

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ASH LEA SCHOOL**

Cotgrave

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122957

Headteacher: Mrs. L. Skillington

Reporting inspector: Michael McDowell  
1405

Dates of inspection: 15 and 16 April 2002

Inspection number: 242728

Short 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 special
Age range of pupils:	2 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Owthorpe Road Cotgrave Nottingham
Postcode:	NG12 3PA
Telephone number:	01159 892744
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. S. Colman
Date of previous inspection:	21 March 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Ash Lea is a day, community, special school for 67 pupils aged between three and nineteen who have statements of special educational need because of severe learning difficulties. For this reason the attainment of pupils on entry is very much below average. Of those presently on roll, 37 are boys and 28 are girls. There is only one pupil aged under five. The great majority of pupils are white but there are three black pupils and three who are Asian with Indian or Pakistani backgrounds. There is also a pupil from a Traveller family. While all pupils have significant learning difficulties, 14 have profound and multiple learning difficulties and eight have autistic spectrum disorders. Most of the pupils with more profound and complex needs are in the primary phase or in the early secondary classes. This reflects a comparatively recent change in the nature of pupils being referred to the school. Twenty pupils are entitled to free school meals, just under a third of the total. This is about average for a school of this kind. The previous report was clear that the school was very good. It has since been awarded Beacon status.

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

The school is extremely effective in identifying and meeting the educational needs of its pupils and students. Overall pupils achieve very well in response to teaching of excellent quality. The head teacher and others in leadership roles provide excellent leadership and the school is managed to the highest standards. It gives excellent value for money.

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

- High expectations for pupils' achievements, a strong emphasis on the development of their communication skills and excellent teaching enable pupils and students to make very good progress.
- Very good learning opportunities within the classroom are greatly enhanced by the extensive provision made beyond the classroom to broaden the understanding and experience of pupils and students and provision for their personal development that is excellent.
- Excellent relationships with parents lead to a true partnership between home and school and a shared commitment to give pupils the best possible chance to learn.
- The head teacher's leadership is excellent and she is very strongly supported by her deputy and others in leadership roles.
- The school provides excellent personal care for its pupils and students and takes full account of the need to ensure the safety and welfare of all those who learn and work at the school.

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

There are no weaknesses of sufficient significance that they need to be addressed in an action plan following this inspection.

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in March 1997 when it was found to be very good. Since then there has been good, continuing, improvement and the issues that the school was asked to address have all been resolved. There is greater involvement with mainstream schools and in local and national initiatives than formerly. There has been development of the curriculum and the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies have been introduced. This has led to the re-organisation of teaching groups for literacy and numeracy. A greater range of external qualifications is now offered and more flexible timetabling and better planning procedures have led to the better meeting of individual needs. There is now greater pupil involvement in decision - making, including a School Council. A Foundation Curriculum has been introduced and, in line with national requirements, a performance management strategy has been developed. There has been significant building improvement and pupils now have access to other schools to use specialist facilities.

## STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets.

Progress in:	by Year 6	by Year 11	by Year 14	<b>Key</b>  very good            A  good                    B  satisfactory            C  unsatisfactory        D  poor                     E
speaking and listening	A	A	A	
reading	A	A	A	
writing	A	A	A	
mathematics	A	A	A	
personal, social and health education	A	A	A	
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A	A	

