true for pupils of all abilities and for those with additional learning difficulties. Teaching is excellent in 15 per cent of lessons, very good in 45 per cent, good in 28 per cent, satisfactory in ten per cent and unsatisfactory in two per cent. In English, science and personal, social and health education, teaching and learning are very good and in mathematics they are good. Good and very good teaching is characterised by very good teamwork between teachers and learning support staff, as well as excellent relationships and pupil management. These lead to a positive attitude from pupils who clearly want to do their best. In addition the very good planning which helps lessons to be varied, fast paced and based on real experience, ensures that pupils remain interested and can relate what they learn to their own lives. Shortcomings in teaching which are evident in a small number of lessons, include limited subject knowledge, insufficient allocation of time for the lesson, lack of consistent assessment of what is learned and missed opportunities for giving homework. These lead to a lack of challenge and sense of purpose or slower learning for some pupils.

Teachers take very good care to foster pupils' basic skills of speaking and listening, reading, writing and working with numbers and data in all subjects. In addition computers are used effectively to support learning in most lessons. High expectations of what pupils are able to do are a key feature of the successful lessons and the very good progress that pupils make.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good overall; all pupils have opportunities to study the full National Curriculum, with very good, enriching visits, activities at lunchtime and strong links with the community.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to develop their personal and social skills through careful planning of activities and experiences to help them mature. Awareness of the wonder in how things work and grow and how we live with others is fostered very well. Pupils have sufficient opportunities to appreciate music, art and literature, but insufficient experience of other cultures, their traditions, beliefs and achievements.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for pupils very well, keeping them safe and happy and closely monitoring how well they do. The procedures for helping pupils behave well are excellent. Parents are kept well informed of how their children are doing.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management by the headteacher and deputy headteacher are excellent. They lead a strong team in setting clear, highly appropriate goals and achieving very high standards in most of the school's work.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They ensure that all National Curriculum subjects are taught and have a clear view of what is good and what could be better, to help them move the school forward. They do not report all the details required of them to parents.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has good procedures overall to assess how well it is doing and what needs to be improved further. However, it lacks consistent and systematic detail from some subjects.
The strategic use of resources	The financial management is very good, ensuring that money is spent on the right things and that good value is obtained. Resources and modern technology are used very well to deliver a very good education to the pupils. Staffing, the accommodation and overall resources are good and sufficient to help pupils succeed well. The school provides very good value for money.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The progress pupils make</li> <li>• The information provided about pupils</li> <li>• Links with parents</li> <li>• The approachability of the school</li> <li>• The high expectations of pupils</li> <li>• Leadership of the school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of homework given</li> <li>• Opportunities to visit the school and meet other parents</li> </ul>

Parents' views reflect closely the findings of the inspection team. Pupils do make very good progress and the school takes great care to keep parents informed of how their children are progressing. Regular telephone contact is made and there is a home/school diary. Leadership of the school is excellent and is closely linked to the high expectations of pupils. Homework is given but it is inconsistent between subjects and classes. The school does not have a parent group and this leads to lack of contact for some parents.



## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Pupils of all ages and abilities, including those with additional learning, reading and attention difficulties, achieve very well at Oakgrove. The majority of pupils make very good progress in most subjects and begin to catch up with their mainstream peers. There is no discernable difference between the progress of the one girl and the boys. Pupils enter the school at all ages in the primary range, although there is only one pupil in Year 1. When pupils first enter the school they are well behind the performance of their mainstream peers in their studies. Several have missed a year or more of schooling and all of them have had their learning disrupted because of their difficulties with behaviour. A few pupils have additional special educational needs, including moderate learning difficulties, reading difficulties and hyperactivity. This year's Statutory Assessment Tests (2001) show that pupils make substantial gains. By the end of Year 2 at age seven, pupils are below national averages in English but no longer well below, and they have caught up to be average in mathematics. By the end of Year 6, more than half of them reach national averages in English and mathematics and all of them do in science. This is a significant achievement for a school which has only been open for two years and where 25 per cent of the pupils have been in the school for one year or less.
2. The school has many targets because everything has had to develop from the beginning in September 1999. The focus has successfully and appropriately been to establish success in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology and this aim has been achieved very well. In addition, a major factor has been the personal and social development of the pupils, because their behaviour difficulties have inhibited their learning in the past. Pupils' progress in meeting their personal targets and learning to behave well is impressive. The school has also aimed to improve standards and establish good progress in all subjects and this has largely been achieved.
3. The very good progress in English is shown because pupils gain much more confidence in speaking in class and learn how to listen carefully. Discussion is a strong feature of many lessons and pupils are not afraid to share their opinions and ask searching questions. In addition reading progress is rapid and pupils who were hesitant to read simple texts soon become fluent, reading all types of text from stories to instructions. Writing is slower to develop, although overall progress is good in both key stages. Most pupils are able to write neatly and spell well by the time they leave. The skills that pupils develop in English are used well in all subjects and help them to make very good progress overall.
4. In mathematics, good progress is evident when pupils solve problems using mental calculations, estimate and measure lengths and present information in graphs using a computer. In science the very good progress is seen during lessons, for example when pupils discuss how to test their ideas about electrical currents and force. The pupils in the Key Stage 1 class have learned how to care for small animals and can relate their new learning to their own experiences.
5. In other subjects very good achievement and progress is evident in information and communication technology, music, a modern foreign language and particularly in personal social and health education. Pupils make good progress overall and achieve

well in art, design and technology, physical education and religious education. In geography and history satisfactory progress is made.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

6. Pupils' attitudes are very good. They arrive at the school with enthusiasm, clearly looking forward to the day's activities and they begin work promptly. The stimulating lessons and the confidence the pupils have in their teachers and learning support assistants, contribute to this positive response to school and have a strong impact on learning. There is a general air of purpose in lessons and pupils show a willingness to learn. Where pupils find the task difficult and show signs of giving up, there is always skilled support on hand to re-direct them. One example was in a Year 5 music lesson where staff were on hand to successfully teach alternate rhythms. Pupils are proud of their work.
7. Pupils behave very well in classes and around the school, in particular during the lunch period. Their behaviour outside the school, on visits to the local swimming pool, for instance, is very good. Parents feel that all pupils are happy to come to school and the school encourages their children to be polite, have good manners, work hard and give each other mutual support and tolerance. Pupils are clear about how to behave through the clear teaching of values reinforced through the school's 'Golden Rules'. They understand and value others and have very good relationships with all staff. Some pupils enter the school with very challenging behaviour but the very positive relationships within the school, together with plans to meet their individual needs, successfully help them to improve. When pupils are difficult, especially in lessons, staff consistently follow the school behaviour policy and individual behaviour plans and the pupils are able to calm down. This means that the behaviour difficulties experienced by all of the pupils rarely interrupt learning. During the last academic year (1999 – 2000) there were ten fixed period exclusions involving six boys. In the current year there have been four fixed period exclusions involving two boys. This is further evidence of the continuous improvement in standards of behaviour that are clearly prevalent in the school.
8. Pupils are polite to each other and respectful to teachers. Dinner times and playtimes are orderly, pleasant, social occasions, when pupils can confidently eat, play and enjoy themselves. Structured activities are organised during the lunch period in which all pupils participate. They all help to get out resources and clear them away after the activity has finished. Older pupils look after younger ones well.
9. Teachers value the pupils and celebrate achievements very well. Even the youngest know they are valued and in turn value each other. Pupils know members of staff care for them and for each other. Pupils reflect on what they do and understand the impact of their actions on others. The manner in which the school follows pupils' difficult behaviour through is a significant strength and underpins everything else it does to encourage pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour.
10. The school's attendance rate, at around 89 per cent is very good and well above the national average for similar schools. Pupils were punctual during inspection week and lessons started on time.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

11. The overall quality of teaching is very good throughout the school, resulting in very good learning and progress in the majority of lessons. Teaching is excellent in 15 per

cent of lessons, very good in 45 per cent, good in 28 per cent, satisfactory in ten per cent and unsatisfactory in two per cent. This is a very high standard of teaching. In English, science, information and communication technology, personal, social and health education, music and French teaching is usually very good and sometimes excellent. In mathematics, art, physical education, geography and religious education it is usually good and in history it is satisfactory. Pupils of differing ability, the girl and the boys, and those with additional learning difficulties are all taught to this very high standard and there is no significant difference between key stages.

