

INSPECTION REPORT

MAPLEFIELDS SCHOOL

Corby

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 131186

Headteacher: Lynda Morgan

Reporting inspector: Michael McDowell
1405

Dates of inspection: 29th January – 1st February 2001

Inspection number: 230102

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	School Place, Gainsborough Road, Corby, Northamptonshire
Postcode:	NN18 0QP
Telephone number:	01536 409040
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. Ken Gosland
Date of previous inspection:	None

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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1405	Michael McDowell	Registered inspector	English as an additional language, Science, Physical education, Religious education	How high are standards? The school's results and achievements. How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9052	Helen Barter	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for it pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
11239	Sue Flockton	Team inspector	Equal opportunities, English, Art, Geography, History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
20745	David Williams	Team inspector	Under fives, Special educational needs, Mathematics, Information and communications technology, Design and technology, Music	Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development, How well are the pupils taught?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Maplefields is a primary special school for pupils aged 4 to 11 who have severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. All the pupils have statements of special educational need and they are drawn from the eastern part of the county of Northamptonshire. Occasionally pupils from neighbouring counties are admitted. Daily transport to the school is organised by the LEA.

The school has been open for just over 2 years and numbers on roll are steadily increasing. At present there are 23 pupils – 3 girls and 20 boys. There is only a small number of black pupils, the majority is white. Attainment on entry is well below average and while most pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties, a number have additional special educational needs. These include severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder, and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder. About a half of the pupils are entitled to free school meals and about a quarter are cared for by the local authority.

The school aims to motivate children who have failed to respond to their past experience of education by providing a stimulating but secure, calm and caring learning environment. There is direct teaching of social and behavioural skills to help children develop respect for themselves, to follow rules, form relationships and become integrated and accepted members of society.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school has made a very good start in developing provision for pupils with serious emotional and behavioural difficulties. It provides very good value for money. It is highly effective in meeting the needs of its pupils. Teaching is of a very high standard and pupils achieve well. They make good progress in English and mathematics and in science their progress is very good. They also make very good progress in personal, social and health education and towards achieving the personal development targets that are set for them. The head teacher provides excellent leadership and is very well supported by those other staff members in leadership roles.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching is very good and leads to very good learning.
- Careful and meticulous records of pupils' behaviour enable support and guidance to be effectively targeted to bring about change.
- Very good provision for pupils' personal and social development leads pupils to gain understanding of how to recognise and manage their feelings and come to understand how their actions affect others.
- Very good relationships between staff and pupils are a positive factor in prompting pupils to try their best.
- There is high commitment by staff to the schools' values and there is a strong desire to achieve success in meeting the needs of pupils.
- There is excellent leadership provided by the head teacher and very good support from staff in senior posts.

What could be improved

There are no issues of such significance that the school should address them as a matter of priority. Some minor issues for development are mentioned in the body of the text and these are listed in Part B of the report.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has not previously been inspected.

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

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

The school does not set targets in literacy and numeracy, both because of the special educational needs of the pupils and because it has not been open long enough to establish sufficient data to do this. It does however set appropriate additional targets for pupils' personal development that it is on course to achieve. Achievement in English and mathematics is good and in science it is very good. Pupils also make very good progress in physical education, (PE), in personal, social and health education, (PSHE), and towards the targets set for them at Annual Reviews and in their IEPs.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good; pupils have positive attitudes and enjoy coming to school. When, because of their emotional and behavioural difficulties, some show negative attitudes, the school's excellent support and guidance ensures that this is a temporary state.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good; behaviour in the great majority of lessons is good which has a positive effect on pupils' learning and personal development. On journeys outside the school behaviour is very good. Negative behaviour in some individuals is very well managed.
Personal development and relationships	Good; pupils make good progress towards the personal goals that are set for them and develop greater ability to relate to others of their own age and to adults. Relationships between adults who work in the school and pupils are very positive.
Attendance	Very good; there is little unexplained or unauthorised absence and attendance is high for schools of this kind.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall		Very Good		

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

Teaching is very good overall; in lessons observed 29.4% were excellent, 35.2% were very good, 29.4% were good and 6% were satisfactory. Teaching was good in English and mathematics, and very good in science and physical education. In personal, social and health education it was excellent. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their pupils and very good knowledge of their subjects. They inform their planning with strong awareness of the learning and behavioural characteristics of their pupils and manage their classrooms very well. There is great consistency in the way in which they respond to the challenging behaviour of pupils and this is managed very well by all staff. These strengths enable learning to take place in a secure environment and pupils make good progress because of it. Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy follow National Guidelines and are effective. Teaching is carefully matched to the needs of the pupils and enables pupils of all ability levels to make gains.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good; pupils have a good range of opportunities within the taught and wider curriculum. The curriculum offered is well developed to meet the need of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and very good use is made of contact outside of school to support this.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good; overall provision for social, moral and cultural development leads to good personal development, however, too few opportunities for spiritual development are planned or offered.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good; the school has effective procedures to ensure the health and safety of its pupils and it supports and guides them very well enabling them to improve their behaviour and to take advantage of the educational opportunities it provides. It is vigilant in applying its procedures for child protection. At present, as a priority, it is seeking to develop the best means of assessing what pupils know, understand and can do within each subject and the ways in which this information can be used to greatest effect when planning teaching. Procedures for gaining and recording information about pupils' personal development are of very high quality and this information is used very effectively.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good; the head provides excellent leadership and she is very well supported by senior staff members who ably carry out their responsibilities Accommodation is very good and well used as are resources for learning which support the curriculum well. There are sufficient appropriately qualified and experienced staff to meet the requirements of the curriculum and the pupils' needs.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Good; the governors are fully aware of the school's strengths and of those areas that are in need of development; they carry out their statutory duties well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good; the school has comprehensive systems for keeping its performance under review and uses these to plan its future development.
The strategic use of resources	Good; the school uses its resources to further its well planned developmental priorities. In making its spending decisions it is aware of the need to ensure that it obtains the best 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"> • They are well informed about their child's progress. • The school is approachable. • They think the school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some did not approve of the amount of homework given. • Some felt that behaviour caused concern.

The school works very well in partnership with parents. Parents think very highly of the school and it provides them with clear and relevant information about their children's progress. The school has sought the views of parents in a survey and as a result is revising its procedures for providing work for pupils to do at home. Links with parents are particularly helpful in establishing consistency between home and school in the management of children's behaviour. The impact of the home on children's learning is most marked where parents and school act in harmony to manage challenging behaviour. In the view of the inspection team, parents' views about the school are generally well founded. It is approachable and very well led and managed and they are given good information about their children's progress. The school is aware that homework should be given when this is requested. Pupils are admitted to the school because their behaviour causes concern. The school manages their behaviour very well.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Achievement is good; pupils aged 5 to 11 enter the school at any time during the school year. They have all had unsuccessful and often fragmented experience of education elsewhere, and some have not been in a school for a substantial length of time. All have severe emotional and behavioural difficulties and a number have additional learning difficulties. Over time they are enabled to stabilise their behaviour so that they can take advantage of the very good quality of education the school offers. They make notable gains in relation to their previous attainment.

2. In English, achievement is good across the age range. Most pupils enter the school with weak reading and writing skills and with little ability to listen effectively and talk purposefully. By the time they are ready to leave, a minority has reached the national average level in reading and all have improved their literacy and oracy skills to a marked extent. Listening to and taking account of what others say poses a particular challenge to pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties but they successfully learn to take turns, listen carefully and ask and answer questions clearly. Pupils, including those with greater learning difficulties, can read and understand simple passages and most read fluently and with understanding. Writing skills develop more slowly and many pupils, including those in their final year, need support with spelling. Higher attaining pupils, however, write well and draft and re-draft their work. Overall achievement in writing is satisfactory.