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

The school is on course to meet the very ambitious, overall targets it has set for pupils' achievement. Individual pupils also have targets set for them. These include specific attainment goals in communication, literacy, numeracy and personal development. The great majority of both girls and boys meet these targets within the time prescribed. The development of pupils' communication skills is consistent and progressive, and very good strides are made in speaking and listening, where necessary using signs and symbols. Pupils and students develop their literacy and communication skills within lessons in all subjects, and use these, effectively, to convey their understanding of what they are being taught. Pupils' achievement in literacy is very good; over time almost all come to recognise letters and the sounds they stand for and many learn to read and to write independently. Pupils' understanding of number develops very well and, across the age range, progress in numeracy is very good. Pupils make very good progress in science; within individual lessons observed achievement was, on occasions, excellent. Pupils show in their growing confidence and social competence, the effectiveness of their learning in personal social and health education. They make very good progress in personal development both in response to the very well planned teaching they receive in PSHE lessons and to the excellent range of additional learning opportunities with which they are provided. The progress and achievement of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders is very good, as is that of the small number of those who have English as a second language. Pupils and students reflect the progress they have made in their successful achievement in externally assessed examinations and courses. A substantial proportion of students was awarded the Certificate of Educational Achievement in English, mathematics, information technology and design and technology in 2001. In addition all who were entered for the English Speaking Board examination gained a pass. Ten students gained the Bronze Youth Award accredited by ASDAN and eight were awarded the Bronze Medal in the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Since the last inspection there has been a notable increase in opportunities for students to gain qualifications and in the number of students doing so.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent: Pupils enjoy coming to school, are very enthusiastic learners and try to do their best in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent: Behaviour in lessons, in assemblies, and at lunch times, helps to establish the happy, purposeful atmosphere that is a feature of the school. There has been only one exclusion within the past twelve

	months.
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Personal development and relationships	Excellent: Relationships between the staff and pupils are extremely positive and this provides a very helpful example to pupils and students in forming their own relationships with one another. The opportunities provided to pupils to express their individuality and independence increase as they move through the school. The success achieved by students in activities conducted to exacting national standards, such as the Duke of Edinburgh awards, demonstrates that personal development is outstanding.
Attendance	Excellent: Pupils and students always come to school except when there are medical reasons that prevent it. There are no unauthorised absences.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 1 – 6	Years 7 – 11	Years 12 – 14
Quality of teaching	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent

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

The overall quality of teaching is excellent and, because of this, pupils, of all ages, and with a wide variety of individual special educational needs, work extremely hard, take a great deal of pride in what they achieve, broaden their knowledge and understanding and acquire many new skills. Their learning is excellent. In all subjects, teachers make very good use of information and communications technology. Teaching in English is predominantly very good and, during the inspection it was occasionally excellent. Effective use is made of the National Literacy Strategy and there is an emphasis on developing pupils' knowledge of books. The development of pupils' speaking and listening skills is greatly enhanced by the school wide emphasis on communication and the very helpful input of speech and language therapists. All pupils and students learn the meaning of signs and symbols and this helps to ensure that those few pupils who rely entirely on these methods of communication are not isolated from their fellows. Reading is taught very systematically and pupils