12. The teaching of literacy and numeracy in all subjects is a strength of the school. In every lesson care is taken to encourage discussion, pupils are encouraged to listen carefully and read and write with accuracy. Where numeracy is required, for example in science and music, pupils are helped to develop their basic skills, collecting and presenting information or working out patterns and simply counting. Computers are used where appropriate so that skills in using information and communication technology are developed through the subjects. For example in science, pupils are shown how to use the Internet to find out an answer to their question about the weight of a skull. A significant number of lessons promote elements of other subjects, such as using a map in religious education to show the spread of Christianity or relating the food people used to eat during World War Two to food technology.
13. The qualities which are consistent in all of the good, very good and excellent lessons include very good teamwork between the class teacher and the learning support staff. In some physical education lessons for example, the teacher and support staff take it in turns to teach part of the lesson while the other one gives highly skilled support to pupils' learning or behaviour. The work of learning support assistants contributes significantly to the very good levels of progress pupils make, they know the pupils very well and understand just how to help them grasp a point or pay attention. Excellent relationships and management of pupils are also significant reasons that teaching and learning continue, despite occasional disruptions due to the disturbed behaviour of some pupils.
14. The planning of good lessons also helps pupils learn effectively. The activities, resources, and approaches are continually varied to hold pupils' attention and allow them to learn in their own way. A good example of this planning and variety was seen during a French lesson, where pupils were shown a video, played a game and answered questions during a discussion. The fast pace and well matched tasks really helped the pupils to speak French confidently. Another strong feature of lessons, particularly for pupils in the Key Stage 1 class is the creation of real experiences. In religious education for example a 'real' wedding was enacted and in science a live rabbit, newly hatched chick and skeleton helped pupils to relate firsthand to what was being taught. In several subjects such as science, English, French and music, teachers have a very good subject knowledge, which enables them to provide lessons rich in detail.
15. Limited subject knowledge for some teachers leads to a small number of lessons being satisfactory rather than good. This was particularly evident in a few physical education, religious education and history lessons. The school is aware of this and is working gradually and effectively to bring teaching in all subjects up to the standards of the best. Other elements, which lead to lessons being satisfactory rather than good, include shortage of time to consolidate learning, especially in physical education where pupils have to change and the time left for teaching is very short. In addition, the assessment of pupils' skills and knowledge, which is often good, is not recorded systematically by all teachers, so they cannot plan easily for different levels of ability, resulting in an occasional lack of challenge. This is evident in some history, religious

education and physical education lessons. Homework is used well by some teachers, but it is not given regularly or consistently, which means that pupils often miss the opportunity to extend their learning independently at home. Several teachers do ask pupils to collect information, for example about pets in science, or discuss times past with their parents and grandparents for history; it is the lack of consistency which limits the value of these experiences.

16. A major factor in the very high quality of learning taking place is the high expectations of what pupils can do, linked closely to individual education plans and work which gives them success and builds their self-esteem.

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

17. Since the school opened two years ago, the staff have worked very effectively to put a good curriculum in place. Subject documentation is good, and clear policies guide practice. Statutory requirements for the National Curriculum and religious education are fully met. The school provides a wide range of activities to ensure that pupils have access to a rich learning environment. Curriculum planning is good and ensures that activities are appropriate to pupils' individual needs and additional learning difficulties. In English and mathematics, for example, detailed knowledge of each pupil's abilities means that subject co-ordinators are sufficiently well informed to create appropriate individual programmes.
18. Provision for personal and social education is very good. A high priority is given to the development of personal skills, and significant opportunities are created for pupils to share and work together and to take some simple responsibilities such as serving milk and water during lunch, helping younger pupils, giving out equipment and tidying classrooms. There are many other opportunities for pupils to take turns, undertake simple jobs and prepare and clear away their own work. Some pupils make boxes of produce for elderly people in the community. In all subjects, activities are planned to promote positive attitudes and behaviour and successfully help pupils to develop confidence and self-esteem. In addition, every class receives well organised personal, social and health education lessons including sex education, where opportunities to discuss issues are promoted. An annual visit by a drama group promotes clear knowledge and understanding of the misuse of drugs.
19. Great care has been taken to provide opportunities to develop pupils' basic skills. The school uses the National Literacy Strategy very well and careful planning means that basic skills, including numeracy, are developed in all subjects. However, the limited use of regular homework means that pupils miss opportunities to develop independent study skills as well as to practice their basic skills away from the classroom.
20. Very good extra-curricular activities promote very good standards of personal development. The curriculum is enriched by the many and varied, lunchtime club activities, which promote a wide range of skills, including, gymnastics, gardening, games and computer skills. Pupils are encouraged to choose different activities each day which improves their personal and social development, because pupils are able to mix with different groups and gain the confidence to try different skills. Staff work closely with pupils at these times to help them take turns, or wait. This strategy is successful in promoting tolerance. Pupils' self-esteem is raised by the instant praise for small successes.

21. Because the school is new, links with the community are still developing and are good overall. Pupils use the local shops to purchase small items. They have many different visits to places of local interest to support their studies. For example, pupils in the Key Stage 1 class have visited the local garden centre as part of their science project on growth. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have attended a 'Variety' sponsored bowling afternoon. In Year 5, pupils visit the local Bramhall Hall, as part of their Tudor studies in history, and all pupils regularly attend the local church. The local vicar visits regularly to take assemblies, and a range of visitors support many areas of the curriculum, helping to make subjects lively and more meaningful to pupils.
22. Provision for spiritual development is very good. Pupils are provided with many very good opportunities to reflect on their experiences and to develop their awareness of special events. For example, pupils were able to watch the birth of a chick as it hatched. There was great excitement and a sense of wonder as they listened to the chick in the egg, tapping its way out. Pupils attend church regularly and in one assembly led by the local vicar pupils were encouraged to reflect on the symbolism around them, and to describe what certain symbols meant to them. Within lessons, pupils develop their spirituality as they begin to appreciate, often with amazement, how things grow or work and how other people contribute to their own lives. Planned assemblies promote increased appreciation of the way others think and feel and are connected together.
23. Provision for the moral development of pupils is also very good. The school helps pupils to realise right from wrong and learn to consider the effect of their actions on others. All staff act as positive role models treating pupils with respect so that pupils learn what they must do by observing. This means that pupils gradually begin to behave more considerately and face up to the fact that they may have done something wrong. They are then able to learn what to do and if necessary put things right. Readily available attention from staff during times when pupils have done something wrong, helps them to reflect on their actions and feelings and so learn how to behave more thoughtfully in the future.
24. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory overall. Pupils are taught about other cultures as part of their religious education, geography, music, art and history studies. They have enjoyed visits from local residents to talk about life in times past, and also from a missionary who talked about his work in other countries. Very good appreciation of well known musical pieces and works of art contributes to pupils' cultural development. They also develop appropriate awareness of their own local cultures through regular visits to the shops and areas of local interest.
25. However, provision for multicultural development is insufficient. Too few opportunities are created to extend this aspect of personal development. The examples offered to pupils for studying different cultures in subjects are not sufficiently extended. There is little evidence in displays around the school or in pupils' books to indicate that they are being fully prepared for life in a multicultural society. In religious education for example, the focus is on Christianity and Judaism with some mention of Islam, but the study of other religions is not sufficiently detailed to give pupils a full understanding of the beliefs and values of others in our society. The school does consider other cultures and there is evidence of some work in several subjects including, geography, music, art, religious education and history, but it recognises that this is one area that still needs further development.

## HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

26. The school cares for its pupils very well indeed. The procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' safety and welfare are very good. Clear guidelines are laid down for child protection for all staff and the staff who have a key responsibility are well trained. There is effective liaison with outside agencies and the school nurse is able to offer regular health advice. Health and safety are well monitored and risk assessments are carried out for the premises as well as school trips. Regular checks are carried out on all electrical and fire equipment.
27. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. There are weekly checks of registers and unexplained absences, in most cases, are quickly followed up by telephone or by using the services of the taxi and escort service that is provided for conveying pupils to and from school. The services of the educational welfare service are used effectively. The procedures in place for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are excellent and a significant strength of the school. All pupils have personal behaviour targets and their progress towards these is regularly monitored. The way in which staff handle the more challenging behaviour of some pupils is impressive. Pupils quickly respond to the help they are given in learning to manage themselves. Proper records are kept where restraint is used on a pupil and these indicate that parents are informed either by telephone or letter of the incident and outcome.
28. The positively written behaviour policy was the subject of wide consultation. It clearly identifies rewards and sanctions, which are well understood by pupils and parents alike. All members of staff consistently apply the 'Golden Rules' that are prominently displayed throughout the school. Bullying is not tolerated and close monitoring, counselling and use of group discussion called 'Circle Time' are some of the strategies in use to combat it.
29. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' achievements and progress are good with some very good aspects. The assessment of all pupils on arrival in school is very thorough and includes an evaluation of academic ability, additional special educational needs and behaviour. This information clearly identifies strengths and weaknesses and is used to prepare individual education plans which are the basis for pupils' future learning. Annual reviews are of good quality and the more recent ones provide National Curriculum levels for all subjects. However, formal procedures for assessing pupils' progress are inconsistent in history, geography, music, physical education, religious education and science. Teachers know their pupils exceptionally well and talk about achievements and progress with ease and accuracy but are not consistent in recording these facts and how they use this knowledge in planning future work. This weakness has not had a negative impact in most subjects, because the school is small and pupils, who are relatively new, often show good initial progress. However, as pupils are likely to remain in the school for several years the current system does not ensure that pupils can be supported in making systematic progress in a wide range of skills in all subjects. This is recognised by the school which plans to establish consistent and systematic assessment in all subjects. The school is just beginning to analyse the data it has recorded over the last academic year to chart individual pupil progress as well as patterns of progress within classes and across the school. Good analysis of Statutory Assessment Tests results is carried out and the findings are used effectively to raise standards further.
30. Teachers use day-to-day assessment well in literacy and numeracy. During the inspection teachers adapted their planning as a result of the previous day's work. In lessons, the discussion at the end of lessons is used well to assess the learning that

has taken place. Pupils also receive good feedback; they are told whether they have met the objectives for the lesson as well as their personal targets.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

31. Parents, generally, view this as a very good, supportive and caring school. A number of parents however, would wish for more opportunities to visit the school and to meet with other parents. Very few parents come into school and none are invited to attend 'Celebration of Achievement' assemblies, for instance. This has been acknowledged and the school's development plan contains ways in which these concerns will be addressed, such as the formation of a parents' association. Almost all parents did, however, attend the school's Christmas concert. Fifty per cent of all parents attended the meeting with the registered inspector before the inspection commenced.
32. The quality of information given to parents by the school, including information about pupils' progress, is good and there is a termly newsletter. However, a small number of parents consider it not to be regular enough. The school prospectus and annual governors' report to parents whilst informative, lack certain legally required detail. A home/school agreement exists and the diary that accompanies it is well used by the vast majority of parents, as a form of dialogue with individual members of staff. The contribution that these parents make to their child's learning at home is good and makes a positive contribution to their child's learning. The school makes good efforts to involve parents in their child's educational development and volunteers to pick up parents in their minibus for meetings to discuss pupils' progress and to enable them to attend annual review meetings. These meetings give parents and pupils good opportunities to contribute to the future academic and personal targets being set. Frequent telephone contact is also made between members of staff and parents and home visits take place as and when appropriate.

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

33. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are excellent in leading the school to the very high quality of education provided in only two years. The very clear focus on high educational standards has been successful in achieving the school's aims. The pupils, who have all failed in other schools, are helped to make very good progress and overcome their previous difficulties. The headteacher and deputy headteacher lead by example, providing very high quality lessons, dealing with difficult behaviour and running the lunchtime meal everyday. Curriculum and subject responsibilities are shared between the headteacher, deputy headteacher and class teachers. This means that all teaching staff contribute substantially to making the school development plan effective. A key feature of the school is the way all staff work closely together and consult twice a day to ensure everyone knows what has happened and what needs to be done next. The caretaker is a governor and learning support staff have an equal contribution to make in meetings. The whole staff are truly a team and are therefore very successful in achieving common goals.
34. Governors fulfil their legal duties well, with the exception of some omissions in the prospectus and reports to parents, such as the summary of the policy for special educational needs. They ensure that everything that should be taught is in place and are fully aware of the good things about the school as well as knowing what still has to be done. They take a strong role in shaping the work of the school and monitoring progress. The local vicar, who is a governor, is a regular visitor to the school and two members of staff are on the governing body.

35. Subject co-ordinators have been appointed and they manage subject development well, providing advice and support to colleagues. However, the role does not include monitoring of teaching and learning in all subjects. The headteacher and deputy headteacher carry out this role, but this means that co-ordinators are not fully aware of the strengths in teaching and learning in their own subjects. This leads to differences in the quality of teaching and learning within subjects. Senior management are aware of the need to further develop the co-ordinators' roles to improve consistency within the subjects. However, due to the newness of the school and the staffing difficulties in the last academic year, they have proceeded with caution until staffing, routines and common goals are established before increasing the roles of subject co-ordinators further. Nevertheless, the very high quality of teaching observed, where almost 90 per cent of teaching is good, very good or excellent, indicates that the role of senior management in developing teaching skills is highly effective. The result is a developing process based upon firmly established practice and a sense of ownership with all concerned.
36. The school very carefully monitors performance and sets targets for all teachers as well as the headteacher and deputy headteacher. This process, linked to the appraisal of teachers, is well done. However, the inconsistent assessment of pupils' skills does not yet provide the information to help the school clearly identify how well different groups of pupils are doing in some subjects. This weakness does not have a negative impact currently because the school is still very small, pupils have only been in the school for a short time and teachers know the pupils very well. However, as the school grows and pupils remain for longer it does not provide sufficiently detailed information to support subject planning and development for all pupils. The school is working towards a system to suit its characteristics and the needs of the pupils and is well placed to set performance targets that should help raise standards further.
37. The school's priorities for development are excellent. There is a three-year plan with clear educational objectives which are entirely suitable to setting up a new school. The excellent success so far in achieving the goals set, indicate that the school is committed and able to achieve its aims and continue improving and developing.
38. Developments are very well supported by financial planning. The school experienced some early difficulties in settling a sum for the budget with the local education authority. Consequently finances were, and still are, planned for very carefully. This uncertainty has now been resolved. The school ensures that educational priorities are linked to the budget most effectively through the school development plan. The school has wisely allowed time to fully establish itself before deciding on priorities and needs for improving the school premises, for example the creation of a discrete library rather than an area set aside within another room. It now has a very good understanding of those needs and priorities and these are to be implemented during the summer holidays. Specific grants are used very well for their intended purposes. The school makes very good use of its funds and actively pursues all that it is entitled to from local education authority and government funds, for example, the government study grant, as well as using available funds from charities such as the Variety Club to purchase a minibus. Day-to-day administration is most efficient. Very effective use is made of computers for administrative tasks. For example, they are used to provide information showing individual pupils' achievements as well as patterns of behaviour and progress in each class, so that improvements can be made. Principles of best value are very well applied, particularly with regard to purchasing services and equipment.
39. The school has had two members of the teaching staff (50 per cent) absent on long-term sickness and it has been difficult to obtain regular supply staff. This situation has



