

INSPECTION REPORT

NORTHWAY SCHOOL

Mill Hill, London

LEA area: London Borough of Barnet

Unique reference number: 101395

Headteacher: Mrs L Burgess

Reporting inspector: Mr M Warman
1516

Dates of inspection: 6 – 8 May 2003

Inspection number: 249294

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:	5 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The Fairway Mill Hill London
Postcode:	NW7 3HS
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Stevens
Date of previous inspection:	28 March 2001

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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1516	Mr M Warman	Registered inspector	Mathematics Art and design	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well is the school led and managed?
9835	Mrs G Spencer	Lay inspector		How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
1830	Mr S Charlton	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology Education inclusion	How well does the school care for its pupils?
1718	Mrs K Charlton	Team inspector	English Physical education English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
1370	Mr C Halliwell	Team inspector	Science History Special educational needs	How well are pupils taught?
15427	Mrs K Butterfield	Team inspector	Geography Music Religious education	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

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REPORT CONTENTS

Page

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

6

Information about the school
How good the school is
What the school does well
What could be improved
How the school has improved since its last inspection
Standards
Pupils' attitudes and values
Teaching and learning
Other aspects of the school
How well the school is led and managed
Parents' and carers' views of the school

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

10

The school's results and pupils' achievements
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

11

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

13

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

14

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

15

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

16

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

17

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

18

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

21

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Northway School serves the London Borough of Barnet and provides for pupils from five to eleven years of age with moderate and complex learning difficulties, and pupils on the autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). There are currently 72 pupils on the school's roll, all with a statement of special educational need. A high proportion, forty six per cent, of pupils is identified as being ASD. Pupils are taught in nine classes. Just under half of the pupils are from white British origin. The other pupils come from a wide range of racial backgrounds with no predominant group. Sixteen pupils speak English as an additional language all of whom are at the early stages of language acquisition. The main languages spoken are Gujarati, Urdu, Twi and Greek. Twenty six pupils, thirty six per cent, are entitled to free school meals, which is above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with very good features. Teaching and learning are good and pupils achieve well. The school is well led and managed and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well, overall, particularly in communication skills, numeracy and their personal and social development.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Pupils are very well cared for and are keen to come to school.
- The leadership of the headteacher provides a very clear direction for driving the school forward.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, particularly impressive are the teamwork and the successful strategies for managing pupils' behaviour.

What could be improved

- Pupils' progress in some of the foundation subjects.
- The use of a wider range of strategies, including information and communication technology, to develop pupils' writing and recording skills.
- The opportunities pupils have for learning in mainstream schools.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 2001. Since then improvement has been good. The curriculum has been improved with schemes of work for all subjects in place and being used. There are good procedures for the assessment and recording of pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and personal and social development using the nationally recognised 'P', performance, scales. Monitoring of teaching is now good. The quality of teaching has been improved, as there is now more very good teaching than the small amount seen at the last inspection. Pupils make very good progress in their communication skills, with the use of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) being a strength of the school.

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 the end of Year 6	Key	
Speaking and listening	A	Very good	A
Reading	A	Good	B
Writing	B	Satisfactory	C
Mathematics	A	Unsatisfactory	D
Personal, social and health education	A	Poor	E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A		

Overall, pupils' achievements are good. They are very good in their communication skills, reading, mathematics and personal and social development. This has much to do with the way in which the school has developed the use of the PECS approach with signs and speech, and this is now a very strong feature. There is a clear focus on developing pupils' personal and social skills resulting in their making very good progress in this area. All pupils have individual education plans with well thought out, clear targets. These are used consistently in lessons and consequently pupils make very good progress towards them. Pupils achieve well in all other subjects, with the exception of history, geography and physical education, where achievement is satisfactory.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very interested and responsive in lessons. They are very keen to come to school and enjoy their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well. They are polite and well mannered. Pupils who have difficulties in managing their behaviour make very good improvement due to the consistent approach of the school's successful strategies.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils build strong relationships with each other and the staff who work with them. They gradually take more responsibility as they get older and learn to work as part of a team.
Attendance	Good. Pupils are keen to come to school and only miss for medical reasons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 1 and 2	Years 3 to 6
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good

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

The overall quality of teaching is good. A high proportion of the teaching is either good or very good. Teaching in English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education is good with many strengths. Communication skills are very well taught. This contributes positively to pupils' good and very good learning. The major strength of the teaching throughout the school is the high quality teamwork between all those who work in classrooms and especially between teachers and learning support assistants. Another significant strength is the knowledge and understanding staff show of the pupils' complex needs and the way activities are planned to meet these. This ensures that all pupils have their needs well met. All staff work hard and have a strong commitment to improving pupils' achievements and want pupils to do their best. Pupils' interest is successfully gained at the beginning of sessions and pupils learn well because the work is pitched at the right level. The work of the learning support staff is of a high quality and all staff are consistent in the way they work, particularly in behaviour management. Planning for lessons is very thorough but although objectives are very clear for most sessions, for some of the foundation subjects the specific vocabulary or knowledge and skills expected to be learned are not made sufficiently explicit.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. The school has developed its provision well to meet pupils' very wide range of learning needs and ensure that all statutory requirements are met. The high emphasis on developing pupils' skills in communication is a significant strength of the provision.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. These pupils are well provided for and consequently make the same progress as all other pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Spiritual, social and moral development are very good and cultural development is good. Very good opportunities are provided in assemblies, lessons and celebrations of pupils' achievements. The very good programme for personal, social and health education makes a strong contribution to these areas.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Pupils are very well cared for and all health and safety procedures, including child protection, are very well in place. Assessment procedures, the use of assessment and the monitoring of pupils' performance are good in English, mathematics and personal, social and health education but could be improved in other subjects.

The school's links with parents are good and the quality of information provided to parents and carers is very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and has been highly instrumental in moving the school forward to its present strong position.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Good. The governing body is effective in identifying strengths and weaknesses and helping to move the school forward. It is very supportive of the headteacher and staff.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. There are good procedures for evaluating the performance of the school. These are used well to improve the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' performance. Co-ordinators' roles in English and mathematics are well developed but other subject leaders have limited opportunity to check on the quality and standards in their subjects.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Financial planning and control are good and governors are fully involved in budget setting. School improvement planning is well linked to the budget and the criteria for success are clear. Specific grants are used well.

The school is well staffed with teachers and support staff. They are very experienced and skilled in the work they do. Learning resources are generally good but the accommodation is only adequate. The school applies the principles of best value well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents like nearly everything about the school and are supportive of its work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small number of parents commented about the behaviour in school, the amount of work pupils get to do at home and the way the school works with parents.