3. Pupils make very good progress in their mathematics lessons and, over time, their progress is good. A minority reaches a standard equivalent to the national average by the time they are 11, and overall, attainment by this age is higher than it is in similar schools nationally. By the age of 7, pupils add and subtract numbers to ten, and use comparative language such as "largest" and "smallest". By the age of 11 the higher attaining pupils calculate accurately using the four rules of number, know their tables, are familiar with the names of geometrical figures and can weigh, measure and use money confidently.

4. Achievement in science is very good across the age range. Pupils aged 7 to 9 have very good knowledge of materials and their properties and can name and describe them. Pupils aged 10 to 11 understand the investigative process, make accurate observations of simple phenomena and record their findings accurately.

5. In personal, social and health education, pupils take full advantage of the excellent opportunities provided to improve their awareness of themselves and how best to control their impulses. They learn of the impact that their actions have on others. Their achievement is very good.

6. There is very good achievement across the age range in physical education. In history, achievement in lessons is good but, over time, it is satisfactory. Achievement of pupils of all ages is satisfactory in geography, design and technology, music and information and communication technology. Achievement is also satisfactory in religious education. In art there is good achievement in lessons but too little evidence to form a judgement about achievement over time.

7. The school, which was opened in the last two years, has insufficient data to set targets for achievement in the curriculum. However, it sets targets for pupils' personal development and is on course to achieve these. Pupils make very good progress towards the individual targets set for them in behaviour and education plans. Progress is also good towards the broad objectives set for them at the annual review of their statements of special educational need.

8. In its initial phase the school has emphasised the development of a secure methodology for managing and improving pupils' behaviour and alleviating their emotional difficulties. English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education were the curriculum areas on which initial focus fell. Other subjects are less well established and this is reflected in the discrepant achievement generally noted between core and foundation subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils' attitudes to school are good and so is their behaviour and personal development. Their attendance is very good.

10. Pupils have positive attitudes to school and to learning. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Parents agree that this is so. It offers a very secure environment both in terms of personal support and safety. The school's ethos encourages pupils to have good attitudes to learning and for improving their behaviour. Pupils accept that from time to time other pupils will become very angry or distressed. They know not to interfere if a peer is having a bad day. Pupils with additional special educational needs respond well to the additional support given to them. They have good and, frequently very good relationships, with teachers and support assistants. In lessons, pupils are attentive and in most cases they settle quickly to their work. Pupils' attitudes are best when lessons are challenging, for example in physical education where they are kept very active and enjoy extending their physical skills. Pupils respond well to the regular structured school day. Lunchtime clubs give pupils opportunities for making choices. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good in whole school assemblies and circle times. On these occasions pupils have a strong sense of community. They know they must respond with high standards of behaviour and personal control. Pupils are happy when they meet their behaviour targets and receive the appropriate sticker or certificate as a reward. Equally, they are accepting when personal targets are not met and no reward is given. Overall, pupils make very good progress toward the personal goals that are set for them and develop an improved ability to relate to others of their own age and to adults.

11. The behaviour of most pupils is good most of the time and it has a positive effect on their learning and personal development. Pupils were seen to work best and make best progress when they were taught as a whole class. In these lessons pupils showed eagerness and confidence when answering questions, in discussions and when summarising their findings in plenary sessions. For example, in a music lesson, with younger pupils at Key Stage 2, pupils were very keen to demonstrate that they had achieved an understanding of "pitch" by identifying high and low notes played by the teacher. They recalled the names of a range of percussion instruments. They knew the materials from which instruments had been made. They were aware that notation was linked to the alphabet. Very occasionally, in lessons, pupils' behaviour is unsatisfactory. This arises, most frequently, when pupils have only recently been admitted to the school. They are not yet able to conform to the school's structured reward system. Trusting relationships are not yet established. Of necessity, in this situation, whole group teaching is not feasible and pupils are taught individually for much of the lesson. On journeys outside the school the behaviour of pupils is very good.

12. Pupils' personal development is good as a result of the quality of relationships throughout the school. There are very good relationships between staff and pupils. This is a positive factor in prompting pupils to try their best. Pupils respond well to the consistency of the school's procedures and especially to the integrity of teachers and support staff who respond to each pupil in a consistent and unflappable manner. Pupils know that staff care. However, testing the stability and quality of these relationships is a regular part of the daily regime. Relationships between boys and girls and between pupils of differing special needs are good. In circle times and in assemblies pupils are given frequent opportunities to think about their behaviour, about relationships and the effect that their actions have on others. Direct teaching of social and behavioural skills helps pupils to develop respect for themselves, to follow rules, form relationships and become integrated and accepted members of society. There is no evidence of any bullying or oppressive behaviour within the school. Pupils are given a satisfactory range of opportunities to show initiative and to take personal responsibility. Pupils take registers to the office. In lessons they are given opportunities to take responsibility; for example, in a food technology lesson pupils are responsible for washing up and for putting away all equipment and ingredients. They do this efficiently and carefully.

13. The level of exclusions during the past year is acceptable and reflects the necessity to exclude, for short periods, those pupils who are very disruptive in lessons or who are violent towards members of staff.

14. Attendance is very good and this suggests that pupils enjoy coming to school. Pupils generally arrive on time, with any lateness due to traffic delays where buses and taxis have to make journeys in difficult weather conditions. Pupils have very good attendance records and there is very little unauthorised absence. This is a significant improvement for many pupils, some of whom have been out of school for an extended period of time before coming to Maplefields School. Pupils' very good attendance means that there is little disruption to their learning and this has a very good impact on the progress that they make.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of teaching is very good throughout the school. In nine out of every ten lessons teaching is good or better. In well over half of lessons teaching is very good or better. In almost a third of lessons teaching is excellent. No teaching is unsatisfactory and infrequently it is just satisfactory. The high quality of teaching is recognised by parents. The quality of pupils' learning closely reflects the quality of teaching throughout the school. Pupils' learning is very good. Excellent lessons occur when teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subject, plan to meet the individual needs of pupils and when pupils' demanding behaviours are managed with great skill. Where, very occasionally, teaching is just satisfactory lessons lack clear learning objectives and the management of pupils' behaviour falls below the very high standard normally practised.

16. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of pupils' needs and their management of pupils' behaviour is excellent. A whole school approach to management of behaviour has been agreed and implemented. Within lessons teachers use this consistently. As a result pupils gain confidence and learning is enhanced. Relationships between teachers, learning support staff and pupils are very good. All teachers know pupils very well as individuals. They have an excellent understanding each pupil's particular learning and behavioural difficulties. These are well documented in pupils' personal records. Progress towards achieving behavioural targets is reviewed regularly each day. Pupils' progress in each subject area is recorded in their personal files. The quality and use of on-going assessment is good. Although the use of homework is satisfactory, policy and practice are not explicit.

17. Teachers have excellent knowledge of the subjects they teach. Their lesson plans relate well to the school's schemes of work. Teachers plan work at a level that ensures success. Lessons are well pitched to improve the achievements of pupils. Pupils enjoy the structure and the challenge. Lessons are well planned to use time effectively and to give pupils every opportunity to move their learning and knowledge forward.

18. The use of resources to support pupils' learning is very good. Teachers make very good use of the highly skilled learning support assistants to enhance the learning of pupils. Special support assistants, (SSAs), are also used very well to support individual pupils when they are off task or having severe behavioural outbursts. They are very well trained and give pupils the consistency required to improve behaviour and relationships. This has a beneficial effect on the quality of learning and the achievements of pupils. Additional specialist staff are employed to work together with teachers to further improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school. For example, a teacher specialising in information and communication technology, (ICT), advises on equipment and completes baseline assessments of pupils. A play therapist is employed by the school to give additional support to teachers and pupils. Through this provision pupils are enabled to not only improve their play skills but also to gain insights into their own behaviour and learn to modify it. They are then more likely to come to terms those issues in their lives with which they have experienced great difficulty and emotional upset. Teachers make very good use of these additional staffing resources and where possible incorporate the advice given to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' learning and social adjustment.