now been resolved and staffing is again stable. However, this disruption has slowed down intended developments in establishing responsibilities for the subjects and staff roles. The school now has sufficient qualified and experienced teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum in all subjects. The deployment of staff is good. Induction and the support given to new permanent and temporary staff is very good and ongoing. The work of learning support assistants is a strength of the school; without exception they are of a high calibre and make a very positive contribution to pupils' learning, especially for those with additional learning difficulties. Opportunities are available for all staff and subject co-ordinators to take the training that they need. Staff have received high quality training for behaviour management as well as in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies.

40. The school has made significant improvements to the accommodation since moving into the building two years ago. Double-glazed windows and new external wall panels have transformed what was a dilapidated building. The former school kitchen has been turned into a dining room and also provides an area for teaching of food technology. The new building, whilst providing well for pupils' needs and reflecting a high commitment to pupils' care does not cater for disabled access or facilities. The hall area that is used for school assemblies also doubles up as a gymnasium, which is adequate but is not fully equipped. The grounds are also adequate; they contain a large grassed area but no marked pitches for sport and a hard playground that is not set out so that pupils can play different games. The classrooms and building are very well used and organised to meet the demands of the curriculum. The building is kept in good condition overall, by the caretaker.
41. Resources for learning are good. They are of good quality and are well used to support learning. Resources are particularly good in information and communication technology, where the new suite is having a very positive impact on pupils' achievement. They are very good in English, science, music and in French, but there are too few resources for field and competitive sports. Not enough links have been made with local schools to help improve this provision. Overall the school has an attractive, welcoming atmosphere and lessons have sufficient resources to provide pupils with the variety of experiences that enable them to learn so well.

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

### **To improve provision further the headteacher and governors should:**

- a) provide more opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures, their achievements, festivals, religions, traditions, values and beliefs. This is to prepare them better for living in a multicultural society. (*Ref para: 25*)

### **In addition to this major issue the headteacher and governors should consider:**

- improving the consistency of assessment in science, geography, history, physical education and music to:
  - i) provide a clear view of the way groups of pupils are progressing; and
  - ii) help teachers plan better for developing a wide range of individual pupil skills in these subjects. (*Ref para: 29*)
- ensuring that the homework policy is consistently applied so that all pupils receive the opportunity to work independently; (*Ref para: 15*)
- increasing the opportunities for parents to visit the school and to meet each other, so that more parents feel involved in the work of the school; (*Ref para: 31*)
- developing further the role of subject co-ordinators, to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their subject. This is to provide them with more information for subject development. (*Ref para: 35*)

These minor issues are acknowledged by the school and are part of the school development planning.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
15	45	28	10	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**

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	23
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	12

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

### **Attendance**

<b>Authorised absence</b>		<b>Unauthorised absence</b>	
	%		%
School data	9.8	School data	0.16

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	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	21
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	4
Average class size	6

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	155

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	10	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	284,754
Total expenditure	295,348
Expenditure per pupil	12,842
Balance brought forward from previous year	12,713
Balance carried forward to next year	2,119

### ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

#### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	22
Number of questionnaires returned	7

#### **Summary of parents' and carers' responses**

Parents are very pleased with the school and feel that their children make good progress, improve their behaviour and begin to learn well, often for the first time. Progress in reading is particularly good. The only concern is that some parents would appreciate more opportunity to visit the school, meet each other and see what goes on. These views were borne out by the inspection.

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

### **ENGLISH**

42. The standards achieved, and progress made, by pupils in English are very good in both key stages. Pupils enter the school at all ages with standards well below average in speaking and listening, reading and writing, but by the age of eleven have achieved levels comparable with those achieved in mainstream primary schools. The 2001 Statutory Assessment Test (SATs) results show that 60 per cent of pupils present for the tests reached Level 4 (the national average) and 40 per cent Level 3. This is a great achievement, especially considering that most pupils have been at Oakgrove for less than two years.
43. When they enter the Key Stage 1 class pupils initially lack confidence in speaking and their listening skills are poor. Reading skills are poorly developed and few have the experience or confidence to write easily. These limitations are soon addressed by effective teaching. Despite their initial lack of confidence, pupils progress well and by the age of seven are almost to the level expected for their age. From an early age pupils learn to use speaking and listening not only for communicating but also for clarifying their ideas before they write. More able pupils know that a synonym is a word very similar in meaning to another one and all match words such as quick and fast, cheerful and happy, afraid and scared in their literacy 'big book' sessions reading 'Please Mrs Butler'. They listen very well to each other in specific speaking and listening sessions, for example when telling what they did over the weekend. Teachers' records show that a short time after joining the school there has been a tremendous improvement in pupils' ability to participate in this type of activity. Reading skills show marked improvement during pupils' time in the school with most pupils' reading ages improving by more months than the actual months they have spent in the school. Pupils read both fiction and non-fiction, including different forms of poetry, which they enjoy greatly. Pupils are not always keen to write. Handwriting shows very good progress. More able pupils write their words all on one line and the size of letters is consistent. Less able pupils show steady improvement in forming words with large legible letters. Pupils write in many different ways, including stories, reports and poetry. More able pupils use dictionaries for their spellings or as part of a directed dictionary search, for example discovering that 'a cat is a small furry animal often kept as a pet'.
44. By the age of eleven most pupils listen attentively and can discuss their experiences and ideas on many subjects. They now enjoy reading, although some are loathe to admit this! Most pupils read a reasonably complex text, understanding the main themes and the characters involved, for example stories such as 'The Iron Man' and the play 'Romeo and Juliet'. A few search the Internet to gather and collate information. Pupils write in different forms, using language thoughtfully. They develop ideas and describe events clearly, but prefer factual writing such as an explanation of how electricity is produced or retelling stories they have heard. They use very good similes to illustrate their descriptions, for example describing the Iron Man's 'eyes as lights', its 'legs like skyscrapers' and its 'tongue like a wriggling snake'. Most pupils write in ink, more able pupils using cursive writing whilst the less able still use printing with some attempts at joining letters together. Spelling is variable but evidence shows very good progress over time. Pupils make good use of dictionaries and often enjoy hunting up spellings for themselves.
45. The quality of teaching is very good in Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2 it is very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers plan very carefully, using the broad structure of the