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive comments. Two thirds of parents replied to the pre-inspection questionnaire, all except one or two expressing positive views of the school. Inspectors found behaviour in school to be very good and that the school works with parents well. The amount of work pupils get to do at home is similar to that found in other schools of this type.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall, pupils' progress and their achievements are good throughout the school. As a result of the good quality of the teaching, there are consistently good standards. In all classes pupils make good progress.
2. The school has been analysing the data concerning the progress made by pupils for two years in English and mathematics. Analysis of the gains made between Performance (P) levels (these measures are produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority for pupils who are below the lowest level of attainment of the National Curriculum) and, where appropriate, National Curriculum levels show that many pupils make significant progress in these subjects. This demonstrates a clear link between the well-planned curriculum, the good teaching and good achievement and progress made in these subjects. Suitably challenging targets for this year have been set and the school is on course to achieve them.
3. Throughout the school there is a strong emphasis on meeting the needs of each individual pupil and as a result there is no measurable difference between the progress made by boys or girls or by pupils from ethnic minorities. Pupils from homes where English is an additional language consistently do as well as other pupils because the work is specifically tailored towards ensuring their knowledge and understanding of language is developed effectively. Additionally, the good and very good teaching of literacy, particularly communication skills through the PECS approach, and numeracy, is included in all subjects and taught at every opportunity. Good attention is paid towards ensuring that pupils with additional special educational needs have the correct level of support so that they too do as well as other pupils.
4. In English, mathematics and science pupils make good progress and achieve well. They develop their skills in speaking and listening and in reading very well. By the end of Year 2, pupils clearly indicate their needs and wishes and make choices using a range of approaches, including signs and PECS, and many vocalise and begin to use words and sentences. They listen attentively to stories anticipating what will happen next and improve control when they develop their early writing skills. By the time they are in Year 6, communication skills are greatly improved. They participate in discussions, look at pictures in books and are in the early stages of reading. Many create sentences using the PECS system, 'overwrite' words or copy underneath and begin to write short sentences on their own.
5. The use of number rhymes and songs in mathematics helps pupils learn to count and by Year 2, many join in up to five and sort objects by shape or size. As pupils move through the school, they begin to recognise and name an increasing number of shapes and begin to do simple addition. By Year 6, they collect data, recognise coins and learn about telling the time. Their accurate use of mathematical language increases and more able pupils tackle addition and subtraction confidently. Many pupils show a good understanding of measuring distances in metres and centimetres.
6. In science, pupils develop their investigational skills throughout the school and make good progress. By the end of Year 2, pupils discover that pushing and pulling makes things start and stop. They learn how things grow and begin to recognise the parts of their bodies. Pupils' ability to predict develops as they get older, becoming more accurate, for example, in their opinions on what happens to water when it is cooled. By Year 6, pupils know that plants grow and they explore what is needed for them to thrive. They are beginning to understand about forces through their work with spinners and parachutes.

7. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in personal, social and health education because it is taught throughout all lessons as well as in separate sessions. They learn to look after themselves as far as possible and to relate very well to each other.

8. It is understandable that in some other subjects standards are not quite so high because, rightly, time has been invested in the effective implementation of the core subjects. Nevertheless, because the standard of teaching is good, pupils make good progress and do well throughout the school. The exceptions are in history, geography and physical education (PE) where pupils' progress and achievement are satisfactory.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. The school has continued to maintain the very positive attitudes since the last inspection. Pupils are enthusiastic about school life. They arrive at school cheerfully and soon settle to the varied routines within classrooms. The warm and caring relationships between all staff and pupils are clearly evident. This means that pupils of all abilities work hard and respond very well to the activities planned. Pupils move around the school very sensibly and with a developing awareness of and sensitivity towards the needs of others, which they show, for example, by opening doors and helping to fetch and carry things.

10. Behaviour of the pupils is very good. Overall, there is a calm atmosphere and racial harmony within the school, which is particularly evident during circle times and school assemblies. Pupils do their best to do as they are told and they follow instructions well. They show great respect towards others and especially towards the staff. Pupils have a very clear understanding of the 'Golden Rules' displayed in each classroom and the school hall and know how they are expected to behave. Where pupils have difficulty in managing their own behaviour they try very hard to change and are learning to understand what staff are asking them to do. There have been no exclusions during the current school year.

11. Relationships within the school are very good. Pupils build up trust and knowledge of routines and systems through the caring and consistent way in which they are treated. This is one of the strengths of the school and makes a significant contribution to the whole school ethos. Evidence of this can be seen during their classroom activities and at playtimes, where they often work and play co-operatively, as well as during the 'Hello' and 'Goodbye' routines at the beginning and end of the day, which they thoroughly enjoy. Pupils are polite and friendly and know that it is important to share, take turns and listen when appropriate. Staff listen carefully to the pupils and set very good examples for them to follow because they treat them fairly and with respect. Pupils show interest in one another's achievements both within the classroom activities and in assemblies. They make good gains in developing their own self-esteem and they very much appreciate the success of others.

12. The personal development of the pupils is very good. Pupils benefit from the way this element is effectively taught in morning assemblies and as a subtle, but important component in lessons, particularly religious education. They are learning what it means to be a responsible member of the school community and to undertake tasks, such as giving out and tidying away resources and returning attendance registers to the school office after registration. In activities, such as the 'breakfast club', they are learning effectively how to develop their initiative by making decisions about what they are going to eat and how to prepare food. Before physical education lessons, most pupils are confident in changing their own clothes and make good progress in developing their social skills. During lessons, pupils successfully learn how to co-operate with each other and work well in groups and pairs.

13. Attendance in the last school year was good. The school monitors attendance closely and has very close liaison with parents, carers and escorts. Parents are very supportive of the school's aims and they make very good efforts to ensure their children attend school regularly. Unauthorised absences are carefully monitored and the school has very good systems in place to ensure that parents adhere to the school's procedures that are clearly written in the school prospectus.

Transport arrangements are effective resulting in punctuality being very good and therefore the school day starts at the same time for all pupils. Registration periods are very orderly. Governors are reporting attendance figures annually to parents as required.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school with many strong features. In approximately half of the sessions seen, the quality of teaching was good and in well over a third of sessions it was very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Overall, the quality of teaching is good in all subjects except geography, history and PE where it is satisfactory. This demonstrates that the school has sustained the improvements reported at the time of the last inspection. Particular strengths are the teaching of basic skills utilising the national primary strategies, the effectiveness of the teaching methods used by staff, the management of pupils and the teamwork of all the staff working in the classrooms. As a result, most pupils make good progress in their learning across most subject areas. This is no mean achievement when the very diverse needs of the pupils are taken into account, especially those of the pupils in the discrete ASD classes.

15. The teaching is particularly strong across the school in developing pupils' communication, reading, numeracy and personal and social skills.

16. The teachers' planning is thorough and detailed, with the main objectives being rehearsed with the pupils and reinforced through the use of the PECS. All staff have high expectations and use this system in an effective way to fully engage pupils in their learning. This is so whether the lesson is, for example, literacy, history or swimming. Individual education plans (IEPs) in literacy, numeracy and PHSE, personal, health and social education, are of a good quality, being specific about tasks, teaching approach and expected outcomes. These IEPs are particularly well used by all staff to assess progress and ensure they meet the specific needs of pupils. The lesson objectives are subject specific for the planning of literacy, numeracy and personal and social education, and hence help to track pupils' progress. On occasions, in many of the other subjects, these objectives are insufficiently subject specific, lacking a focus upon matters such as language, knowledge, understanding and skills. In addition, whilst some good examples were seen in developing pupils' writing and recording across the curriculum, for example, in science, insufficient attention is given to this matter in teachers' planning and lesson organisation. This might be improved if there was a higher level of monitoring and guidance by the subject co-ordinators, which is currently limited in these subjects.