19. The teaching of basic skills in literacy is good and pupils make good progress. For example, younger pupils at Key Stage 2 listen attentively to the story of the "Three Little Pigs." When re-telling the story pupils can recall of the events and suggest their own ending to the story. They speak clearly, think logically and remember well. Throughout the lesson, the teacher uses an excellent range of strategies to engage the attention of the pupils and to make them think. The excellent quality of relationships, the very good knowledge of the National Literacy Scheme and the excellent range of control strategies lead to positive gains in learning. Teachers make good use of their knowledge of the National Literacy Scheme in other lessons; for example, in a music lesson at Key Stage 2 the teacher uses skilful questioning to encourage pupils to discuss the differences in a range of instruments. Pupils listen carefully and consider their answer before replying.

20. The teaching of basic numeracy skills is very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the National Numeracy Strategy and pupils respond very well to the structure of these lessons. They enjoy counting, adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing and measuring. Teachers ensure that pupils are given opportunities to use their knowledge in other lessons. For example, in a food technology lesson pupils used their skills to weigh ingredients and to estimate the quantity of greaseproof paper required to line a tin. They carefully noted the time by which the mixture should be cooked.

21. Pupils with additional special educational needs receive appropriate teaching and their achievements are good. On occasions the teaching of pupils with additional special educational needs is excellent. For example, a teacher working with a pupil with severe learning difficulties ensured that the objectives for the lesson were planned in very small steps to enable the pupils to make progress and to experience success at every stage. Tangible rewards were used appropriately to emphasise success and achievement. Activities were changed frequently to maintain the pupil's interest. The teacher's very detailed understanding of the pupil's mood swings was used very skilfully to avoid confrontational outbursts. As a consequence learning was reinforced. The pupil remained happy and felt successful. Excellent progress was made. The use of ICT to ensure equality of access for

pupils with additional special educational needs has only recently been introduced. However, plans for the development of ICT include the provision of an appropriate range of special switches and software programmes.

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

22. Pupils are provided with a good range of learning opportunities, within the taught and wider curricula, which clearly reflects the aims of the school. The taught curriculum provided meets statutory requirements and gives pupils a broad experience of all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The curriculum offered is particularly relevant to the needs of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties with an appropriate emphasis on personal, social and health education, which gives a high priority to pupils' personal development. The curriculum for personal, social and health education includes taught lessons, and circle time, both of which are part of a wider behaviour curriculum which is being developed in the school and which gives pupils very good opportunities to develop their personal and social skills. The personal, social and health education curriculum includes the required teaching on drug misuse. There is not yet a policy for the teaching of sex education, but the governors have agreed that this should be part of the curriculum and there are plans for the development of a policy.

23. Although an equal opportunities policy has not yet been written, there is a clear statement in the school prospectus which emphasises the school's commitment to equal opportunities for all. Particular attention is paid to ensuring equal access to the curriculum for the small number of girls in the school. Overall, good provision is made for pupils with additional special educational needs such as severe learning difficulties, although the needs of pupils with specific literacy difficulties have yet to be fully addressed.

24. One of the senior staff acts as curriculum team leader, and there are co-ordinators for all curriculum subjects. Policies have been written for all subjects and detailed planning is being developed based on the National Curriculum. A very useful system has been developed for the curriculum co-ordinators to monitor the curriculum to ensure that pupils are taught the full range of topics in each subject. Foundation subjects are planned on a two-year cycle, which helps to ensure that pupils make progress within each subject area. Initial consideration is being given as to the curriculum cycle for the pupils of lower ability who may stay in one class for more than two years. The National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies have been well adapted to meet the needs of pupils and are being effectively implemented.

25. The school provides many opportunities to enrich the curriculum and provision for extra curricular activities is good. While the transport system limits opportunities after school, there are many opportunities at lunch times to participate in various clubs such as computers, outdoor and indoor games, and a video club.

26. The school has good links with the community, which make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Use is made of the local area for a variety of educational visits; for example, to a farm and to Wicksteed Park. Horse riding for pupils is provided through the Riding for the Disabled group. Pupils take part in events such as the Corby country dance festival. Visitors to the school have included a number of theatre groups. The community policeman and representatives of the fire service provide sessions on issues such as safety. The British Conservation Trust volunteers are involved in a project to develop the school grounds, and pupils have been involved in planning different areas of the site. There are close links with the neighbouring old people's home at Swan Gardens, and pupils visit the residents at Christmas, and entertain them in school at times such as Harvest Festival.

27. The school has well organised and valuable links with other local schools. An outreach project has been developed involving four primary schools. Staff from Maplefields work with these schools to help them to develop strategies for managing pupils' behaviour and developing their personal and social skills. A further project in the local Education Action Zone, allows staff from Maplefields to work with staff in three schools on finding ways to maintain pupils at risk of exclusion in their mainstream schools. It is hoped to extend both these projects in the future. Contacts with a local primary school are also being developed as staff work to re-integrate a pupil from Maplefields into mainstream school. There are also close links with special schools, through staff and head teachers meeting and planning together. For example, the behaviour curriculum is being developed with another primary school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils also participate in events at other special schools; for example, a music extravaganza, a drama project, a design day, and various sporting activities.

28. The school aims to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all its pupils, in particular to help children develop a respect for themselves and for others, in order that they can follow rules and become integrated and accepted members of society who can form positive relationships. In this context, very good provision is made for social development, while that for pupils' moral and cultural development is good, and for spiritual development is satisfactory. There is, as yet, no policy for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, so that planned opportunities, particularly for spiritual development, are not yet in place.

29. Pupils attend whole school assemblies on three days in the week and take part in class assemblies on the other two days. These assemblies fulfil the statutory criteria. They cover a range of subjects, giving opportunities for spiritual development, as well as linking to moral and cultural development. For example, during the inspection, assemblies were seen which gave pupils the opportunity to talk about and reflect on the need to think before speaking or acting. They considered how their actions reflect the kind of people they are. Other topics included having respect for others, and trusting others. Throughout the year, assemblies are often linked to topics in Religious Education, such as the stories of Creation and of Noah's Ark. Festivals, such as Christmas and Easter, are celebrated and reflected on. Pupils are made aware of festivals in other religions and cultures such as Diwali and Chinese New Year. While these assemblies provide a good basis for spiritual development, other opportunities within the curriculum are often not followed up.

30. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. Pupils are encouraged to understand the difference between right and wrong. They are made aware of the rules of the school which are displayed on the walls of classrooms, and many have the traffic light system which reminds pupils to stop and think before acting. All adults are good role models, and make use of opportunities such as mealtimes, clubs and circle time to reinforce the attitudes, which the school promotes. Good behaviour is reinforced by consistent use of praise and reward, such as the Maple Leaf system and certificates, which most pupils try hard to earn. When pupils lose control of their behaviour there are clear sanctions, and these, together with guidance and play therapy, help pupils to develop more appropriate behaviours.

31. The very good provision for pupils' social development underpins the work of the school. The pupils are treated with respect, which reflects the very good relationships. Mealtimes are pleasant, social experiences and pupils are encouraged to be polite and to take turns. Pupils begin to develop responsibility as they help to get equipment ready for lessons or to take the registers to the office. Pupils are encouraged to help others by raising money for charity or by visiting the old peoples' residence. Good displays around the school celebrate pupils' work and achievements, and help to raise pupils' self esteem.

32. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their cultural awareness. Through their work in English, they are introduced to different authors and to a variety of literature, such as stories, poetry and plays. Opportunities to watch theatre groups have also contributed to this aspect of their development. An appreciation of the work of European artists is encouraged through art, and pupils have produced paintings based on African art. Opportunities for listening to the work of different composers are provided in music lessons, and at the beginnings and ends of assemblies. Pupils are made aware of the multi-cultural nature of society when they hear about festivals such as Diwali and the Chinese New Year.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. The school provides a very safe, caring and supportive environment for pupils in which they are helped to improve their behaviour and to take advantage of the educational opportunities provided. Parents have high regard for the work of the school in helping their children to behave well and to become mature and responsible. All of the parents who responded to the questionnaire said that their children like coming to school and that they find it easy to approach the school if they have any questions or problems. Individual parents commented that the school is very successful in its strategies to manage and improve pupils' behaviour and that the school offers very good levels of support to parents and children.