National Literacy Strategy. Lessons are of varying length, for example a ten-minute reading session at the beginning of every afternoon and a fifteen-minute speaking and listening session every morning, sets the scene for the day. These sessions are used very effectively to enthuse pupils, for example with the forthcoming visit of a missionary to the Years 4 and 5 class, or the building of anticipation for hearing 'The Gorilla' by Anthony Browne in the Years 3 and 4 class. Teachers have clear objectives for lessons and their careful explanations ensure pupils understand what is expected. Class discussions and the reading and writing tasks are invariably conducted briskly so that time is spent productively. The relationships between staff, both teaching and learning support assistants, are very good and these have a positive effect on pupils' learning. Behaviour is managed very well and this too helps pupils' confidence in obtaining maximum support from the adults teaching them. Excellent teaching is characterised by the development of a quiet enthusiasm so that pupils become eager to sit and listen to the story and discuss what might happen next, which is a delight to behold. Teachers do not consistently give homework however, and so some pupils miss opportunities to develop their independent learning. The way teachers mark pupils' work is good, it is consistent and praise and constructive comments are regularly used. End of lesson summaries are also consistently used well, they provide careful reinforcement of what has been learned during the lesson. Assessment of pupils' achievements in English is of very good quality using the national literacy guidelines very effectively.

46. The leadership and management of English are excellent. The co-ordinator monitors the quality of teaching through regular lesson observations and so is well informed. This results in very clear directions for developing the subject and very good day-to-day management. The co-ordinator has established the literacy hour format very well and backed this up with very good resources. Training in English is very good. A particular strength is the fact that all teachers have visited mainstream schools to observe the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy thus ensuring a clear practical knowledge. The school library area is too small at present but a new library room is being established during the summer holidays. Classroom materials and resources are varied, of very good quality and quantity and are used very well by all teachers.

## **MATHEMATICS**

47. Pupils make good progress during their time at the school, and they achieve well in lessons. Standards are below average on entry, often linked to pupils' emotional difficulties. By the end of Key Stage 1, Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs) show that half of pupils reach national averages and by the end of Key Stage 2, three out of four pupils reach average scores. Considering the behaviour and additional learning difficulties experienced by the pupils and their history of disrupted schooling this is a good achievement by the school.
48. By age seven at the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are confident when working with numbers. They can recall number facts to ten quickly and easily, and understand the different operations that are used to solve simple addition and subtraction sums. Higher attaining pupils often achieve above-average standards as they add and subtract two-digit numbers mentally. In one lesson, a higher attaining pupil in Year 2 was able to explain that: 'if you had 16, and gave four away to three other people, you would have a quarter each'. Pupils in the Key Stage 1 class make good use of simple mathematical resources, such as number fans, to find answers to questions. In one lesson, they were observed confidently shuffling their fans, trying to be the first to answer simple addition and subtraction problems. All pupils in Key Stage 1 can sort objects by colour and shape and size. Pupils with more limited ability in mathematics

work confidently with numbers to ten, recognising numerals and counting objects. Pupils make good progress as they move through Years 1 and 2, and they achieve well in mathematics lessons.

49. During Key Stage 2, pupils develop their mathematical skills through many practical experiences. By the time they reach the end of Key Stage 2 in Year 6, pupils achieve standards that are broadly similar to the national average. They are able to solve problems using a range of mental methods of computation. In Years 3 and 4, pupils extend their mathematical skills by consistently practising computational problems. They use correct technical names for common shapes and use a range of measures accurately. They make good progress as they solve simple problems, and achieve well in lessons. Pupils in Year 5 have used information and communication technology (ICT) to present their findings during a traffic survey linked to their geography studies. They show good understanding as they interpret the data they have collected, and can clearly explain what the graphs represent. In Year 6, pupils show good skills as they double simple and complex numbers orally. They recognise many different shapes and can describe them accurately. They use appropriate mathematical language as they measure the perimeter of shapes they have drawn, using standard and non-standard measures. They build on prior skills as they collect and interpret data. The standards that they achieve are closely linked to the good teaching that they receive.
50. Good teaching is a feature of mathematics lessons. The effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is also having a positive impact on standards. Teachers know pupils very well. This helps them to manage challenging behaviour successfully, so that any disruptions to learning are minimal. The good use of resources promotes interest and motivates pupils. For example, pupils in Year 5 made very good use of 'tables folders' to enable them to calculate answers during a mental-oral starter. Very good use is made of ICT to present findings. Teachers use questions well to encourage pupils to think, and to work out answers for themselves. For example, in Year 6, the good questioning by the teacher helped pupils to improve their ability to recall number facts mentally. In Years 4 and 5, pupils benefited from quick methods suggested by the teacher as they tried to recall multiplication facts. The quality of teachers' planning is good. It plays an important part in ensuring that activities and objectives are appropriate to individual pupils' needs. Learning support assistants support learning very well; they show good discretion as they quietly support lower attaining pupils so that their self-esteem remains intact. The contribution that they make to pupils' success is significant. Occasionally the pace of learning is limited by challenging behaviour, but because this is so well managed, pupils' learning is rarely affected. There is little evidence of homework being given regularly, which means that pupils are not sufficiently supported in developing independent learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is good in the vast majority of lessons. Where there is less expertise, learning dips and the content of lessons is weaker. However, in almost all lessons, teachers offer challenge and encourage pupils to investigate answers independently. This style encourages good learning and ensures that pupils achieve well. Very positive relationships promote empathy and understanding between staff and pupils.
51. Mathematics is well led and effectively managed. The quality of the leadership has a positive impact on pupils' achievements. The National Numeracy Strategy is clearly embedded in the curriculum provision and is helping to raise standards. Resources for the subject also play a positive role in raising levels of achievement. They are of good quality and are well used in lessons. Good overall assessment procedures ensure that teachers know where individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses are. Hence, their progress can be carefully monitored to ensure improvements. Lesson observations are undertaken by the headteacher and deputy headteacher and together with a detailed



action plan, guides practice. The major strengths of the provision for mathematics are the good teacher knowledge and the very high quality of behaviour management in lessons.