17. Most lessons have a clear structure, consisting of an introduction, a main focus of group and/or individual work and a plenary session. In the main, these lessons are delivered at a brisk pace. The pupils have a wide range of concentration spans. The staff successfully meet this considerable challenge through the use of a good range of strategies to capitalise on the pupils' attention and to extend it wherever possible. For example, in a numeracy session, very good use was made of three-dimensional shapes to maintain pupils' attention through tactile work. In a science session on the bones of the body, the use of the song, ' ..and this bone is attached to..' was used to sustain pupils' concentration whilst, the use of the 'Sooty' puppet to 'oversee' the work of the class was successful in another session.

18. In the majority of lessons, strong team work between all staff, well-organised routines and unobtrusive shepherding procedures usually mean that the lessons run smoothly and learning is uninterrupted. A key strength of the school is the calm and patient way in which all staff manage difficult behaviour. A wide variety of interesting, lively and exciting activities are presented which pupils want to join in with and find out more about. Good examples of this were seen in:

- the use of the story of the "Little Red Hen";
- the experiences of blowing a recorder and using percussion instruments;
- the discussions about babies using photographs of the staff's families

and the use of a skeleton in a science lesson. As the staff have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the pupils, very good relationships with them and very good and effective

techniques to help pupils with significant difficulties, the overwhelming majority make good progress. This is particularly evident for pupils with ASD, where specialist techniques such as the use of the Treatment and Education of Autistic Children (TEACCH) approach, signing and PECS enable most of them to make significant strides in their learning through joining in and communicating.

19. The work of the learning support assistants throughout the school contributes significantly to the good quality teaching seen and the good learning opportunities provided for the pupils. They are highly skilled when teaching groups of pupils or when working with individuals. Their necessary interventions to help with the management of pupils are very effective, as is their anticipation of the possible reactions of pupils to certain situations, thereby reducing the likelihood that the learning of other pupils will be disturbed.

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

20. Overall, the quality and range of the curriculum is good. The school has developed its provision well to meet pupils' very wide range of learning needs and ensure that all statutory requirements are met. The high emphasis on developing pupils' skills in communication is a significant strength of the provision.

21. Curriculum development has been undertaken in a systematic way so that all policies and schemes of work have been reviewed in recent years. A clear and appropriate focus has been given to the development of pupils' skills in communication and literacy, mathematics, and personal and social development in the first instance. The school's policy of developing pupils' skills in communication using a wide range of strategies, including PECS and signing, is particularly successful and supports pupils' learning across all other areas. Other strategies, such as the TEACCH approach in the discrete ASD classes, are also very effective as they focus pupils' minds on learning. The school has also adapted the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies very effectively to suit its own needs and introduced a well thought out programme for personal and social and health education. All of this guidance is used, along with pupils' own individual education plans, to ensure that planning in these areas is good. Subject planning in other subjects is thorough but there is not always sufficient focus on the specific subject skills to be developed. This is linked to the fact that procedures to assess and monitor pupils' progress are not fully established across all subjects of the curriculum.

22. The school has a strong commitment to equality of opportunity and ensures that all pupils are very effectively included in activities. The school fully meets the requirements of the special educational needs Code of Practice. Pupils' needs are identified early and they are set clear and appropriate targets. A wide range of different types of support is provided according to each pupil's needs. This includes speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and individual support in using the PECS programme. Carefully worked out programmes support pupils who speak English as an additional language. All of these are effectively planned and reviewed regularly to achieve the best outcome for pupils. The school is very inclusive by planning opportunities to enable groups of pupils from different classes to work together thus giving pupils a particularly good appreciation of the fact that everyone is an important member of the school community and has a special contribution to make. The school is suitably extending the links it has established with other schools, including mainstream and the secondary school to which most pupils transfer. This is to broaden the experiences given to pupils and also to provide staff with important opportunities both to share and extend their own learning. The school has rightly identified this focus on inclusion as an important next step in the school improvement plan.

23. The school's provision for personal, social and health education is particularly effective. Throughout the day, staff reinforce the work undertaken in specific lessons. In this way they help pupils to realise that each individual has responsibilities as well as rights, and that everyone has to learn how to make choices. There is good attention given to the need for healthy living and the dangers associated with the misuse of drugs. A good emphasis is given to the development of

pupils' understanding of citizenship. The school council plays an important part in school life and exemplifies well the school's focus on pupils taking responsibility. For example, at a meeting observed during the inspection, members put forward some excellent ideas for playground markings.

24. The provision for the development of pupils' skills in ICT is much improved and is now generally good. The school has placed high priority on the development of this subject in the whole-school improvement plan and resources have been improved significantly over time. Staff training has taken place and staff are now confident to teach the subject. The school has a clear action plan in place to ensure further development in this area, in particular to ensure that it is used effectively across other subjects.

25. The school provides a very wide range of activities outside lessons. These include clubs, for example, aerobics, disco dancing, reading and games, all of which are very popular with pupils. The breakfast club is also well attended.

26. The school has good links with the community, which enhance pupils' learning. A wide range of visits into the community takes place supporting several subjects, most notably studies in geography, history and religious education. These include visits to local places of worship, museums and local events such as the Montrose Music Festival. A wide range of visitors, including the police, the fire service, musicians and local clergy, all help to enhance the curriculum well.

27. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall.

28. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. Staff receive and value pupils' ideas and encourage them very well to have a positive self-image. They act as good role models and inspire a sense of trust. In this climate, pupils are confident to explore their feelings and emotions; for example, when pupils talked with the staff, and one of the parents who is expecting a baby, about the ways in which they would help care for a baby. The school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to find out about different beliefs. Assemblies, religious education lessons, stories and visits to places of worship, such as the local church and a Hindu temple, all contribute to this effectively. There are good opportunities for reflection in assemblies and pupils respond particularly well to these. In subjects, such as science, music and art, opportunities are provided for pupils to develop a sense of wonder at the beauty of the world. This was particularly noticeable when some of the pupils discussed the wonders of the human skeleton.

29. There is very good provision for moral development. Parents expressed their appreciation of the aims, values and good behaviour that the school promotes, and pupils are aware that they are expected to behave well. Pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong, and appreciate the importance of 'The Golden Rules'. They understand that it is their responsibility to behave well and also to help others to do so. Targets to help improve behaviour are carefully worked out for each pupil and all staff who work with the pupils are made aware of these so that there is consistency of approach. The staff work hard to help pupils attain these and this results in pupils making particularly good progress in this respect.

30. The support for pupils' social development through the daily life of the school is very good. Adults are very supportive of the pupils and have established very good relationships with them. The school is particularly successful in ensuring that pupils help and care for one another. In class and elsewhere, pupils are effectively encouraged to work together and support the whole-school community. At breakfast club, playtimes and throughout the lunch breaks many staff are on duty. They eat meals with the pupils and take part in games with them. All areas of the school grounds are supervised extremely well. Games and clubs are well organised and pupils enjoy playing together. Pupils also take on specific jobs for the whole school or their class, for instance, setting up and running the tuck shop. Visits undertaken by all year groups play an important part in encouraging pupils' social development.

31. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their cultural awareness. Pupils develop their understanding well through visits to local places of interest, when visitors come to school, through assemblies and their lessons notably in art, history, geography and religious education. Staff from different cultural backgrounds make a very positive contribution to pupils' understanding since they bring items of interest from their own culture and talk to pupils about these. Festivals from different faiths, such as Diwali, Hannukah, and Easter, are recognised in assemblies. Pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures is also promoted through learning about Christianity, Judaism and Islam in religious education. Books appropriately include information about the diverse range of cultures represented in society. The school has a suitable policy to encourage positive race relations and, taken overall, the school ensures that pupils learn about life in a multi-cultural society well. Further development through the work planned to extend the school's expressive arts programme is a positive next step.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and these are applied with total consistency by all staff. There are good policies relating to bullying and oppressive behaviour. All pupils are aware of these and know what to do if such incidents occur. There were many good examples seen during the inspection when staff dealt with instances of unacceptable behaviour in a very effective way which enabled the pupils concerned to maintain their dignity and benefit from the learning experience which the staff established out of the incident. Consequently the school is a very orderly and friendly environment in which all pupils have confidence to explore how to manage their own behaviour. This is a very effective aspect of the school's provision in which it is justifiably proud.

33. Attendance is well monitored with an effective rewards system on a class basis for good attendance.

34. The school is at an early stage of developing formal procedures for assessing the progress of individual pupils. Although these are satisfactory overall, the school recognises that they must be improved. In literacy and numeracy there are recently established systems to identify and record pupils' achievements but to date, these have generated insufficient information over time to be fully effective. These procedures are based on the 'P' scales and the Small Steps scheme and in the school development plan there is an appropriate strategy to extend them to the other subjects of the school's curriculum. Discussions are currently taking place to develop and implement a formal recording system through which this regular pattern of assessing pupils' progress can be used to more closely focus the development of specific skills for individual pupils. However, all staff know their pupils well and the informal assessment and monitoring which takes place is used well to match work to the needs of individuals and to move their learning forward. The individual education plans for all pupils are reviewed regularly and are used well to track the progress which pupils make in English, mathematics and personal and social education. Tracking in other subjects lacks the detail which will be provided by the use of the 'P' scales and the Small Steps scheme. There are very good links with specialist staff such as speech therapists, physiotherapists and psychologists. All of whom work well with staff to ensure that all pupils derive maximum benefit from their skills.

35. The information that the school provides in the Annual Reports to parents gives a clear picture of what pupils have achieved and their targets for the future. All the Annual Reviews of the pupils' Statements of Special Educational Need fully meet the requirements of the Code of Practice and are valued by parents.

36. As the school has only recently been able to bring its ICT facilities up to the standard expected, these are not used extensively to record pupils' achievements. However, the school has made very good use of photography and audio and video recording to do this and recognises the potential to further extend these through the use of digital technology.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37. Parents consider Northway to be a good school.

38. Almost all parents say that their children enjoy coming to school and they are happy with the standards the school achieves. A small minority, however, do not think that the school provides sufficient after-school or holiday activities and a similar amount are unsure of the arrangements for homework. Inspectors found that the school provides a very wide range of activities outside lessons. The amount of work pupils get to do at home is similar to that found in other schools of this type. However, the school is addressing this issue so that parents are clearer about the arrangements for homework. This is an example of how the school always seeks ways to improve its partnership with parents.

39. The school has effective links with parents, carers and escorts. The recent meeting to encourage parents to play a more effective role in the life of the school was well attended and produced, through the carefully presented survey, many offers of help with the fun day, gardening, library, swimming and ICT clubs. The Friends of Northway is made up of parents, staff, and governors. They work hard to raise funds over and above those which are given by the local authority. They also organise fun days which are well attended by parents, pupils and their families. Workshops are well attended. The recently introduced PECS programme workshop was well attended by parents, carers and escorts. The programme is well used and is an excellent method of communication. The school has a good relationship with Barnet Carers' Centre, which provides support to parents with regards to medical and other issues.

40. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. The school newsletter, The North Star, is well documented, bright and contains useful information about past and present pupils. There are also separate weekly newsletters for individual classes that inform parents of special events, news and views. Letters home are easy to read, clear and to the point. There are also regular communications by telephone between staff and parents. The school prospectus and governors' report to parents provides an excellent source of information to parents and both comply with requirements. Parent consultation evenings are well attended and useful.

41. Parents are involved in the life of the school and their child's learning at home. The amount of work pupils get to do at home is similar to that found in other schools of this type. The school ensures that parents are well informed through the home/school diary and information about the curriculum and the topics of each term. The well-structured school prospectus, the effective individual class newsletters and the home/school diary is making a significant contribution to the partnership between home and school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

42. The headteacher, supported by the staff and the governing body, has been very successful in moving the school forward to its present strong position. She provides strong leadership and a clear direction for the school to continue to move forward. This results in the aims of the school being very well reflected in its work. Teamwork is a major strength and all staff work together very well and share the desire and commitment that all pupils will make as much progress as they can, both academically and in broader areas of personal achievement. The result is a school that is effective in striving for high standards in all that it does.

43. Monitoring by the headteacher and senior staff has been effective in raising the quality of teaching to its present level. Subject co-ordinators are starting to have an effect on their areas of responsibility. Most have developed good schemes of work related to the needs of the different groups of pupils and support other staff well. However, at present, few monitor the planning of individual teachers or the impact of their subjects on pupils' progress. Administrative staff contribute extremely well to the friendliness and efficiency of the school. This includes the warm reception to visitors as they enter the school and the helpful and, as necessary at times, sympathetic response to telephone calls.

44. The governing body has a good knowledge and understanding of the strengths of the school. Governors receive detailed written and spoken reports from the headteacher and other senior staff, and are briefed well about specific aspects of school development, such as the very successful approach to communication through the PECS system. There are appropriate sub-committees to support the full governing body meetings. Governors regularly visit school during lesson time so that they also have first hand information about how well the school is operating and an opportunity to speak with other members of staff. Overall, the rigour of the governors' monitoring alongside their strong support has contributed well to the headteacher's confidence in the actions that are taken, in further initiatives that are planned and, more broadly, in shaping the future of the school.

45. The school's self-assessment procedures, its annual improvement plan and the longer-term strategic plan are good. The improvement plan is detailed and includes all the important areas of the school's responsibilities. It is linked carefully to the school's budget. The plan is built upon a very comprehensive self-assessment approach, gathering information about how well the school is achieving from a wide range of sources. Questionnaires are sent to parents and the local authority has also contributed a strong external perspective. Information obtained from the regular monitoring of teaching and learning and pupils' progress is used well. The self-assessment and improvement planning process has resulted in important changes that have improved pupils' learning and progress. The improvement plan is monitored regularly and these updates are reported and discussed with the governing body, adding to its understanding of the school. The school has started to set itself targets based on pupils' achievements against the 'P' scales in literacy and mathematics. The results of this target setting are being used well to contribute to the school's self-assessment and improvement planning.