34. The school offers pupils a very high standard of pastoral care and support. There are very good procedures in place to ensure that pupils attend school whenever possible and to closely monitor any unexplained absences. The educational welfare officer gives very good support to the school, pupils and their parents and carers to ensure that there is as little disruption to pupils' learning as possible and to help pupils settle into school life. All staff have a very good understanding of pupils' backgrounds and the difficulties that they experience in their lives. They are clear about the correct procedures for reporting any concerns they may have about a pupil's welfare. Staff have very good awareness of child protection issues that may affect a pupil's well being, ensure that confidential records are kept of concerns and are well supported by outside agencies. The school has very good links with the educational psychology service and receives high quality support from it.

35. The school provides pupils with a safe, clean and well-maintained environment. The site supervisor, with the headteacher, ensures that any risk to pupils and staff is minimised by carrying out immediate repairs. Regular health and safety checks and reviews are completed so that any potential hazards to staff or pupils are assessed and dealt with; for example, the evacuation procedures in the event of a fire. Staff are very caring when pupils are distressed or feeling unwell. There is an appropriate number of trained first-aid staff for the numbers of pupils in the school.

36. The school's approach to monitoring and improving pupils' behaviour is very good. All staff have very clear expectations of pupils and are consistent in the way in which they reward good behaviour and sanction inappropriate behaviour. There are precise guidelines for the use of any physical control. Staff are well trained in its use and show very good responsibility for ensuring that procedures and practice are carried out according to the guidelines when pupils' behaviour is such that they are at risk of harming themselves or others. The consistency of approach from all staff has a very good effect on pupils' behaviour. Instructions from staff are clear, precise and non-confrontational and help pupils to modify and make progress in their behaviour.

37. The links made by staff to pupils' individual targets in their behaviour management plans gives them a very clear message about what constitutes acceptable standards of behaviour and attitudes towards others. Pupils value highly the award of stickers, maple leaves and certificates and understand when their behaviour is being closely monitored through the use of the 'traffic light' system of smiling and sad faces. The quality of relationships between staff and pupils has a very significant impact on pupils' behaviour. Pupils are treated with care and respect within clear boundaries and high expectations that they will make improvements.

38. The monitoring of pupils' academic progress through assessment and record keeping is at an early stage of development and forms part of the school development plan. When pupils enter the school, baseline assessment of their reading and spelling skills is undertaken, and this is updated regularly. At present, different systems are in place for on-going assessment, as teachers have been using different formats in order to identify the most effective system. Each year, teachers assess pupils against the level descriptors in the National Curriculum to identify the level at which they are working and the progress which they have made. A new system of recording on-going progress has recently been introduced, to show the objectives and outcomes for each module of learning. This is being used effectively by some teachers but is not yet used consistently. The assessment and evaluation of lessons is also inconsistent. In some cases, teachers evaluate each lesson on their daily or weekly lesson plans, but some rely heavily on what they recall about pupils' learning. The usefulness of on-going assessment is dependent on clarity of objectives in lesson plans. Where objectives are clear, the assessments are specific, but where objectives are confused with activities, the assessment tends to be very general.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39. In the time since it opened, the school has developed a good partnership with parents and carers. It is working effectively with them to manage and improve pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning.

40. Those parents and carers who completed questionnaires before the inspection showed that they are very positive about the school and its work. Most feel that their children are making good progress because of the good quality of teaching and the school's expectations that their children will work hard and do their best. Parents and carers are pleased that the school works closely with them and that it is easy for them to ask questions or to discuss any concerns. All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire say that the school is well led and managed. Overall, parents and carers have very good views of the school although some are concerned about the amount of homework that their child receives. The school has already identified this as a concern through its own survey. It is currently developing activity packs for those parents and carers who wish to encourage and support their child's learning at home.

41. The school's staff recognise the importance of parental involvement in supporting their children at school and at home and they work hard to encourage this. As nearly all pupils come to school by taxi or bus, the home-school diary is seen as a vital means of communication. Staff, parents and carers use this well to relay messages and to share information about pupils' behaviour and progress. All parents and carers are informed and involved in the setting up of their child's individual behaviour and education plans and in planning for their classroom support. There are regular opportunities for staff and parents to meet to update these plans, so that parents are fully aware of the school's strategies for working with their child and improving their standards of behaviour. The work that the school does with parents and carers is effective in helping them to understand their child's difficulties and to offer them support in establishing consistency between home and school in the

management of children's behaviour.

42. The quality of information that is provided for parents and carers is good. Pupils' end of year reports give good information about their progress in all areas of the curriculum, particularly in English and mathematics, and the progress that has been made against specific targets for behaviour set by the school. Staff place a high priority on regular communication with parents and carers through the home-school books, telephone calls, and informative newsletters. They encourage them to visit the school and to see their children's work, as well as sending them formal invitations to review meetings and consultations. There is a very good induction programme for parents and carers of children who are new to the school which offers reassurance to those who are concerned about their child's placement, sometimes because their child has been out of school for an extended period following exclusion.

43. As the school develops, it is keen to gain the views of parents and carers in all areas of its work. A recent survey showed that parents are very pleased with what it provides and the resulting improvement in their child's behaviour, attendance and attitudes to school. It has acted positively to criticisms on homework and has been positive in addressing individual concerns such as the necessary use of physical control. It is continuing to develop its links with parents and carers through the work of the play therapist who works closely with individual parents to provide strategies for continuing the work on behaviour management at home. A weekly 'helpline' telephone service is used well by some parents, while others have attended small support groups. There are regular opportunities for parents to come to school for concerts, assemblies and fundraising events and these are, mostly, well supported.

44. The impact of the partnership between home and school on children's learning is most marked where parents and carers act in harmony with the school to manage challenging behaviour. However, the school recognises that there is still more work to be done in encouraging some parents to be more closely involved in supporting their children at home and school. This is developing well because the school is pro-active and positive in its development of communication and support for pupils and their families.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

45. This new school, which has been established during the past two years, has rapidly developed very effective practices to meet the needs of its pupils and is speedily developing and refining the curriculum it offers. The major factor in this success is the excellent leadership provided by the head teacher. She brings to her headship a clear vision of the educational purpose the school must achieve and a fund of experience from past leadership roles. Others in senior positions in the school contribute very strongly to the school's successful start and its achievements. A strong team ethos has been established and all members of the school staff make a valued contribution. In this and in the learning environment it has established, the school realises its aims.

46. There are very good systems for monitoring teaching and learning. Teaching is evaluated and targets are set under the performance management policy that was recently put in place.

47. The school has been required to develop rapidly. In doing this it has been aided by carefully chosen priorities. Initial emphasis has, properly, been put on establishing a system that makes the management of very challenging pupils possible and at the same time enables pupils to acknowledge their difficulties and start to amend their behaviour. In coming months, a greater emphasis will be placed on ensuring that the curriculum is full and stimulating and that pupils' learning is accurately assessed and carefully recorded.

48. There is great enthusiasm for the work being undertaken, and this shared by all staff members. The senior managers and the staff group, alike, are confident about their purpose and have a strong will to succeed. Their capacity to succeed is very high.

49. The governors discharge their duties well. They are aware of current strengths and weaknesses and they ensure that the school makes efficient use of its finances and resources by playing a full part in budget setting and maintaining an overview of expenditure. There is an appropriate committee structure in place, which enables governors to be aware of developments in the curriculum or of any difficulties that are encountered in managing the behaviour of the pupils. The governors include members who have good personal professional experience in education and others with invaluable experience in management and in the workings of the local authority. The school makes effective use of information systems in its administration.