## SCIENCE

52. The achievement and the progress made by pupils in science are very good throughout the school. Pupils enter the school at all ages in the primary range and have usually missed out some learning of science. When they join the Key Stage 1 class their knowledge and skills are well below average. Within a short time they begin to catch up; the end of Key Stage 1 teacher assessments indicate below average performance, but all the pupils who took this year's Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs) in Year 6 reached average levels. This is a remarkable achievement for pupils who have been in the school for less than two years and have severe behaviour difficulties.
53. In the Key Stage 1 class pupils make very good progress through a series of linked lessons on pets, the care of animals and how they grow. Their understanding of how chicks develop in the egg and eventually hatch is excellent. These pupils can discuss at length their own pets at home and the different routines needed to care for them. Very good progress continues as pupils move up through the school into Key Stage 2. In Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 pupils extend their skills in developing a theory and working out how to test it. For example, in one lesson pupils worked out that in testing the effects of wire length on electrical transmission, they needed to keep everything in their experiment the same except for the wire length. Pupils show an increasing ability to ask good questions and think carefully about the way things work. In a lesson about bones, pupils wanted to know which bones in the body were heaviest and whether animals have a jaw like us. They all develop knowledge of a wide range of scientific topics, including growing plants, testing the property of materials, studying what things are made of and learning about their own bodies.
54. The very good quality of science teaching at Oakgrove is the main reason that pupils learn so well. In the Key Stage 1, class teaching is excellent. Excellent management of pupils' behaviour and the strong personal relationships mean that pupils really try hard with their work. They grow more confident as time goes on and begin to question maturely, sharing their ideas and their own experiences. For example, when one group was trying to move a tank using an elastic band, pupils were completely engrossed in the discussion as to how to make the tank move, testing the properties of the elastic and comparing performance. In one lesson with the youngest group, the excellent variety of activities and resources included a video and a newly hatched chick. By the time that a real rabbit was brought into the classroom, the pupils were so quiet and gentle the moment felt magical and they began to ask lots of questions and shared their own knowledge of rabbits. Learning support assistants know the pupils very well and are highly skilled in helping individuals do their work successfully. The high level of skills and knowledge of science of all teaching staff contribute to the high quality of lessons and mean that the subject is presented very effectively so that it interests all pupils and keeps them focused on the lesson. Sometimes pupils are asked to find out things from home, but regular homework varies from class to class and pupils do not have much opportunity through science to develop their independent investigations.
55. Leadership and management of the subject are also very good. Well-planned staff development has ensured that the way the subject is taught is of a very high quality. The curriculum is enriched by the provision of plenty of firsthand experience through visits to places such as Stockport Primary Science Fair. The systems for assessing what skills individual pupils achieve however, are not consistent throughout the school

and do not provide a clear overview of levels of achievement, especially for younger pupils in Key Stage 2. In addition the role of the co-ordinator in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in science is not well developed. These shortcomings do not effect current levels of achievement, but mean that the co-ordinator is not able to monitor how well groups of pupils are achieving, so that she can plan for improvements as the school becomes established. This is well recognised by the school which is poised to develop the co-ordinator role further.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

56. Standards of achievement and progress are good in art and design throughout the school. Pupils have sketchbooks, where their work shows real improvement in the standards achieved for the varying lengths of time pupils have been in the school, some only a matter of weeks. Pupils' work is celebrated through displays in class and around the school, for example the Year 6 collages representing Aesop's Fable of the 'Tortoise and the Hare'. On arrival at Oakgrove, pupils are often hesitant to express themselves on paper; however, their work shows a real increase in confidence over time.
57. Teaching is good throughout the school. Few lessons were observed, but pupils work and the displays indicate that lessons are well planned, work is appropriate to the needs of all pupils and the good quality of teaching means that the skills required in drawing, painting, making patterns and designing different effects is good. Very good discussion means that pupils are able to reflect on what they have learned before and decide which materials to use for the best effect. The skilled work of learning support assistants and the excellent relationships mean that pupils behave well, feel successful and so want to do their best. In one lesson, behaviour of the youngest pupils was very mature as they accepted that they must not eat the fruits they were drawing until the end of the lesson. Occasionally opportunities for pupils to make independent choices are missed because tasks are too directed and this hinders their experience of being creative in those lessons.
58. Very good subject leadership means that teachers are supported well in what to teach and strategies for lessons. Senior management monitor the quality of teaching which is why standards are so high. However, assessment and the monitoring of teaching are not part of the co-ordinator role. This means that clear detail to support planning for developing the subject is limited. Now that the first stage of establishing the subject is complete, monitoring of teaching by the co-ordinator is planned.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

59. Good progress has been made at both key stages in design and technology and pupils achieve well.
60. By the age of seven pupils study designs and make judgements about their findings, for example, they visited two playgrounds, tested and compared the equipment in them and then, having discussed which pieces of equipment they liked best and why, created a wall display to illustrate their findings. They make good gains in their learning, for example in making choices, understanding relationships between different sizes and shapes and in their manipulative skills.
61. By the age of eleven pupils design Ferris wheels, investigate the most suitable materials to use to build their design and then evaluate both design and finished article. They use the Internet to study the design of chairs around the world and following a brief, design and build their own chairs. These are most impressive and are

capable of withstanding the weight of an adult. They are presently on display in the school entrance and create a striking example of the school's work in design and technology. In the Years 3 and 4 class, pupils make excellent models to illustrate how air pressure can be used to produce and control movement.

62. The quality of teaching in art, for all age groups, is good overall. In Key Stage 2, where teaching is most successful, pupils are encouraged to work out design problems by class discussions very ably led by the teacher and then pupils help each other with ideas during the construction stage. Staff work closely as a team and create a relaxed, supportive atmosphere, with the result that pupils readily settle to work and are clear about what they are learning and what is expected of them. Less successful teaching does not allow pupils to make mistakes then discover how to remedy the situation, although it does ensure that pupils successfully create their model. Very successful design and technology was observed in a history lesson when pupils were studying the impact of World War Two on the food people ate. Pupils created a 'fake flan' using the ingredients available to the population during the war.
63. Subject management is now very good. The new co-ordinator has a very clear view of what needs to be done and supports staff well in developing the subject. However, there are no opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the subject. In addition assessment, which is good overall is not consistent across the school. These two factors lead to an unclear view of how well pupils are doing and does not provide sufficient information to decide how to develop the subject further. Senior management do monitor the quality of teaching which is why standards are so high and they recognise the need to develop this aspect of the co-ordinator role now that the school is more established.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

64. Pupils throughout the school achieve satisfactory standards and make sound progress in relation to their own prior learning. They achieve higher standards in those lessons when they are particularly interested in the content. Pupils enter the school at all ages in the primary range with standards that are well below average.
65. In Key Stage 1, progress over time is satisfactory. Pupils learn about their local area and make comparisons between Stockport and Rhyl. They think carefully about the differences between a town and the seaside, identifying places to stay and many different shops and amusements. They make very good use of resources, such as large photographs, which, because they can all see them, leads to good progress in some lessons. Pupils are able to discuss what they have learned well, although the amount of work in their files is limited.
66. At Key Stage 2, pupils study a range of topics as they build on what they have learned before making satisfactory progress in lessons. For example, in Years 3 and 4 they begin to study simple maps and show good understanding of grid references. In Years 4 and 5, pupils make good use of ICT to produce a simple map of a journey through Stockport. They make at least satisfactory progress as they recognise similarities between their own local area and a town in India. They notice many differences as they study large photographs, although discussion is often immature as they talk about 'who lives in their house'. In Year 6, there is evidence that pupils have studied a mountain environment in depth. They have made good use of secondary sources such as books and computer discs to gather evidence.
67. The quality of teaching in geography is good overall and very good in key Stage 1. Teachers plan and manage lessons well, making very effective use of resources, such

as videos and visits to keep pupils interested. This helps pupils to understand more deeply the differences between the places they study. Sometimes, however, lessons are too short to allow in-depth study of a particular aspect. Often pupils are hurried; because of this the amount of work they do in lessons is sometimes too little and this reduces their achievements, leading to satisfactory progress overall.

68. The subject is well led, and the temporary co-ordinator is effectively putting procedures in place to improve standards. The geography curriculum is also good and provides many opportunities for pupils to relate their learning to their own experiences. For example the good use of the local area is particularly strong. Geography lessons are observed by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, which has improved teaching but limits the co-ordinator's firsthand knowledge of strengths and weaknesses in the subject. The school recognises this and intends to develop the monitoring role of the co-ordinator now that the subject is established. Assessment in lessons is not well established to be consistent across the school, although teachers use their excellent knowledge of the pupils to plan effectively. However, there is insufficient information to plan for systematic build up of skills as pupils remain in the school for longer. Senior management recognise the need to develop these aspects of the subject and plan to do so.