46. Financial planning and management are strong. The headteacher and the governing body, supported very effectively by the school's administrative and finance officers, exercise great care with available finances, technology is used well to support this process. They are very successful in extending these resources through bids from a range of public, private and charitable sources. Specific grants are always used well and aimed at improving the quality of the education they offer and, therefore, the achievements of pupils. The school applies the principles of best value well. There is careful consideration of the needs of the school and the ways in which these can be most effectively met. At the end of the financial year 2002/3 the school had a planned carry-over to enable necessary work to be done on the accommodation which is in the process of being completed.

47. The numbers, experience and qualifications of teachers and learning support assistants match the needs of pupils and the demands of the curriculum very well. There is very clear guidance for new members of staff and a good emphasis on the continuing professional development of all staff. For example, the mealtime supervisors and coach escorts have been trained in the use of PECS. Performance management and appraisal of all staff is well established. Teaching is regularly observed and contributes to this process. Targets are set and their achievement is monitored. Learning support assistants make a major contribution to the success of the school and support pupils' development very well.

48. The accommodation is adequate and well maintained by the site manager and cleaning staff. There is some specialist accommodation including a food technology room, swimming pool, sensory room, music therapy room and soft play area. The outside rural science area is a particularly good resource. Resources for learning throughout the school are generally good, including a well-stocked library with a good range of books suitable for the needs of the pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

49. In order to raise standards further and improve the quality of education the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- (1) Improve pupils' progress in the foundation subjects by:
 - identifying in teachers' planning the subject specific vocabulary, knowledge and skills to be developed. (paragraph number 16)
 - developing assessment and recording procedures by using the 'P' scales. (paragraph numbers 21 and 74)
 - monitoring pupils' progress and setting targets for improvement. (paragraph numbers 34 and 68)
- (2) Improve pupils' writing and recording skills by using a wider range of strategies including PECS and ICT. (paragraph number 56)
- (3) Increase the opportunities for more pupils to have learning experiences in mainstream schools by extending the present arrangements and seeking new links with schools. (paragraph number 22)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	48
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	19	22	7	0	0	0
Percentage	0	40	45	15	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 two 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	72
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	26

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	16

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	93.5	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

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	36	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	6	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	18	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y 1 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	8
Average class size	8

Education support staff: Y1 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	627

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2002/3
	£
Total income	1,041,839
Total expenditure	1,025,307
Expenditure per pupil	15,078
Balance brought forward from previous year	68,169
Balance carried forward to next year	84,701

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	72
Number of questionnaires returned	47

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	34	0	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	49	0	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	43	2	4	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	49	6	4	8
The teaching is good.	58	37	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	41	4	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	41	4	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	37	0	2	2
The school works closely with parents.	48	44	8	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	64	31	0	2	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	43	0	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	42	4	4	10

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

ENGLISH

50. Pupils of all ages and abilities, including those who speak English as an additional language, achieve very well in developing their skills in communication and also in reading. They achieve well in writing. This level of achievement is due to teaching which is consistently good and often very good. The high focus given to developing pupils' skills of communication has a very positive impact on pupils' learning in all aspects of the curriculum. Overall, there has been good improvement since the time of the last inspection.

51. By the end of Year 2, many pupils use a range of means, including PECS and signs, to communicate their needs and contribute to lessons. By Year 6, many begin to show an appreciation of the audience and in this way they learn to adapt their communications to suit the situation. Throughout the school there is very good improvement in developing confidence to communicate with large groups, for example, in school assemblies when pupils of different ages are asked to contribute their ideas about their Favourite Things. In smaller groups and in one-to-one situations, younger pupils learn to make their needs known, for example, when asking if they can play with a 'slinky toy'. This is extended so that older pupils are successful in answering questions, for example, about what the 'Hungry Caterpillar' likes to eat. In all situations, staff are responsive listeners and in turn set a high expectation for pupils. For example, in a Year 4/5 lesson, when the pupils and the staff listened very carefully and respectfully to pupils' ideas about what they thought would happen next in the story entitled 'Rosie's Walk'. In all classes, pupils are learning to take turns in making a contribution to a discussion, for example, when discussing their news. Some of the older pupils showed particularly good understanding about the need to take turns and listen to each other when discussing the ways in which they might help to look after the animals found in the school's outdoor science area.

52. Pupils' skills in reading are developed very systematically in all year groups. By Year 2, many show good understanding about the ways in which books are organised. They turn pages correctly and refer confidently to the illustrations to explain the meaning of the text. When asked, they point to the title of the book and the name of the author. Pupils learn the names and sounds of letters, they gain clear awareness of sequences in stories and a number can suggest what might happen next. They build up good awareness of their favourite stories, such as the one about 'Going on a Bear Hunt' and more able pupils can read this with confidence. By Year 6, many pupils can recall the main events and characters in a story. A significant number of pupils have established good understanding of the key words needed for the books they are reading and can recognise these in different situations. The more able begin to use the sounds of the letters of the alphabet to help them work out the meaning of words of which they are unsure. These pupils are beginning to appreciate the need for good expression when reading aloud, for example, when referring to the alarm clock going off in the story entitled 'Peace at Last'. Generally, pupils show enjoyment in reading and most make significant gains in building up their skills over time.

53. Writing is developed well although not as systematically as communication and reading. Throughout the school many pupils develop an appreciation that words, signs and icons can be used to convey meaning in a written format. Many create sentences using the PECS system and others either trace over or write under script that they have dictated to an adult. Pupils enjoy writing about their own experiences and are starting to write about more imaginative situations. Pupils of all abilities take great care with their writing and their work is usually well presented. For many, the standard of handwriting is good and developing well using programmes built up for individuals through links with the occupational therapist. Pupils usually have positive attitudes to writing. The older ones are very successfully learning to write from someone else's perspective, for example, when pretending to be a bear who has landed on the moon and who is writing a postcard back to his mum to tell her what it is like. One pupil not only showed very good understanding of the

situation but also made very effective use of extended vocabulary when he wrote, ' I absolutely love the moon, we had a picnic and counted the stars'.

54. Teaching of English is good overall; there is very good teaching of communication and reading with all staff showing a consistent approach. Staff have benefited from a significant amount of training in the National Literacy Strategy and in using the PECS programme. As a result they are secure in the subject and plan effectively. Staff show particular enthusiasm for teaching English and set a high expectation to which the pupils respond very positively. Lessons are very well organised usually with a well-timed introduction, good attention given to small group or individual work followed by a helpful plenary at the end. Good use is made of time and resources, including the wide range of big books available in the school. Teachers make very effective use of support staff who are of a high quality and who make a significant contribution to the team. Staff manage pupils' behaviour very well so that there is a purposeful working atmosphere which ensures good levels of concentration. A noticeable feature of many lessons is the way in which staff use a wide range of strategies to engage pupils' attention. This not only happens in class lessons but also in small group work, such as those taken by the PECS co-ordinator. Staff are always ready with a new strategy, for example, using a toy, a puppet or a new sound, to help re-focus the pupils' attention on the key aspects of their learning.

55. Pupils in the school have an extremely wide range of learning needs and teachers take account of these very well. Staff make good use of assessment information so that tasks are well matched to the wide range of pupils' levels of understanding. They provide very good support to ensure that there are no barriers to learning and pupils maintain their self-esteem and confidence. A wide range of extra support is used, depending on the pupils' needs, to ensure that they make progress. This includes individual and small group PECS sessions, occupational therapy and speech therapy sessions. All of these are well organised with staff contributing effectively so that pupils achieve the targets in their individual education plans. The teaching of writing has been an area on which the school has focused in order to achieve improvement and generally this is working well although there is not the high level of consistency seen in teaching other aspects of the subject.