are given a thorough grounding in recognising letters and the sounds they stand for. Their writing skills are carefully developed and extended. Mathematics is taught very well across the age range. The National Numeracy strategy provides a strong framework within which lessons are planned. There is a very effective emphasis on mental mathematics and lessons frequently start with this. The tempo of teaching in mathematics lessons is high and pupils' understanding is thoroughly checked as lessons proceed. The quality of the science teaching observed was excellent. There is a practical and investigative emphasis to the work and within lessons opportunities are taken to reinforce communication, literacy and numeracy skills. Teaching is of very high quality, overall, in personal, social and health education, (PSHE). Assemblies play a part in this. In assemblies, teaching, which is directed at pupils' personal development, is excellent. Teaching is of such high quality because it is based on a clear understanding of the pupils' needs and learning characteristics and the requirements of the subject being taught. It is planned very thoroughly. Planning emphasises the part to be played by the learning support assistants within the lessons and the team approach that emerges from this makes a major contribution to their success. The needs of all pupils, whatever their special need, within each group are taken into account and there are the highest expectations of what can be achieved. Management of pupils is very effective and in particular it promotes the inclusion of those with more complex learning needs, including challenging behaviour, in most planned learning experiences. There were no significant weaknesses in the teaching observed that had an impact on pupils' learning.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good: At each stage of their education pupils and students are offered a broad range of learning opportunities that takes account of their individual needs. The requirements of the National Curriculum are complied with very well and both sex education and religious education are provided. The school makes exceptional provision for learning beyond the classroom that increases the self-confidence of pupils and greatly extends their experience of life beyond school and their own community.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent: Provision for pupils' social development is enhanced at all ages, by opportunities to be a part of and contributors to their group. Through integration initiatives pupils have many opportunities to observe the social behaviour of others of their own age. Pupils are carefully led to an awareness of right and wrong.. Assemblies draw the school community together and provide excellent opportunities for spiritual reflection. There is exceptionally good provision outside of lessons that extends pupils' cultural experience.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent: Child protection and health and safety procedures are of the highest quality with clear records of all incidents. The manual handling of pupils with physical difficulties is consistent with best practice. The monitoring and assessing of pupils' progress and personal development are very good. Excellent use is made of assessment in setting targets and planning lessons.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent: The head teacher has great enthusiasm and works extremely hard to further improve the quality of education that the school offers. She is an inspiration to her staff. She is clear about the role of the school within a changing, local pattern of provision of special education and the direction it must take. The deputy head provides exceptional leadership and is very effective in ensuring that school policy is implemented to the best possible standard. Those who lead subjects of the curriculum, or who have other managerial responsibilities, carry out their duties to the best of their ability and to a very high standard.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Very Good: The governors fulfil their responsibilities and are strongly committed to the school. They guide and oversee its performance very well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent: Monitoring and oversight of the curriculum and of the quality of teaching and learning is very thorough. Action is taken to ensure that the school reaches the targets it sets.
The strategic use of resources	Very Good: The school makes very effective use of learning support assistants and the strong classroom teams help pupils to learn throughout lessons. Information and communication technology is used well. The extensive school grounds have been sensitively developed as a learning resource. Careful management of finances has enabled the school to build up financial reserves so as to fund its planned