## **HISTORY**

69. Pupils of all ages and abilities have sound achievements and make satisfactory progress in history. When they enter the school in all age groups, pupils' knowledge of history is well below average.
70. In the Key Stage 1 class, satisfactory progress is seen as pupils learn about the differences between the past and the present. They have been looking at the differences between holidays in Victorian times, the 1950s and today and show an emerging sense of the passing of time as they talk and draw about the past. They know that clothes, transport and activities have changed, and a few pupils offer reasons for this. They suggest that the changes are because some things 'were not invented then'. Pupils answer simple questions about photographs of the 1950s, using words from the period.
71. In Key Stage 2, pupils continue to make satisfactory gains in learning about the past. They undertake a range of different history projects, including a study of the Romans and the Ancient Egyptians. They benefit from a 'Tudor Visit' in Year 5, and a museum visit in Year 6. During the week of the inspection, pupils in Year 6 visited a local hat museum. They showed that they had learned many facts about 'hats over time', as they discussed the differences on returning to school. Their historical knowledge improved because of the visit. They know that the past can be divided into different periods, and talked about some of the periods they have studied with a growing understanding of chronology.
72. The quality of teaching in history is satisfactory overall throughout the school. Teachers plan lessons appropriately by using subjects that the pupils can understand, for example learning about houses from history compared to their own. Preparation of resources in a few lessons, however, is unsatisfactory, which leads to restlessness and a lack of concentration. For example in one lesson, photographs were too small, and the material was not suited to the pupils' ages or ability. However, in most lessons teachers manage pupils well, and they are very interested in what is being taught. This was evident when pupils who were making food from World War Two became very involved and asked many thoughtful questions. History is used well to extend pupils' independent study through collecting information from people in their family. A good

variety of activities are consistently well used to help pupils learn, which include sequencing pictures of different holidays, comparing objects found by archaeologists with those we use now and brainstorming their own ideas during discussion.

73. The temporary co-ordinator manages the subject well. She has worked hard to put the curriculum in place, providing good documentation to support teachers in planning their lessons. The curriculum is tailored to meet the needs and interests of all pupils, it has a broad scope and best use is usually made of the recommended activities. The historical visits that take place promote pupils' knowledge and understanding, in particular their cultural understanding. The role of the co-ordinator does not include lesson observations, which has led to variations in the quality of how history is taught. In addition there is insufficient assessment to build systematically on individual pupils' skills as they progress through the school. The role is to be developed to include the monitoring of teaching as soon as a permanent co-ordinator is appointed. The amount and quality of history resources in the school are adequate and the school makes effective use of the library loan service and local historical places of interest.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

74. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are in line with the national averages in Key Stages 1 and 2. All pupils achieve very well in lessons. They enter the school at all ages with skills below average and have made very good progress in the subject over the past year. This is closely linked to the very good quality of resources and the very good teaching that pupils receive.
75. Pupils in Key Stage 1 can find and use information that they have previously saved. They use computers confidently to develop their own ideas. Almost all can use the mouse to make choices, and they give instructions purposefully. They use the right technical vocabulary as they talk about their work. Pupils quickly find the file that they want and add to it using good keyboard skills. For example, pupils used the mouse in a lesson observed during the inspection, to enlarge photographs so that they could choose which one to use. The photographs were from an earlier visit in which they used the digital camera.
76. Pupils in Key Stage 2 undertake straightforward lines of enquiry and refine and improve their work. They often work from design briefs and try to keep within given guidelines. For example, in Years 4 and 5, pupils were required to develop a logo for a biscuit company. However, they were limited to using three colours only, to create impact. They tried out several combinations before making a final choice. In Years 3 and 4, pupils worked towards an end product. For example, they had been given a design brief to create a 'sticker chart' for pupils in Key Stage 1. They showed clear understanding of the design brief and modified their final product, after testing it to make sure the stickers would fit. Pupils in Year 6 attain average standards and achieve very well as they develop their skills through a broad range of activities. During the inspection, they were using ICT for the results of a geography traffic survey. They showed clear understanding of both the impact of traffic on the local roads, as well as the need to create an impact in their work. They used a spreadsheet very well to help interpret their findings, choosing an appropriate style of graph to make interpretation easy.
77. The quality of teaching in ICT is very good overall and has some excellent features. For example, the subject is taught by a specialist. This has a very significant impact on the quality of pupils' learning, and on the amount that they achieve in lessons. The teacher has very good technical and computer skills, and is highly skilled in managing relationships and behaviour. These, combined with the very good use of very good

resources, ensure that the subject is developing very well and that pupils make significant amounts of progress over time. Lessons are planned to incorporate the kind of projects that these pupils find exciting. Pupils work from design briefs that make them feel as if they are doing important work. The links with other subjects are becoming stronger each term. In science and design and technology for example, the Internet is used to find information. Because the teacher knows pupils very well, every effort is made to support those who struggle. Hence, relationships and attitudes are positive. Occasionally learning is reduced because lessons are too short. Pupils become disappointed when there is a lack of time to see their own printed work.

78. The curriculum for ICT is very good and the very appropriate activities that are used to develop skills keep pupils interested and keen to work. Resources and accommodation are a real strength, and the very good, new suite has a positive impact on pupils' achievements. Assessment is in the early stages of development and there are no procedures for monitoring progress, other than good pupil knowledge. This does not affect learning currently, but does not provide sufficient detailed information to help plan as pupils move through the school.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

79. All pupils have begun to speak French for the first time this academic year and progress has been very rapid with every age group showing the confidence to speak well, understand what is said to them and continually increasing their understanding of the language. Pupils achieve very well in speaking French. Pupils show that they can count, have learned several colours and can reply to questions about name and age. They are able to greet people and say goodbye, Most pupils can also write short phrases such as 'c'est bleu', 'c'est jaune' etc.
80. The subject contributes well to literacy and numeracy skills through practice, for example in counting and speaking. The use of computers is well established for gathering information on France and French people, although using e-mail to make contact with French children does not take place.
81. The quality of teaching in French is very good. Of the two lessons seen one was excellent. The teacher is very well prepared and lesson planning is excellent. Routines are very well established so that the lesson starts immediately and pupils are very confident in knowing what to do. Quick-fire games to test pupils' vocabulary set a brisk pace, which keeps the interest levels in the work very high. Because the teacher uses the French language to teach the lesson, expressions such as 'J'ai un frere', 'J'ai une soeur' are spoken with an excellent accent by the pupils. Excellent lesson planning, with exciting resources and a wide variety of activities helps pupils to practice what they have learned, as well as gradually remembering new words and phrases. When they replied to 'Ca va?' pupils could answer well and then remembered to ask 'Et toi?' Learning support assistants join in and support pupils who need extra help in a highly skilled and effective manner so that all pupils make the very good progress observed. The excellent pupil management results in a warm respectful atmosphere, creating high self-esteem in the pupils, with good behaviour, confident responses and a real enjoyment of what they are doing.
82. Subject management is excellent. The subject has been developed from the beginning of this academic year and the co-ordinator has planned a systematic growth of skills for all age groups based upon very good resources, assessment and successful strategies for encouraging understanding. She has links with the local authority to

support her own development in providing a French language education of the highest quality.