50. The school has sufficient well qualified and experienced teachers to meet the needs of the curriculum offered. In addition to the class teachers, there is a teacher who is the outreach co-ordinator, who both liaises with mainstream schools in the outreach project, and provides cover for other teachers to work with these schools. An additional teacher provides support to a pupil with severe learning difficulties. The employment of a play therapist provides good support for working with some pupils to address their emotional and behavioural needs. There is a good number of special support assistants, (SSAs), three of whom are trained nursery nurses. These SSAs support pupils both in dealing with behavioural issues and in helping them to access the curriculum. They attend training provided by the school and the local education authority, and some have first aid training. Induction of teachers and SSAs new to the school is very good. Teachers have a mentor who meets with them regularly to ensure that they are aware of the school's policies and procedures and are developing the skills necessary to work with pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. All staff have regular training, and this is linked carefully to the needs of the school as described in its development plan. A system of Performance Management has been introduced, and this is effectively identifying targets for teachers which support both the school's development and their own professional development.

51. The quality of the accommodation is very good and has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes to their learning. There is a sufficient number of rooms, other than a music room, to allow for the range of subjects being taught. Rooms are large enough to allow for different arrangements for different activities, and for areas to be screened, where appropriate, to help pupils' concentration and to avoid behavioural problems. The library area, which was originally an open plan space, has recently been turned to a small room, which has enhanced its effectiveness, as pupils using it are no longer distracted by movement around the school. The quality of the provision is enhanced by attractive displays in many areas. The grounds of the school are being developed with the help of volunteers from the British Conservation Trust.

52. The range and quality of resources is good overall and for information and communications technology and physical education is very good. There is a need for more artefacts to support the curriculum in religious education. Resources are well used and have a positive effect on the quality of education provided. Resources for teaching literacy and numeracy are being developed well, and new books, particularly "big books" are used effectively to stimulate pupils' interest. Most resources are well organised, both in classrooms and in the resource room. Resource packs for a number of subjects are being developed to make resources readily accessible.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

53. The school has made a very good start since it was established two years ago. It has phased its priorities for development sensibly so that by the end of this year all aspects of its work will be fully “on stream”. There are no issues of such importance that they must be addressed immediately in response to this inspection. There are, however, some more minor matters that the school may wish to take into consideration when it is drawing up its action plan. These are listed below against the paragraph numbers, which show their position in the report.

Minor issues

- Develop the curriculum and assessment of those subjects, which are less well established and end discrepant achievement. (Paragraph 8).
- Improve provision for pupils with literacy difficulties. (Paragraphs 23 and 56).
- Put in place a policy for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. (Paragraph 28).
- Make more use of opportunities for spiritual development. (Paragraph 29).
- Ensure that in teachers’ plans, learning objectives are clear. (Paragraph 38).
- Improve resources for religious education. (Paragraphs 52 and 100).
- Implement a suitable system for assessment and recording in art. (Paragraph 73).
- Make for use of information and communication technology and the local area in history. (Paragraph 82).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	34
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
29.4	35.2	29.4	6.0	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	Y1– Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	23
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	10

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	Y1 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	23
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	23

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.1
National comparative data	11.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	8.2

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	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	13
Any other minority ethnic group	9

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	2	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.

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: Y1 – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	2.8
Average class size	6

Education support staff: Y1– Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	346

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	373,827
Total expenditure	361,544
Expenditure per pupil	15,720
Balance brought forward from previous year	15,290
Balance carried forward to next year	27,573

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	23
Number of questionnaires returned	12

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	83	17	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	50	0	8	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	33	17	0	25
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	17	0	25	33
The teaching is good.	83	17	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	92	8	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	92	8	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	25	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	83	17	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	100	0	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	33	0	0	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	67	17	0	0	17

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

ENGLISH

54. Pupils' achievements in English are good. Most pupils enter the school with limited reading and communication skills due both to their special educational needs and to chequered patterns of school attendance. The good progress which pupils are making is reflected in the Key Stage 2 SATs results last summer. Of the four pupils who sat these tests, two achieved level 3 and two reached level two. The two pupils whose overall score was level 3, reached level 4 (the national average score) for reading. Although the overall scores were below national norms, these results represent good progress.

55. Pupils' speaking skills develop well as they move through the school. Listening skills are developing well in some situations but, because of their special educational needs, pupils sometimes find it difficult to listen quietly and to take turns in discussions. Pupils are encouraged to listen carefully to adults and to one another, and are generally able to listen attentively while teachers read stories or give instructions. They answer questions about the stories and about what they are doing in lessons. Although, for less able pupils, this may be in single words or short phrases, they show that they have listened to, and understood, what they have been told. By the end of Key Stage 2 more able pupils make use of a good range of vocabulary in talking about books and plays they are reading as a class. Pupils show their competence in answering questions and in discussion in different subjects, for example when talking about a video they have watched in history.

56. Overall, pupils make good progress in developing reading skills. Younger and less able pupils develop pre and early reading skills. Most know where to start reading a book, and some know about titles and authors. They understand that stories have a sequence. They enjoy stories and can often identify rhyming words. They recall stories that they have heard, and join in repeated sentences, as in the story of the Three Little Pigs where much enthusiasm was shown for taking part in the reading. They begin to recognise initial letter sounds and some words. By the end of Key Stage 2 many lower attaining pupils read simple passages and show understanding of what they have read, while more able pupils are confident, fluent readers, using improved skills, including predicting, to decode new words. They are encouraged to read aloud in class, as well as having their chosen reading books. Pupils read regularly from the reading scheme and their progress is recorded in reading diaries. They show good comprehension of what they read, and they read for information about other subjects. However, a few pupils, particularly those with specific literacy difficulties, make less progress because of the lack of a structured programme to meet their needs.

57. Progress in writing is, overall, satisfactory. Many of the younger and less able pupils are able to copy over or underneath writing. They begin to sequence stories, initially using pictures and then simple phrases and sentences. Older pupils with learning difficulties make progress appropriate to their ability, with some being able to dictate sentences and copy under these, while others begin to write a few sentences independently, using full stops and capital letters. A few of the more able pupils make progress towards more independence in writing, but most require a significant amount of support and encouragement to write. Pupils are given the opportunities to write for different purposes, for example, in writing stories, poetry, newspaper articles, instructions, letters and diaries. Some write a summary of a story or play and learn drafting and redrafting as, for example, when they write about the plot of Macbeth. Many pupils require support with spelling. They learn the alphabet and know how to use dictionaries and word books. Occasionally pupils produce a final draft of their work using

word processing skills, and this enhances their pride in what has been written.

58. Good progress has been made with the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, which is being well adapted to meet the needs of the pupils. When “big books” are read, pupils are encouraged to join in wherever possible, even if this is only in identifying individual words. Pupils understand the structure of the lessons, and this helps them with their behaviour.

59. The development of oral and writing skills is supported in some other areas of the curriculum, but there is, as yet, no policy or shared understanding of how this should be done. On some occasions teachers introduce key words to pupils as they begin new topics, and these are sometimes displayed in classrooms which provides good support for literacy development, and also helps pupils to become more independent in their learning. Pupils are encouraged to use their skills, for example, writing about experiments in Science, or about artefacts in History. However, as with writing in the context of English lessons, much of this is very limited. In many lessons pupils are encouraged to develop their speaking and listening skills. These are particularly well supported in Circle Time, where pupils are encouraged to contribute to discussions and to listen carefully to others, for example in completing the sentence “I do my work best when...” or in discussing what is meant by words such as “trust” or “respect”.