56. The management and co-ordination of English are good. The co-ordinator has worked well with other staff to ensure that there has been focused improvement since the last inspection. The school carefully monitors pupils' progress and achievements as well as the quality of teaching and learning. Useful whole-school targets are set as well as individual pupil targets. This means that the school can easily monitor the overall effectiveness of its work in this area. The current action plan recognises that further consistency is needed in the teaching of writing. An important next development involves using a wide range of strategies, including PECS and ICT, to develop pupils' writing and recording skills across other subjects, particularly in science, history and geography.

MATHEMATICS

57. Pupils of all abilities, including those who speak English as an additional language, make very good progress and achieve very well. Pupils' very positive attitudes, good and often very good teaching and the effective adaptation of the National Numeracy Strategy contribute to the very good achievement. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when achievement was satisfactory.

58. By Year 2, most pupils count to five and join in simple rhymes and number songs. A few more able pupils can count to 20 or 30 with help. They are beginning to match, recognise and order numerals from one to five and give the correct number of objects on request. Pupils showed a good understanding of the concept of full and empty during a practical activity, feeding the baby. Many sort objects by shape, size and colour and can match squares, circles and triangles. Action songs and number rhymes are used frequently to support pupils' understanding of the concepts of number. Pupils help tidy up by collecting all of one set of objects and know the difference between big and small and long and short.

59. By Year 6, most pupils read and write numbers and have good counting skills up to 20 and beyond. They are confident calculating simple addition sums and are beginning to be aware of multiplication as continuous addition. For example, in a Year 6 lesson pupils could confidently talk about the number of centimetres in a metre or parts of a metre by counting in tens. Pupils sort objects according to criteria and collect information to record on simple graphs. The concepts of 'more and less' and 'bigger and 'smaller' are known and demonstrated during practical sessions. Most pupils know the order of the days of the week and identify yesterday and tomorrow. They begin to identify and correctly name a range of simple shapes, such as circle, square and triangle. A few can name three-dimensional shapes, for example, a cylinder. This was seen during a geography lesson, when pupils were discussing the shapes of buildings in preparation for making a model highway. Pupils show a good understanding of measures and the need to use standard measures, for example, 'metres to measure the playground rather than paces as everybody has a different size of pace'.

60. Pupils' learning in mathematics is reinforced very well at other times. Pupils count at every opportunity, for example, the number of pupils present in the morning and the number of places needed for snack. Very good experience of handling money and giving change was gained when a group of pupils sold food made in technology to the rest of the school at break time.

61. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with examples of very good practice. The way the National Numeracy Strategy framework has been adapted enables teachers, through their very detailed planning, to meet the very specific needs of the group. They reinforce skills from previous lessons, particularly mental and oral skills, effectively. Good use is made of group work so that pupils' learning is able to be carefully monitored and encouraged by staff who work very well together. Learning support staff are used very well in this way. Very effective use is made of PECS during mathematics lessons to help pupils show their knowledge and understanding by answering questions and requesting equipment or an activity. Staff constantly use mathematical terms so that pupils become familiar with what they mean. Throughout lessons, praise is freely given which encourages the pupils to try hard. Plenary sessions at the end of lessons are good. They celebrate achievement, assess and reinforce learning and also help pupils to be aware of what they and others have achieved. Information and communication technology is beginning to be used to support pupils' learning. For example, in one lesson pupils were clearly motivated by a shape-matching program.

62. The subject is well managed and the co-ordinator supports staff well. A detailed scheme of work, based on the National Numeracy Strategy, helps teachers to plan very well for the wide ranges of ability. 'P' scales are now being used very well to identify progress and set challenging targets for individual pupils. Monitoring of the subject has identified strengths and weaknesses from which the co-ordinator is clear how to improve standards still further. There are good resources that are easily accessible in all classrooms. Staff use them well to make their lessons interesting, which gains the concentration of the pupils.

SCIENCE

63. The progress made by pupils in science is good throughout the school and all pupils achieve well. A very good programme of work has been developed which has been carefully adapted to meet the needs of the school's population. The implementation of this scheme has improved the quality of science provision since the last inspection and pupils are now benefiting from this and achieving better than previously reported.

64. Up to Year 2, pupils make good progress as they complete activities on recognising the main body parts. They understand that pushing and pulling makes things start and stop moving, and that every day appliances use electricity to make them work. Successful work is also being undertaken in getting them to understand that plants are alive and that green plants need light, water and warmth to grow.

65. Pupils maintain this good progress as they pass through the school. By Year 6, pupils have observed, and tried to understand, what happens to water when it is cooled and how sea salt affects this process. They have also experimented with spinners and parachutes to demonstrate that air resistance is a force that slows moving objects. These matters were well illustrated in the work of Year 4 and the Year 5/6 group respectively. In the Year 5/6 class, some highly effective work has been completed on predicting what would influence the growth of plants, through the use of PECS. In general, pupils writing about and recording their work on scientific enquiry is weak and this latter approach is an example of very good practice.

66. Overall, teaching is good and often very good, which elicits good responses from pupils and results in effective learning experiences for them. In the very good sessions, the lesson planning focuses on the scientific language and knowledge to be learnt during the lesson. Not all planning achieves this standard although it does indicate the activities to be provided for the pupils, the resources to be used and the organisation of the lesson. Lessons move along at a good pace with a suitable range of direct questioning of individual pupils and opportunities for them to respond to more open-ended questions. This was demonstrated well in two different lessons on the human skeleton where pictures, books, word prompts and a small skeleton were all used effectively to get pupils to know the names and positions of the main bones and parts of the body. A similar, successful approach, using the big book, 'Bean Diary', was used with the younger pupils when starting a project on plant growth.

67. A particular strength of all the teaching is the contribution of the learning support assistants. They are fully involved with the teaching and learning, either as part of the whole-class group or in the teaching of individual pupils. This is also the case in the staff's management of pupils' behaviour which is frequently very good. Well-timed interventions ensure pupils stay working, timers are used when pupils' behaviour becomes unacceptable, and songs are used to sustain concentration. For example, 'the knee bone is connected to ...' and the use of the Sooty puppet to 'oversee' the class are all highly effective strategies to manage pupils' behaviour and to maintain their concentration.

68. The main weakness of the teaching is the lack of a systematic recording procedure to monitor the progress which pupils make. The piloting of 'P' scales is nearly complete and the implementation of this process across the whole school to monitor pupils' progress will be implemented by this September. This will enable staff to track pupils' progress and target set more effectively. The current processes are however, inadequate to gauge, in a systematic way, pupil progress.

69. There are good displays of pupils' work around the school which help to celebrate pupils' achievements and to promote an interest in the subject. These range from the design of a clown's face where the eyes light up through the completion of an electric circuit, the results of the work on flight using spinners and parachutes and work on pushing and pulling undertaken in the local park.