	developments such as a pool.
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Accommodation is good and effective use is made of local facilities to make up for shortfalls in provision within the school buildings. There are sufficient qualified and experienced teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum and the needs of the pupils and students. Excellent in-house training has enabled the school to build up a strong group of staff members who support the pupils' learning and care for their individual needs. Resources are of very good quality and are sufficient to match curriculum and learning requirements. The school compares its performance with an identified group of similar schools and applies the principles of best value very well.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviour in the school is good.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• They would feel comfortable approaching the school</li> <li>• The school has high expectations of what their children will achieve</li> <li>• It works closely with parents</li> <li>• It is well led and managed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of homework offered</li> </ul>

The parents have a high opinion of the school and the findings of the inspection support this. A minor criticism made by a few parents responding to the questionnaire was about the quantity of homework being set. The inspectors disagree with this criticism and found the amount of homework offered to be suitable

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**High expectations for pupils' achievement, a strong emphasis on the development of their communication skills and excellent teaching enable pupils and students to make very good progress.**

1. Achievement is very good across the full range of age and special educational needs because pupils respond enthusiastically to teaching that is of excellent quality. Teachers plan very thoroughly to extend pupils' present attainments and are confident in their expectation that they will achieve the objectives that are set for them. The school sets very ambitious targets for pupils' achievement and all pupils have challenging attainment goals in literacy, numeracy and personal development. In the great majority of cases, they meet these goals in the time prescribed.
2. A very positive feature of lesson planning is that it is undertaken jointly with the learning support assistants who form a vital part of the classroom teams. In many lessons the dialogue between the teacher and the learning support assistant provides an excellent model of communication and plays an essential part in shaping pupils' response and encouraging them to think. Within lessons in all subjects a strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' literacy and communication skills. Pupils develop such skills, therefore, in a variety of contexts and show their growing competence by making good use of them to convey their understanding of what they are being taught.
3. This was clearly illustrated in an excellent science lesson for pupils in years 7, 8 and 9 in which support for speaking and listening and for the development of literacy was prominent. The key words that underpinned the concept being developed by this lesson on forces were constantly repeated by the teacher and the learning support assistant. For those pupils who required it spoken instructions were reinforced with signs, and written questions, on the pupils' recording sheets, were augmented by the use of symbols. In giving their answers pupils showed their understanding of both the concepts being taught and the new words they were learning. For example, they explained that a "prediction" was a guess about what might happen based on what they had seen before and that pulling on elastic materials, for example a deflated balloon would cause the material to stretch but that when the pulling force was removed the material would go back to its original shape. They were clear that in this case the change exerted by the force was not permanent.
4. Teachers approach their task with an expectation that their lessons will succeed in moving their pupils' learning on. Learning objectives within lesson plans are ambitious and demand that the fullest, most productive use of time is made. Teachers' confidence that they will successfully promote speaking, listening, reading and writing skills is a feature of lessons from the earliest stages.
5. This was well illustrated by a lesson for pupils in years 1 and 2 where conventions of turn-taking and greeting were already well understood and used. In this instance pupils with a wide range of competencies listened extremely well to a story and showed this by making the right responses and joining in discussion. It was clear that all understood that the printed text on the page conveyed meaning, but, teaching to an ambitious set of objectives, the teacher succeeded in developing their knowledge much further. Within the space of the lesson, pupils who had not previously been able to do this, were taught to match letters at the beginning of their own names and other familiar words to sounds. By the end of the lesson all pupils recognised the connection between a particular letter and the initial sound in their name. The need to extend and augment means of communication is acknowledged and taken forward as a whole school policy.
6. Some of the best teaching takes place daily in the whole school assemblies. These are carefully planned to involve all pupils and students and to stretch their ability to listen and to watch with full attention. Each day one or two signs and the symbols that stand for them are taught to the whole

school. Pupils and students are given opportunities to share their own ideas and enthusiasms and by these means pupils' confidence as communicators is strongly enhanced. The self-belief with which pupils are gradually imbued is very evident when they move out of the school and take up learning opportunities offered in other settings. For example a group of post 16 students attended a drama session at a neighbouring school together with pupils from elsewhere. The teachers' expectations of what could be accomplished in the limited time available were extremely high. Students, however, responded very well and were un-self conscious and enthusiastic as they followed the instructions of their teacher to convey moods such as "sadness" or "joy" that they would make use of later to portray characters in an improvised play. Because of their accomplished and practiced listening skills they quickly understood and remembered the scenes they were to act out, and, in remarkably short time offered a creditable performance of the Ancient Greek myth of Persephone and Demeter.

**Excellent relationships with parents lead to a true partnership between home and school and a shared commitment to give pupils the best possible chance to learn.**