60. Teaching is always at least good, as a result of which pupils’ learning is also good. In some lessons the teaching is excellent. The best lessons are well planned with clear objectives that are shared with the children, ensuring that they are aware of what they need to be learning. Interesting presentations and explanations engage pupils’ interest and attention, as when a story is illustrated by the use of puppets or pictures of the characters, or when pupils have the opportunity to act a story which they have been reading. Pupils respond well to questions which are well targeted to ensure that all pupils are involved, and which give pupils opportunities to show their knowledge and to extend their understanding. For example, in a lesson on “Macbeth”, the teacher’s skilled use of questions ensured that the pupils remembered the previous work on the play, and extended their understanding of the plot and the language being used. Good management of pupils’ behaviour means that pupils are enabled to concentrate on their work and to make progress, while good relationships with pupils encourage them to make an effort with their work. The use of SSAs is well planned to provide support to pupils in managing their behaviour and with their learning. Praise and encouragement are used appropriately, so that pupils know when they are deserved, and these also motivate pupils and help them to stay on task and to make good progress. Less progress is made either when pupils with more severe behaviour problems cause distractions or when pupils become over-reliant on adults for help with their work.

61. The English co-ordinator has worked hard to introduce the National Literacy Strategy and is clear about further developments which are required. He collects half-termly plans from all teachers but these are not yet used to ensure that pupils have opportunities to participate in all aspects of the National Literacy Strategy, and have access to a wide variety of books. Baseline assessment in reading and spelling has been introduced, and these assessments are regularly updated to ensure that pupils make progress. However, diagnostic assessment to identify pupils’ specific needs does not form part of this. Teachers make assessments against the National Curriculum attainment targets and against the targets in Individual Education Plans, but there is a lack of consistency across the school in recording on-going progress to provide a basis for the assessment. A good range of resources for English has been developed. A reading scheme and the introduction of “big books” have supported the introduction of the Literacy Hour. There is a need for more non-fiction books and books for older pupils with a low reading age. The co-ordinator is planning to address this issue. Pupils’ learning is also enhanced by visits from theatre groups, theatre

workshops and participation in local schools' drama festivals.

MATHEMATICS

62. Achievement is good for pupils of all ages. Attainments in mathematics at Key Stage 2 in the SATs in 2000 were well above the national figures for pupils in similar special schools.

63. While progress is good over time, pupils often make very good progress in lessons. At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils can add and subtract numbers to ten. Pupils can differentiate between the longest and the shortest. Higher attaining pupils can add numbers to ninety and have a knowledge of tens and units. They have a good knowledge of fractions; for example, they can colour in a half, three-quarters. At the end of Key Stage 2 higher attaining pupils have a very good knowledge of the four rules of number. They have a sound knowledge of multiplication tables. They know the names of many two and three-dimensional shapes. They understand the use of brackets in simple equations. They can weigh and measure accurately and can estimate lengths in centimetres. They can work out shopping sums; for example "If I buy four items for 90p, what change will I have from £5?" Lower attaining pupils have a knowledge of basic number bonds to 10. They can tell the teacher the difference between an odd and an even number. They can use money up to 20p. They can name a circle, a square and a triangle. Pupils with additional special educational needs have a notion of numbers to five. Pupils use their knowledge well in other lessons, for example in food technology they use weighing scales accurately and calculate the time their mixtures will be ready to take out of the oven.

64. Teaching and learning are consistently good and on occasions very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers capitalise effectively on the good ethos for learning that exists within the school. Teachers have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the needs of pupils. They have excellent subject knowledge. This enables teachers to plan lessons that are challenging to pupils. Lessons start briskly with oral and mental work. This gains pupils' attention and enabled them to practise their knowledge of tables and use of money in shopping situations. Group and individual work follows. Teachers are very well supported in their work by well-qualified and experienced learning support assistants, who help individual pupils. The teaching of basic numeracy skills is very good. Teachers have excellent knowledge of the National Numeracy Strategy, (NNS). All aspects have been very successfully implemented. This has given teachers great confidence. Pupils enjoy the structure of the NNS and feel secure because the work is appropriately pitched to individual levels of attainment. They enjoy mental arithmetic, counting, adding subtracting multiplying and dividing. Pupils respond well in lessons they have good attitudes and behave well. They listen carefully to instructions and are able to remain on task for up to half an hour. Standards of presentation in exercise books are good. Where, very occasionally, teaching is only satisfactory, the management of pupils' behaviour falls below the very high standard that normally prevails. Mathematics lessons make a good contribution to the development of social skills. Pupils work very well together in whole class lessons. They take turns when waiting to answer mental arithmetic questions.

65. The subject is very well managed by the co-ordinator. There is a policy statement and a scheme of work. The co-ordinator has clear plans for the development of mathematics and the way in which it is taught. One objective has been to move away from the use of work books and duplicated sheets in lessons. In practice work sheets are now only used as a part of a behavioural strategy with individual pupils. The co-ordinator monitors the planning of teachers regularly. Procedures for the monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress are good. Baseline assessment is used to ascertain pupils' levels of attainment on entry to school. Clear short-term objectives for each pupil are set through individual education plans.

Although there is no marking policy all work is carefully marked. Teachers make positive comments about pupils' achievements. There is a need for more explicit expectations of homework. Resources for teaching mathematics are good and make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Resources are used well by teachers for example when teaching money skills the teacher used very large replicas of coins. This enabled all the class to see clearly and all could be directly involved in the calculations required.

SCIENCE

66. Pupils' achievement in science is very good and this is the case across the age range. The youngest pupils, aged 7 to 9, investigate materials and their properties. They notice features of a range of materials, which they correctly use to describe them; for example, they notice that metal objects are hard and that some are shiny; they notice that some plastic objects are shiny too. Fabric is found to be soft and easily bent or crushed. From these observations, higher attaining pupils conclude that simple descriptive words, such as "rough", "shiny", "hard" and "soft" are insufficient descriptors. Among the higher attainers, some know that materials have different states, for example, solid or liquid. When they are organising their "investigation", pupils work together, for the most part co-operatively, and they share their ideas willingly. On occasion, pupils whose behaviour is less stable cannot sustain their attention for a full lesson but because of the good system for managing behaviour, these pupils do not prevent others from learning.

67. Pupils aged 9 and 10 investigate hardness. They undertake scratch tests, listening carefully to their teacher and follow instructions well. They notice the effect on rock of scratching with a fingernail, a coin, or a carpenter's nail. Many are aware that there are different kinds of rocks, which can be ordered according to their hardness. They record their findings. A few know about fossils and can say what these are. Pupils who are new to the school find it difficult to work steadily. In these cases, their efforts are spasmodic and the work they produce is greatly helped by the intervention of teachers and classroom support staff.

68. Pupils aged 10 to 11 conduct an investigation into the phenomenon of "bubbles". They blow bubbles using detergent, see bubbles arise when a straw is blown through into water or when fizzy drinks are shaken. They have good incidental knowledge, some being aware of the names of gasses, for example, carbon dioxide and oxygen, and of the purpose and use of the thermometer. They plan investigations successfully, making observations and using measurement of time. Some notice that there is a different response when a raisin and a small ball of fixative are dropped into a fizzy drink. They notice that these objects behave differently. The raisin becomes clouded with bubbles and rises to the surface, sinks again and then rises and continues doing this. The fixative remains at the bottom. They put forward ideas about why this happens. With some encouragement from their teacher, they record their investigation.

69. Teaching in science is sometimes excellent and never less than good; on balance, it is very good. Teachers are keenly aware of the individual difficulties their pupils have. They structure their lessons so as to maintain their interest and to encourage them to feel a sense of achievement. Because of this and the good planning that underpins lessons, pupils enjoy science, take pride in recalling facts, and are keen to undertake investigations and to share their ideas. Where pupils are new to the school, teachers face a particularly difficult challenge. In these cases, they manage their task well, making full use of the very good support from non-teaching assistants that is available. Sometimes pupils are best managed by being taught singly, face-to-face with an adult. They find sharing and discussing the outcomes of their learning very difficult. The teaching is well informed by a very good scheme of work, which ensures that learning is progressive.