70. Subject leadership and co-ordination, overall, are good, particularly in the areas of curriculum development, staff support, and the organisation and matching of learning resources to the scheme of work. The current action plan is also being successfully implemented. A highly successful science event was held last year that included a model car balloon race. A similar science event is being repeated shortly. The management of this subject is only satisfactory however, in terms of monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching. The school recognises that this is a key element in its drive for still greater improvement along with an enhanced recording system to monitor pupils' progress.

ART AND DESIGN

71. The good quality of the art and design work on display throughout the school celebrates the good progress and achievement that all pupils make in this subject.

72. By the time they are in Year 2, pupils have learnt to use a wide range of techniques. They use paint to support work in other subjects, for example, pictures of flowers for a science project on growing. They use collage techniques using tissue paper and they make pictures from objects like pasta bows and cotton wool to show the story of 'Little Miss Muffet'. Throughout Years 3 to 6, pupils build on these skills. They produce illustrations for their poems about Spring and use chalks to carefully draw pictures of flowers. Pupils use their skills of observation very well when making self-portraits and portraits of fellow class members. Pupils use a variety of materials including paint, charcoal, pastels and chalks. They have good experience of three-dimensional work including making models for the class highway, making a life-sized model of a Greek woman and creating Greek pots in clay. By the time they are in Year 6, many pupils understand what happens when colours are mixed and use this to good effect. They make three-dimensional patterns using folded and bent paper and card and use their observation skills well when drawing skeleton leaves.

73. Pupils enjoy their artwork enormously because teachers plan interesting activities ensuring all pupils can do their best. The good quality of teaching enables pupils to develop appropriate skills. Support staff are effective in supporting pupils in lessons, particularly when working with individuals or small groups of pupils. This allows pupils to have sufficient time, the right amount of support and constant comment to keep their concentration levels high. Information and communication technology is beginning to be used to support work in art. For example, pupils used a program to design and colour flowers.

74. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. There is a good scheme of work that ensures a good range of techniques are developed and practised. The co-ordinator shares ideas effectively but at present does little monitoring of teaching and learning. A key area that is recognised for development is the assessment and recording of pupils' skills based on the 'P' scales.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

75. All pupils make good progress and for some, particularly those whose manual skills are not well developed, progress is very good. The school has appropriately decided to concentrate on activities that are focused on model making and food technology but is making increasing use of construction kits to develop pupils' manual skills.

76. In the Year 1/2 classes, pupils have made a wide range of food dishes. During the inspection they prepared a vegetable and noodle stir-fry which involved chopping, tearing and grating as well as cooking with hot oil. The pupils were very well supported by adults so that they gained very good experience in working with hazardous tools, for example, sharp knives, graters and hotplates in a safe situation. Older pupils had prepared a range of 'treats', including cakes and sweets that they then sold to each class through their shop set out in the assembly hall. This provided very good links between their design and technology work and those in numeracy and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Across the school, pupils have made a good range of models using card and paper. These included a mobile of different aeroplanes, a textile mural and a model highway on the ceiling of one classroom. Pupils in the Year 5/6 class have explored various types of packaging and used a net to make their own. During the inspection they were involved in making a life-size model of a Greek girl which brought together a range of skills from art and design and design and technology and which provided very good opportunities for collaborative working. All classes are exploring the use of construction kits to develop pupils' manual skills. However, these developments are at an early stage and the range of kits that are presently available is not well matched to the needs of individuals, as the range of pupils' manual skills is very wide and not age-related.

77. The quality of teaching is good, often very good, and this leads to good learning for all pupils and for many, learning is very good. All pupils make good progress in developing their design and technology skills as they move through the school. Teachers plan work thoroughly based on a very detailed scheme of work which provides good progression in the development of the skills of individual pupils. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good and pupils are keen to do

their best and seek help when they need it. All staff make very good use of praise to develop pupils' self-esteem, particularly those who need help to develop their manual skills. Expectations are high and pupils respond to this very well by producing models and articles that are of good quality.

78. Co-ordination of design and technology is satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator is very hard working and has a very good knowledge of the needs of the pupils. She has developed a very good scheme of work that provides progression through the development of skills that pupils will need in their work, but which recognises that these skills are not age-dependent. There is a comprehensive action plan for the subject which clearly identifies timescales and responsibilities and which provides a very appropriate way forward. It identifies the two areas of weakness - assessment of pupils' achievement is too dependent on the fact that all staff know the pupils well and the use of construction kits requires materials that are well-matched to pupils' needs and which are not specific to particular classes. There are clear plans to develop an assessment and recording model that is based on the 'P' scales. The co-ordinator is presently piloting such a development with her own class. A whole-school review is planned to evaluate the use of construction kits and determine which are the most useful to be kept in a central resource and which should be allocated to particular classes.

GEOGRAPHY

79. During the inspection it was only possible to observe two lessons of geography. Evidence therefore has been drawn from those lessons, the teachers' planning, analysis of the pupils' previous work, assessment information and also from discussions with the staff.

80. Overall, the achievement and progress of pupils across the school is satisfactory. Pupils are provided with a suitable range of opportunities to help them make progress. Younger pupils appropriately learn about the school and nearby environment, through examining the school grounds and by making visits to the mobile library, the fire station and places such as Stocker's Lane Park. During one lesson in Year 1/2, the pupils demonstrated that they could make sensible suggestions as to what features they might see on the way to the park at Rickmansworth and also what features and living creatures they might see when they arrived at the park. Through the topic on, 'Where in the world is Northway Ned?' the pupils are successfully following the travels of a teddy bear. They are beginning to understand that there are many countries in the world and that the features of some countries are different from where they live. By Year 6, pupils are further developing an understanding of their environment and the world in which they live. For example, by making their own model highway and through discussing the local news and events happening across the world. They make suitable progress in learning about water and rivers and in examining maps and finding out how they are used. Less progress is made in learning how to record some of their findings in geography in simple charts or to support the development of their written work.

81. The quality of teaching and pupils' learning are satisfactory. Lesson plans show that teachers have a sound knowledge and understanding of the subject and provide some interesting activities for the pupils. Lessons are well organised and within them teachers make good links to other subjects. Evidence was seen of this in the work on highways, where pupils examined the shapes of buildings to support their mathematical work and designed and made the buildings as part of their learning in design and technology. Pupils are well supported in lessons and PECS cards are used effectively in communicating with the pupils and to help promote very good behaviour. However, not enough emphasis is placed on the specific geography skills to be taught within the lesson and this means that the subject is taught in insufficient depth and pupils have too few opportunities to record their geography work. However, the emphasis on developing the pupils' visual awareness of their surroundings from the classroom to the wider environment is good. Teamwork of the staff is very good, particularly when resources outside the classroom are used and where pupils often need more individual attention.

82. The co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory. Improvements have been made in updating the policy and in preparing the scheme of work for geography and satisfactory progress

has been made in implementing them. Resources for the subject have been suitably organised to support the schemes of work and storybooks and maps are used well to promote pupils' geographical learning. There are insufficient visual resources, such as pictures, charts and labels, to help the pupils gain a better understanding of the subject and support them in the development of their written work. Suitable monitoring of the subject has begun through examination of the planning. However, there are no formal assessment procedures or arrangements to systematically monitor teaching and learning in geography. This means that it is difficult to accurately judge how well the pupils are learning and what exactly has been covered. Good use is made of the school grounds and of outside visits to examine the features of the local environment, such as lakes and railway bridges.