7. The school has established very productive relationships with the parents of its pupils. It has established policies on home/school liaison, homework and written communication with parents, and it consults with its parents on important matters such as the nature and amount of work that children should be required to do at home. All of its parents responded to a recent questionnaire on this subject, although a very small number of parents whose children were new to the school were not involved in this.
8. Newsletters are produced every week by each class that summarise what has been done that week and what is planned for the next. They play an important part in keeping parents in touch with what is going on and, more importantly, perhaps, convey a flavour of the ethos and spirit of the school. The newsletters are lively and varied in style. Some offer advice or ask for parents' help with projects that are being planned. Parents are invited to accompany classes on trips or to provide simple resources when these are needed. The presentation of these newsletters is appealing and clearly involves a lot of work suggesting that a high value is placed by all teachers and staff on having parents as partners in the education of their children. The newsletter from class four, for example, "Four's Facts", uses headlines such as "Top Stories", "People and Places" and "Things to Come" to make its contents attractive and readable. In addition there are half-termly newsletters with amusing recollections and illustrations and written contributions from pupils.
9. The information and reports that the school is statutorily required to provide, such as the school prospectus and annual reports, meet all requirements. Parents indicated when they met with the inspectors that they rely heavily on the home-school diaries that are the daily means of contact between parent and teacher. Pupils with complex needs or profound and multiple learning difficulties(PMLD) are unable to tell their parents about their day at school. Where there is infrequent or irregular contact between home and school parents may, rightly, become anxious. The school prevents this possibility by making full, daily reports through the home school diary. In many cases parents show how much they value this by writing a great deal in return. Information is shared exceptionally well and the use made of home-school diaries and the two-way communication sponsored by this use is excellent.
10. The school also makes excellent arrangements to ensure that the learning entitlement of all pupils is met by providing appropriate work for them to do at home. Homework is set weekly and laid out by subject on a homework sheet. Parents are asked to support the process and given specific advice on how best they can help. Parents are asked to complete their column of the homework sheet as part of the weekly evaluation of what has been achieved. Homework given to pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, includes a range of MAKATON symbols to learn, while pupils who are higher attainers have literacy and numeracy bags which contain a range of different activities for them to do. Through the homework programme, the development of life-skills and the exercise of independence is also encouraged. The great majority

of parents who made their views known believed these arrangements to be excellent and felt that they had the effect of fully including them as partners in their children's learning. A very few parents whose children are new to the school were not

entirely aware of the homework arrangements but when this uncertainty was expressed at the pre-inspection meeting, many other parents offered to help them with information and advice.

11. Parents respond very well to the school's initiatives on partnership. For example there is always full parental attendance at annual reviews of statements. In some cases the school ensures that attendance at reviews is always 100 per cent by holding them in the pupil's own home. By these means the school makes certain that parents play a full part in setting the targets towards which their children are to strive. While a number of similar schools routinely invite parents to accompany their children's class on trips and outings few are as open as Ash Lea in inviting parents into the school to help. Fewer still invite the siblings of their pupils to spend a day in school learning alongside their brother or sister. The school has established this practice with great success. Activity days, which occur each year, focus upon a topic such as "European Languages" or "Science Workshops" and are very well attended by families. Parents support the school through a range of fundraising activities and also support the school in fundraising for charities, such as Leukaemia Research and UNICEF.
12. These outstanding arrangements to promote the partnership between the school and the parents of its pupils arise from the head teacher's passionate belief that parents and families know their own children best. She also believes that if school and parents do not work in close co-operation, the full benefit of the professional expertise that the school can provide will not be realised. Parents are acknowledged to have fresh and interesting ideas and the head teacher believes that the school must always be ready to tap into these and make best use of them. She also believes that the school, in some instances, is uniquely placed to help families experiencing difficulties and that in the interests of its pupils it must make its contribution in these circumstances. As a result, parents are full partners with the school in their children's education.

**Very good learning opportunities within the classroom are greatly enhanced by the extensive provision made beyond the classroom to broaden the understanding and experience of pupils and students and provision for their personal development that is excellent.**

13. At each stage of their education pupils and students are given a broad range of opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding that takes account of their individual learning needs. The requirements of the National Curriculum are complied with very well. The school places proper emphasis on each pupil developing the ability to communicate effectively so as to get the most benefit from what is offered. Since the last inspection opportunities for students to gain qualifications and to have their work accredited by national examination bodies have greatly increased. There is very good personal, social and health education and excellent careers education and guidance. The school makes exceptional provision for learning beyond the classroom that increases the self-confidence of pupils and greatly extends their experience of life beyond school and their own community.
14. Links with the community make an excellent contribution to pupils' learning. For example the school runs a parent and toddler group. Each week local parents, whose children do not have special educational needs and do not attend Ash Lea, bring their toddlers, aged three and under, to spend a morning of play and activities, together with children from the lower classes who are, developmentally, young. The activities are planned around the early learning goals of the National Curriculum Foundation Stage and include singing, hearing stories and having a snack. Visiting parents become involved with the school's pupils and senior pupils also attend to act as helpers. This experience broadens the play and communication experience of the younger Ash Lea pupils and gives the older ones the chance to exercise responsibility. It has led through the good relationships that it generates to further joint activities between local parents and their younger

children and the youngest pupils in the school. For example, they recently completed the Barnardo's "Toddler Trail" together.