## MUSIC

83. Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress in music in both key stages. Those with additional special educational needs, such as reading or attention difficulties, make equally good progress. Pupils enter the school with limited knowledge and skills, which are below average for their age, due mainly to disrupted schooling. Within a short time, pupils of all ages and abilities begin to catch up, demonstrating for example, skills in playing percussion instruments softly and loudly and at different speeds. They also make very good progress in knowing about the different instruments, which are played in orchestral pieces such as 'Verdi's Requiem' and Bach's 'Air on a G String'. Pupils in Key Stage 2 learn to read rhythm notation and can switch from one rhythm to another. The Year 6 pupils are restless at times, not paying attention to the more complicated rhythm work, which means that they make slower progress than other pupils in the school, although their progress is still good overall.
84. All pupils can play instruments as part of a performance and have great confidence and perseverance in this. Singing during hymn practice showed how well the pupils knew a range of hymns.
85. The subject contributes particularly well to numeracy as pupils learn to keep time, pace the length of beats and work out fractions of whole notes. Other subjects are linked, through history with music of the ancient Greeks and geography where pupils study the instruments from other countries. Music makes a substantial contribution to developing a spiritual experience for pupils, particularly in helping pupils understand the energy and celebratory nature of the music from other countries.
86. The quality of teaching is very good. The two specialist teachers have excellent subject knowledge, they create lively, interesting fast-paced lessons which hold pupils' interest. The very good behaviour management means that generally pupils try hard and keep going when something takes them time to learn. For example in one lesson, changing rhythm was proving difficult for some pupils, but with patience from the teacher and very good support from the learning support assistant, they had mastered the skill by the end. An excellent atmosphere is created in some lessons where lively music such as the Samba creates a spiritual element as pupils and teacher perform with enthusiasm and joy.
87. Subject management is very good. The co-ordinator has a very clear view of what needs to be developed in music and has made very good improvements since the beginning of the school year. With two music specialists, the subject staffing is excellent and is the main reason that pupils learn so quickly. The curriculum is good and provides a wide variety of experiences for the pupils, but there is limited opportunity for pupils to compose their own pieces, which means that this skill remains underdeveloped. However, a computer program for composing is beginning to address this shortcoming. Assessment is simple and allows the co-ordinator to develop the subject well. However, it is informal during the term and does not provide a clear overview of how pupils' individual skills develop from lesson to lesson.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

88. Pupils achieve well in physical education and also make good progress in developing sporting, dance and gymnastic skills. They make very good progress in learning how to swim. Development in the subject has been steady since the school opened and is poised to develop much faster since the new co-ordinator was appointed in May 2001.
89. Good achievement is seen in both key stages in gymnastics, for example where pupils learn to warm up, by stretching and rotating their ankles and wrists or stretching and then running. During the lunchbreak pupils practice their skills on the 'box' learning how to jump up onto their feet and land very neatly. Sports lessons, which involve pupils in learning how to 'dribble' a football using different parts of their feet, demonstrate how quickly some pupils pick up the necessary skills. Others need support and practice to master the movements, which they all eventually do well. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 become more fluent in their throwing and catching skills and with practice improved their ability to bat and control the ball. When swimming, the pupils in the Key Stage 1 class have made very good progress. None of these pupils could swim at the beginning of the year and now they can swim backwards and forwards, kicking with their legs, as well as swim under water. A few pupils at this very young age can swim a width of breaststroke and all of them can swim using 'doggy paddle'. These swimming skills are at least equal to those of pupils in mainstream schools. Records show that other pupils in the school also make very good progress in swimming, several achieving distance certificates.
90. The quality of teaching and learning in physical education is generally good throughout the school. When teaching is good, excellent relationships create confidence in the pupils and they are willing to try very hard. When pupils' behaviour is sometimes difficult, skilled management means that learning is not interrupted for other pupils. Much of the gymnastics and sports' skills undertaken in the school hall is sound, but a few teachers lack sufficient knowledge and skills to teach the subject to a higher level. This means that some pupils are not sufficiently challenged in a few classes and their skills do not progress as fast as could be expected. For example when batting a ball, some pupils could do it easily but were not given additional tasks to extend the skill further. In addition some lessons are too short and by the time pupils are changed and warmed up little time is left to practice other skills. The very positive contribution of learning support staff is significant in physical education and they plan and teach parts of some lessons, such as batting practice, where they have the skills. Pupils respond well to this variety of approach. The quality of teaching in swimming by a specialist at the baths is very good, based upon excellent experience and organisation. Specialist teaching in some lessons and at lunchtimes does provide challenge for pupils and progress in these sessions is very good. The very good discussion, where pupils reflect upon their performance and try to improve their technique, contributes to the good progress in most lessons.
91. Leadership and management in physical education are good. The school has identified the shortcomings in teacher skills and has recently appointed a co-ordinator to take the subject forward. Plans include the use of more specialist teaching, as well as training for staff and more outdoor activity. This shows a clear and appropriate direction for improvement. The assessment of pupils' skills is not consistent from class to class however, and lacks a formal clear overview of what pupils can do. It is satisfactory because teachers have a very good knowledge of their pupils to help them plan lessons to suit individual needs, but does not build a reliable picture for others to use. The number of pupils in the school is currently too small to play games such as football against other schools. In addition the resources, although satisfactory, are limited, with no ropes, no all-weather pitch and an uneven running track. However, the broad range



of physical activity offered by the school ensures that pupils do have sufficient opportunities to develop several talents.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

92. Pupils, including those with additional learning difficulties, achieve well overall in religious education. In the Key Stage 1 class, pupils make very good progress in understanding the meaning of Christian traditions and in Key Stage 2 pupils make good progress overall. The Key Stage 1 pupils are helped very well to become aware of themselves and through their natural curiosity, begin to understand what it means to be alive and part of the world. In one lesson for example, pupils took part in the role-play of a wedding, held by the local priest. This meant that very good progress was made in pupils' understanding of the meaning of promises and the importance of the marriage ceremony.
93. All year groups in Key Stage 2 make good progress in their understanding of themselves in relation to others. They learn effectively to appreciate and value the traditions, beliefs and festivals of other people. The pupils in Year 6 develop a sound appreciation of their responsibilities and the contribution made by others, including people with different values and religions. Throughout the school, pupils mature well in their understanding of the issues and there is a good development of their knowledge of different rituals and celebrations. However, pupils' knowledge of world religions is more limited and they are much more familiar with Christianity and Judaism.
94. The quality of teaching in religious education is good overall. It is very good in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. In Key Stage 1, pupils learn very well because they are helped to experience events firsthand. The wedding referred to above is a good example of how the teaching is based firmly in actual experience followed by discussion. Very good preparation and use of resources for pupils in Key stage 2, such as a world map, photographs and books, holds pupils' fascination, for example about the idea of how far from their own homes Jesus lived. Teachers' excellent relationships with pupils give them confidence to contribute their own experiences of travel. Learning support assistants contribute very well to managing any difficult behaviour so that other pupils in the class continue to learn without interruption. In addition, clear engaging story reading in one lesson held pupils' attention well whilst they learned how St Augustine was able to spread the word of Christianity. In a few lessons a lack of variety in teaching strategies leads to a slow pace and restless behaviour for the Year 6 pupils.
95. Leadership and management of the subject are good and provide a clear appropriate direction for development. The new co-ordinator has identified the need for a broader curriculum, especially for more teaching of other faiths. Currently the subject does not help pupils to learn sufficiently about other cultures and religions, which reflect accurately the world in which they live. The quality of teaching and learning is well monitored, although assessment of individual pupils' achievements is not consistent from class to class, which makes subject monitoring less efficient. Resources, although satisfactory, are limited, particularly for objects that help pupils to recognise symbols used by other religions.