70. Science is very well co-ordinated and pupils' learning is accurately assessed. A folio of pupils' work helps teachers in moderating their assessments. Pupils' achievement is accurately recorded. Resources are sufficient and of good quality and they promote learning well. Pupils have achieved standards equivalent to the national average in some cases in the last year and this reflects the good provision made. Within science lessons there are planned opportunities for pupils to enhance their social development and on occasions their sense of awe and wonder is engaged by what they study.

ART AND DESIGN

71. It is not possible to make a judgement about overall progress in art and design, because limited work was available for scrutiny, and most of this was not annotated or dated. Progress in the two lessons seen during the inspection was good. The work which was available shows that pupils have had experience of working in a variety of media such as crayons, paints and chalks. Younger and less able pupils have experimented with techniques such as finger painting, sponge painting and spatter painting. Pupils of all abilities have attempted collages in paper, fabric and wood. Pupils have been introduced to the work of western artists and have had some opportunities of copying their paintings. They also experiment with working in the style of artists of other continents, such as Africa. Three-dimensional work is seen in activities such as junk modelling, wood sculpture and mask making.

72. The quality of the teaching seen ranged from good to very good. Pupils are given clear instructions about the work they are to undertake, which ensures that they feel confident in what they have to do. They are helped to understand that planning and design are needed before they undertake a piece of work. Good use is made of links between art and design and other subjects, for example, painting Viking longboats linked to History and producing paintings and collages to illustrate "Danny the Champion of the World" which was being read in English.

73. The co-ordinator for art and design is working to develop a scheme of work for the subject based on the QCA guidelines. This meets National Curriculum requirements. The scheme of work provides learning objectives and gives ideas for suggested activities and resources. It usefully highlights key vocabulary which pupils need to know. Assessment and recording are not yet consistently developed, but it is planned to make use of a new format which has been developed in school, and this should provide teachers with useful information when they need to assess pupils' levels of achievement. The subject is generally well resourced, but no use is made of visits to enhance pupils' experience.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

74. During the period of the inspection just one lesson of food technology was observed. Judgements on levels of achievement are, therefore, based on the quality of the work on display in classrooms and other areas of the school and by reference to teachers' plans and pupils' records. It is not possible to make judgements about the quality of teaching or attitudes to the subject. Levels of achievement are satisfactory for pupils by the age of 11.

75. Pupils have experience of considering the qualities of a range of different materials, for example paper, fabric, wood, metal and plastic. They describe these in terms of rough, smooth, light, heavy, flexible and rigid. This work is helped by being strongly linked to that done in science. Pupils consider which material would be most appropriate for making an envelope and a hedgehog box. Pupils differentiate materials that are opaque, transparent and translucent. In food technology pupils follow the instructions from a recipe to make cakes.

They use scales to weigh accurately. They estimate area, for example, when judging how much greaseproof paper is required to cover the base and sides of a baking tin. They have good standards of food hygiene washing hands carefully before the lesson starts. They demonstrate responsibility when putting ingredients back into store in the correct place.

76. The management of design and technology is good. The co-ordinator has established a clear direction for the subject. Priorities for the development of the subject are in place. A subject policy has been written. The school has adopted the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's schemes of work. A scheme of work for food technology has not yet been agreed. This is a priority for development. Good links have been made with ICT. A system for recording pupils' achievements is in place. This broadly follows the attainment levels of the National Curriculum. The school benefits from having a design and technology classroom and a food technology room. These resources are of good quality and are well used to improve the achievements of pupils.

GEOGRAPHY

77. No geography lessons took place during the week of the inspection, so no judgement can be made about teaching in this subject. Scrutiny of work and of displays suggest that, overall, progress is satisfactory. However, because the subject is not taught throughout the school year, some classes have had limited experience of geography this year.

78. Some pupils recall the names of the countries of the United Kingdom, and they can name the capital cities. They mark both on a map. A few extend this to the countries of Western Europe. Pupils who are more able have looked at a range of geographical features, for example rivers, seas and valleys, and can identify characteristics such as cliffs, tributary, source and mouth of a river. Pupils make progress with understanding plans and maps. Younger and less able pupils can draw simple plans of their classrooms. Some extend this to a plan of the school. More able pupils are able to interpret a town plan, and identify specific features such as a station and a hospital, while a few can locate features using grid references. Some pupils make use of ICT to produce maps and plans.

79. A new geography co-ordinator took up post in September 2000, and he is making good progress with developing a scheme of work for the subject based on the National Curriculum. At present, geography is taught as part of the topic based curriculum, but the co-ordinator has drawn up plans to move to a discrete Geography curriculum, which will enable all appropriate aspects to be covered over a two-year cycle. Monitoring of the subject is being developed. There is on-going analysis of the aspects of the subject being taught, and this is used to inform revision of the curriculum. Plans have been made for observing teaching and for looking at pupils' work. To support the curriculum, the co-ordinator is planning to develop resource packs for each topic. Recording and assessment in geography are, at present, inconsistent, but the school has developed a new format for assessing modules of work and this will be used in the subject.

HISTORY

80. Pupils' progress in history is always at least satisfactory and, in some lessons, it is good or very good. Pupils are beginning to develop an understanding of the passage of time; for example, they produce a time line of train travel, using pictures of trains from the earliest invention to the present day. The idea of "then" and "now" is reinforced as pupils look at how objects such as telephones and boats have changed over the years. When they look at a range of toys, they are able to suggest how old they are; by considering whether they are made from wood, metal or plastic. Pupils are beginning to realise that they can obtain information from a variety of sources such as photographs, papers, books and artefacts.

They show some knowledge of different periods in history. For example, older pupils have completed a topic on the Ancient Greeks, looking at the way of life and linking this to literature such as the Greek myths. Pupils know something of the Vikings and of their customs. They know about Alfred the Great and the battles he fought with the Vikings, as well as other aspects of his life such as the ways in which he encouraged learning. Less able pupils are able to show their understanding by drawing objects which reflect these aspects, while more able pupils discuss and write about the topics.

81. Teaching is always at least satisfactory, and in some lessons is good or very good. The best lessons are well structured so that pupils make progress through a series of tasks which develops their knowledge and understanding. Pupils are clear what they have to do and undertake tasks with interest and enthusiasm. Teachers manage pupils well and this leads pupils to concentrate well on the lesson. Questioning is used very effectively to allow pupils to show their knowledge and to check that they have understood new information. In some lessons, very good use is made of artefacts, as in a lesson in which pupils were identifying whether toys were new, old or very old. Less progress is made where teachers allow pupils to distract one another, so that concentration is lost and teaching has to be repeated.

82. The co-ordinator, who was new at the beginning of the school year, is developing the subject well. He has planned a scheme of work in line with the QCA guidelines which ensure National Curriculum coverage, and is developing resource packs for each topic. Assessment and recording of progress are inconsistent, but this will be addressed by the adoption of a whole school system for evaluating progress in each module of work. Resources for History are good, and these are supplemented by loans from the Local Education Authority. Pupils make little use of IT in the subject and, at present, limited use is made of the local area, or of visits to support the curriculum.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

83. During the period of the inspection no ICT lessons were observed. Judgements on achievement are, therefore, based on the work on display in classrooms and other areas of the school and by reference to teachers' plans and pupils' records. It is not possible to make judgements about the quality of teaching or pupils' attitudes to the subject. Levels of achievement are satisfactory across both key stages.

84. Where pupils were observed incidentally using computers they used them with confidence. At Key Stage 2 pupils showed that they had acquired basic skills such as using a mouse well and accessing menus. Records show that most pupils are confident in using a software programme. Some pupils were able to record surveys through the use of simple block and linegraphs. Some pupils have just begun to explore the Internet. This work is in its early stages of development and it is not possible to assess how well pupils complete tasks since no direct observations were possible. The school has clear guidelines to control access to the Internet and to limit access to sites of questionable merit.