15. There is an exceptionally wide range of extra curricular activities, including day and residential visits some of which such as regular trips to opera and ballet challenge pupils' cultural horizons. Visits to other live events such as "pop" concerts complement these. Pupils are offered at least one residential visit each year and some may attend up to four of the educational visits that are offered annually. Within the United Kingdom there have been recent visits to a sports club in Cheshire that provided opportunities for walking, windsurfing, cycling, swimming and gymnastics, visits to other activity centres where pupils were involved in camping and visits to youth hostels. Using specially adapted coaches and/or public transport, visits have been made abroad, Paris in September 2000 and Florence in September 2001. The effect of all of these opportunities is seen in the confidence with which pupils approach their learning tasks and in their excellent relationships with adults and with one another.
16. Opportunities to express independence and take responsibility increase as pupils move through the school. The school challenges its older pupils and students to achieve as much as they can. For the post 16 group moving beyond school to college develops personal initiative and confidence. For those with greater degrees of special educational need a strong emphasis on the development of personal independence and living skills is reflected in the externally validated courses that they follow. For example, the "home management" module of practical shopping, food preparation and cooking skills accredited by the Associated Schools Direct Accreditation Network (ASDAN). For others the school's concept of the "classroom without walls" involves them in outdoor and adventurous activities undertaken as part of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Excellent opportunities for work experience are provided that are tailored to student's particular interests and aims.
17. The needs of pupils with more complex and profound needs are understood and very effective provision is made. For example, regular group sessions led by a physiotherapist for those with physical and motor disabilities enable and challenge pupils to maintain or to extend their range of movement. Such sessions provide their individual helpers with excellent training in how to manage the needs of their pupils with confidence.
18. Assemblies make an excellent contribution to social, moral, cultural and spiritual development of pupils and students of all ages. Within these the school as a community comes to life and the values of sharing, caring for others and celebrating their success are strongly developed. Each assembly gives all pupils and students the chance to learn and practice the use of signs. They show and share with others things that they possess or have made and of which they are fond or proud, and they develop the sense that they are unique and of special worth. In the act of worship with which each assembly concludes all staff and pupils hold hands for a moment of calm and stillness that is natural to them but very moving to the outside observer.
19. There is an active school council that is keen to show leadership. In a commendable exercise in democracy the school council recently consulted all pupils in the school on their preferred options in developing the school's play spaces. Council members showed maturity in realising that the school's limited budget for play space development would need to be increased if their plans were to be implemented and set about doing this by organising fund raising.
20. All pupils and students who attend the school are given a rich experience of life beyond it, opportunities to develop their own strengths to the greatest extent and the best possible chance to take a full part as possible in the life of a lively, purposeful and caring community.

**The school provides excellent care for its pupils and students and takes full account of the need to ensure the safety and welfare of those who learn and work at the school.**

21. The head teacher is the designated person for child protection; she has attended two training

courses in the last year and has shared what she learned with the whole staff. The school is very vigilant in this matter. Staff know and understand their duties and the proper procedures to ensure the protection of children in their care. To be certain that all staff are up to date with this, a refresher session was recently offered at a professional training day. The school tries hard to keep all of its children's needs under review and is also mindful of the needs of families. For example, it uses its influence, which arises because it has very good relationships with attached social workers, to ensure that parents who need it are given opportunities for respite from caring for their children. Children's medical needs are understood and excellent provision is made. There is a full time nurse. Many teachers and support assistants have been trained to administer medication to epileptic pupils and this means that these children can take part in trips and visits. All staff members have received first aid training and have emergency first aid certificates. Two have first aider at work certificates. There are full and up to date records of all matters concerning fire and electrical safety. The school undertakes assessments of the risks involved in all of its classroom and out of school activities. At the last inspection attention was drawn to risks arising from the manual handling of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Having initially accessed training provided by another agency the school was dissatisfied with its quality. The head teacher took a course so that she herself may become a link worker in safe handling techniques. A member of the support staff has been a trainer since October 2001 and a regime has been introduced to ensure safe handling techniques throughout the school. To ensure consistency, reference to the techniques by which pupils are to be managed is entered into class files. In February and March 2002 all support staff completed their manual handling training. Arrangements are currently excellent and safe practice was noted throughout the inspection, particularly, for example, in the group motor therapy sessions when great care was exercised to make effective use of proper apparatus to move pupils from floor mats into their wheelchairs.

22. Assessment of pupils' needs and of what they know, understand and can do is very thorough. Excellent use is made of these assessments to be certain that all pupils receive teaching that is appropriate to their needs. For each pupil, within six weeks of arriving at the school, a behaviour and learning plan, related to the statement, is prepared. There are well tried systems in place to track progress in English, mathematics and science and the information provided by these is used to set targets which are reviewed each term. Pupils reach more than 75 per cent of these targets within the time prescribed.
23. The behaviour of pupils is also kept under constant review; all incidents are logged but there are very few that arise from other than for accidental reasons. The school takes effective steps to keep itself informed of the personal and learning needs of all of its pupils and students and to provide them with a safe environment in which to learn and develop.

**The head teacher's leadership is excellent and she is very strongly supported by her deputy and others in leadership roles.**

24. The head teacher has exceptional enthusiasm and works extremely hard to further improve the quality of education that the school offers and the results it achieves. She is fully involved in all of the school activities. Together with her deputy she organises and takes the excellent, daily, whole school assemblies. In addition to this she is happy to undertake the role of a classroom support assistant within lessons and frequently does so. She organises and accompanies trips with her pupils within the United Kingdom and abroad. In doing this she works to overcome boundaries of imagination and the practical difficulties that often prevent severely disabled pupils from having such opportunities. Visits by pupils from Ash Lea to Covent Garden for opera or ballet performances are, therefore, becoming a regular occurrence. She is exceptionally well informed and aware of the strengths and minor weaknesses of the school. She knows all of her pupils very well as individuals and as learners and visits their classrooms daily. She also knows the qualities of her staff very well and she is an inspiration to them. She thinks deeply about the role of the school within a local pattern of provision of special education that is in a state of change and is sure about the educational direction it must take.

25. The deputy head also provides exceptional leadership and is very effective in ensuring that what is agreed as school policy is implemented to the best possible standard. Those who are leaders of subjects of the curriculum or who have other managerial responsibilities carry out their duties to the best of their ability and a very high standard. Because of this teaching is excellent, the curriculum is very good and the monitoring and oversight of the curriculum, and of the quality of teaching and learning, is very thorough. The school is therefore able to set ambitious individual targets for its pupils and challenging overall performance targets.

### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

26. There are no weaknesses of such significance that they need to be addressed immediately in the action plan drawn up by governors in response to this inspection.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	24
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	27

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	10	10	4	0	0	0	0
Percentage	42	42	16	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than four percentage points

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	67
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	20

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	1
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	0
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	1
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 – Y14**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.1
Average class size	8

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y1 – Y14**

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	750

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	1,114,420
Total expenditure	1,091,257
Expenditure per pupil	16,287
Balance brought forward from previous year	142,221
Balance carried forward to next year	192,384

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1.4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	67
Number of questionnaires returned	33

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	79	18	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	76	24	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	82	15	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	52	3	0	3
The teaching is good.	94	6	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	76	24	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	97	3	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	100	0	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	88	12	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.	79	15	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	79	21	0	0	0