85. The management of ICT is very good. The co-ordinator's plans for the developing the subject are comprehensive and show a clear strategic vision for this very important area of the curriculum. The co-ordinator is very well supported by an ICT consultant who is employed at the school for two days a week. They have a very good commitment to the improvement of the subject and very good capacity to succeed. Together they have ensured that there is a policy in place. A scheme of work is being developed. A good system for baseline assessment and on-going assessment of pupils' achievements has been implemented. The system clearly demonstrates what each pupil knows, can do and understands about computers and control systems, for example, "I can move objects around the screen" and "I

can write a sentence without support.” The co-ordinator, together with the part-time consultant, gives very good support to colleagues to help them develop their own skills and a programme of training is in place. The schools’ current equipment and software is good and supports all aspects of the subject. A policy decision has been made to place all computers in classrooms to ensure that ICT can benefit pupils’ learning across other subjects of the curriculum. When lesson targets have been achieved pupils are rewarded by using appropriate software programmes. All the ICT resources are very well used to support the learning of pupils.

MUSIC

86. Levels of achievement in music are satisfactory. However because the school has only recently opened and pupils are relatively new to the school, the range of attainments is limited. Pupils know whether certain pitches are high or low and whether a tune goes up or down. They have a rudimentary understanding of notation and can follow alphabetic notation to play part of a nursery rhyme tune. Pupils can name different instruments, for example the marimba. They perform simple melodic accompaniments to tunes, using xylophones and triangles. In whole school assemblies pupils enjoy singing hymns and many know the words of those most familiar to them, for example “Lord of the Dance”. They sing enthusiastically and in tune.

87. Teaching is, overall, very good. In one lesson teaching was excellent. All music lessons are taught by the music co-ordinator. Teaching is very good because the teacher has excellent musical skills and has an excellent knowledge of the subject. In addition the teacher has an excellent knowledge of each pupil. The management of behaviour is of an extremely high quality. These qualities are combined with very good lesson planning. Lessons move at a brisk pace and pupils receive very positive feedback about their progress. This encourages pupils to try harder and stay on task. Very good use is made of plenary sessions to summarise what pupils have learnt. Pupils’ learning is very good. Their behaviour is excellent and they have very good attitudes. Pupils greatly enjoy music lessons.

88. The music teacher is the subject co-ordinator. Management of the subject is very good. Following discussions with local authority advisers an appropriate scheme of work for the school has been devised and implemented. Good systems for assessing progress and recording the achievement of pupils have been established. Assessment is used well to guide curricular and lesson planning. Resources for teaching music are good. In the absence of a specialist music room lessons are taught in classrooms. Accommodation for teaching music is satisfactory. The period of the inspection offered no opportunities to judge the contribution information and communication technology makes to teaching and learning in music. Music makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of pupils, for example, music is used to support celebrations of the Chinese New Year. Professional musicians visit school regularly. Pupils take part in music festivals organised for special schools by the local education authority.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

89. Pupils of all ages achieve very well; they make very good progress in their dance, gymnastics and swimming lessons. The youngest pupils, aged 7 to 9, bring great enthusiasm to their work in dance. They recall their previous learning and bring it to bear as they improve and refine the steps they have learned in traditional dances. They confidently try new formations and remember the names, such as the “Elsden circle”, of the dances they can perform and the correct terms for the component parts of these. They respond correctly to instructions to “swing their partner” or to “promenade”. They put into practice the rules for safe dancing that they have learned and show very good bodily control. Their knowledge and understanding of the effects of vigorous exercise on their bodies is good.

90. Pupils aged 10 to 11 show very high levels of agility and excellent balance as they respond to challenges set by their teacher. They are imaginative as they develop methods of travelling across the gym obeying instructions to contact the floor only with their hands and one foot. They are adventurous and inventive when they carry this forward to moving across a range of boxes and benches. Their work in gymnastics is good in relation to standards achieved, nationally, by pupils of these ages.

91. Across the age range pupils achieve very well in swimming. Most are able to propel themselves across the swimming pool without the use of floatation aids and are well placed to attain the national standard, swimming 25 metres unaided. They are aware of water safety and practice this, obeying the instructions of their teachers and behaving sensibly. All pupils show very good levels of confidence in the water.

92. These very good results are achieved by very good and sometimes excellent teaching in which knowledge of the requirements of the curriculum is combined with great awareness of the special educational needs of the pupils and the learning characteristics of individuals. Teachers show gentle but insistent control and share with the pupils the high expectations they have of them. Pupils are strongly motivated when their teacher challenges them to improve or develop their performance and put all their energies into doing what is asked. Good use is made of pupils to model activities and teachers themselves demonstrate very clearly new movements when this is required. Sufficient attention is paid to ensuring the safety of pupils and while pupils, as part of their learning, put out the apparatus for gymnastics lessons, this is always then checked for safety by a member of staff. Teachers use PE very well to develop social learning. When good performance by a pupil is highlighted, others are encouraged to applaud and share in the success and when it is necessary do so pupils wait calmly for their turn.

93. Physical education is well co-ordinated. The scheme of work ensures coverage of the National Curriculum and there is a good pilot scheme for assessing and recording pupils' achievement but this is not yet in full use. Teachers do, nevertheless, assess the performance of their pupils and use this to refine their lesson planning. The school hall is used for gymnastics. It is of suitable size, has good adjacent storage space and there is a suitable range of apparatus.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

94. The school has recently reviewed its curriculum for religious education. It has revised the topics to be studied by each age group. In the short time that this new programme of work has been provided, pupils of all ages have made satisfactory progress and developed their knowledge and understanding at a rate in keeping with their capabilities. Pupils across the age range learn about the major world faiths and the customs of initiation and worship associated with them and the values and beliefs of their followers. From religion they learn

important lessons about moral and social behaviour.

95. The youngest pupils, aged 7 to 9, study Christianity. They learn the parable of the prodigal son, re-told by their teacher in a way that is easy to understand. They know that it is a story about repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation and jealousy, and most can use these words correctly in the context of the story. Some can apply them more generally to their personal experiences. All remember the story and its main events very well.

96. Older pupils, aged 10 and 11, are also studying Christianity. They listen to the New Testament story of Zaccheus and the parable of the widow's mite. From these they draw some conclusions about the character of Jesus. They understand that an important part of his message is the need to see beyond surface appearances. They also understand the benefits of giving those who do wrong a chance to reform. The pupils' understanding of this was well illustrated when one said that Zaccheus had "turned over a new leaf" following his encounter with Jesus.

97. At this early stage in the school's new organisation of the content of the RE curriculum, only a small amount of teaching about faiths other than Christianity has been offered. Pupils' knowledge of these is therefore limited.

98. Teaching is of at least good quality and is sometimes very good. Very good understanding of the pupils' individual needs as learners leads to effective choice of methods. Much work is oral and this enables pupils to offer their ideas and share those of others readily. The atmosphere in lessons is calm and a good contribution is made to this by support assistants who anticipate the difficulties that individual pupils might experience and make helpful contributions to discussions. In some cases, younger pupils with more serious learning needs are unable to sustain their concentration for a full lesson and, appropriately, they are given alternative individual tasks. This good strategy maintains the calm and productive climate for learning within the classroom and enables the teacher to ensure that higher attaining and emotionally more stable pupils get full value from the lesson.

99. In the religious education lessons teachers take opportunities to reinforce literacy as when key words are learned, or numeracy as when discussion of Zaccheus' vow to compensate those he had cheated "five-fold", led to pupils calculating what he might owe to those he had stolen from.

100. The co-ordinator has established in outline the scheme of work for religious education, throughout the school. Methods of consistently assessing and recording pupils' progress have not yet been fully developed but teachers assess what their pupils know, understand, and can do, and take this into account in planning their lessons. There are some basic resources for the subject but there is a lack of the more extended range of resources, including artefacts that the schemes of work will require.