HISTORY

83. A small number of lessons were observed during the inspection week in the classes for the older pupils. This information along, with examples seen of pupils' work, shows that most pupils make satisfactory progress, with a few making good progress.

84. The younger pupils are beginning to develop an understanding of chronology by examining and discussing events which have recently occurred and from experiences within their own lives. Events such as the celebration of the Queen's Jubilee, which resulted in the production of a video, are used to good effect to both promote an interest in the subject and to improve pupils' understanding of the past and the present. The older pupils are studying the ancient Greeks and Roman times and are gaining an understanding of the kind of lives people lived in those days and the clothes that they wore. A few of the pupils can recall specific historical facts, for example, they go to the market to get food and they did not have curtains in their houses.

85. The quality of teaching is satisfactory with a number of strong elements. The use of PECS to help pupils remember what has been covered in previous lessons and to aid their understanding is a particularly strong feature. Good teamwork between staff results in pupils behaving very well, staying on task and being able to concentrate for considerable periods of time. Lessons are well planned in terms of the activities that are to be used and the use and deployment of staff. Planning is sometimes not specific enough in relation to the subject specific language and skills that will be developed. The learning resources, such as pictures, posters and books, are of a good quality and are used well. In one lesson, for example, highly effective multi-media presentation was used to support pupils' learning when making comparisons between ancient and modern pottery. This led to pupils making their own designs from the range shown during the presentation and then using clay to model them. In other sessions, a few of the pupils were insufficiently challenged and opportunities were not provided for them to record elements of their work, this being done for them. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are limited and this does not help teachers to plan lessons easily to build upon individual learning and develop specific skills such as writing and recording.

86. Subject management is satisfactory and developing well. A sound scheme of work has been developed and boxes of learning resources to support this scheme are in place. Good support and advice is provided to staff and a degree of monitoring of history provision and pupils' work is undertaken. However, the subject co-ordinator does not monitor the quality of teaching nor is there a systematic process in place to monitor pupil progress to better inform teachers and staff of pupils' achievements. These required developments are recognised by the school and will be addressed when current priorities are completed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

87. Pupils achieve well and overall, make good progress.

88. The school was one of the last to benefit from the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) funding and consequently, the upgrade of the school's hardware and software has only recently been

completed and the network commissioned. Some equipment is still not fully useable. For example, the interactive whiteboard was used for only the second time during the week of the inspection, the installation having been completed the week before. The school still does not have broadband access through the local education authority's Intranet. The school has managed these challenges well, but they have adversely affected the rate at which pupils make progress. Many pupils need continuous practice to develop the skills they need to be independent users of ICT resources. Much of this one-to-one support has only recently become available with the implementation of the new facilities. These are now being used well, but there are still some teething difficulties and reliability issues.

89. All the teaching seen during the inspection was good and all pupils made good progress in developing their skills. Across the school there are wide variations in the skills and needs of individuals and these are not age-related. For example, some pupils in the Year1/2 class show more independence in their use of ICT than some in Years 5 and 6. Generally, pupils have good mouse skills and many, particularly the younger pupils, are making good progress in using the icons and format bars in a range of software. Good examples were seen where individual pupils used software which was specific to their needs; for example, signing/sounds software linked to PECS. All pupils use ICT at levels that are appropriate to their needs to present their work more effectively. However, the ways in which ICT can be used to support and provide access for pupils to the other subjects which they study are only just being explored. This is an area which is appropriately identified in the subject action plan as a priority. Teachers know their pupils well and match activities and tasks carefully to the needs of individuals. However, at present, many pupils are dependent on the support of adults to use ICT as a tool to support their work in the other subjects they study. Now that the school's ICT facilities are in a position to move from the developmental stage to one of more focused implementation, the co-ordinator is working to develop an assessment framework based on small steps to enable pupils to meet the skills identified in the 'P' scales.

90. The co-ordination of ICT is satisfactory. Since taking up his post in September 2000, the co-ordinator has worked hard to plan and develop the ICT facilities through the NGfL and school-sourced funding. At the same time he has implemented a very detailed scheme of work based on the 'P' scales and national guidance. This provides very good support for teachers. He has also ensured that all teachers and support assistants have completed the national training. The scheme of work and the training have enabled all adults to develop confidence in using the new hardware and software and adapting it to the needs of individual pupils. There is a comprehensive action plan for the subject which clearly identifies timescales and responsibilities and which provides a very appropriate way forward. This plan, linked with the assessment and recording framework, should enable all pupils to develop their independence in using ICT. It clearly identifies that the scheme of work will be extended to provide more focus to teaching specific skills on a group basis linked to one-to-one support to enable individual pupils to gain the practice and confidence they need to use ICT in all the subjects they study.

MUSIC

91. Overall, pupils make good progress in music and achieve well. As a subject, music plays a large part in their everyday activities and contributes significantly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and also to the overall ethos within the school. Music is greatly enjoyed by the pupils and the progress they make and the standards they achieve have improved since the last inspection. This is mainly because the music co-ordinator has taken a more significant role in encouraging the staff to take responsibility for planning and organising musical activities within classrooms. In addition, good use has been made of outside agencies to provide specialist music tuition and to enable pupils to be involved in a wider range of musical experiences.

92. Pupils throughout the school are gaining confidence in learning to play a good range of percussion instruments, which most manage with reasonable control. Through the use of PECS cards, many pupils are able to make choices about which instrument they want to play or which

song they would like to sing. This has helped them to learn the names of the different instruments and know that they are played in different ways, for example, in one lesson pupils knew to blow a recorder and tap a tambourine. Pupils know a good range of songs and enjoy singing them in small groups, by themselves, and in assemblies. A favourite song was clearly evident in a morning assembly, as pupils sang, 'A Sailor Went to Sea'. They managed this with good volume and an accurate sense of timing as they included the actions. Most pupils are gaining confidence in performing to an audience through the different services held for parents during the year, such as the Starlight Christmas Service, where each class performed musical items representing different cultures. More able pupils make very good progress in their lessons with the keyboard specialist teacher and can play a simple tune such as 'Hot Cross Buns' following musical notation. Some pupils were able to go that step further and correct mistakes they made as they went along. Good improvisation to music was seen in the lesson taken by the music therapist. Pupils responded very well to the change in tempo of her guitar accompaniment and the range in the pitch of her voice. Pupils demonstrated that they have a good sense of rhythm and can move their bodies expressively to match the mood of the music, as was seen in a video when the 'Live Music Now' group came into school.

93. The quality of teaching and learning are good. Specialist teaching by the music therapist and instrumental teacher is very good and noticeably raises the attention, spirit and enthusiasm of many pupils as well as being very effective in calming and relaxing them. All staff plan and prepare lessons well and provide pupils with interesting, challenging and worthwhile activities. The combination of class and specialist teaching suitably covers both the performing and composing, and the listening and appraising aspects of music. Staff make effective use of signing and PECS to encourage the pupils to take part in musical activities, learn the names of instruments and make choices. For example, a pupil in one of the ASD classes thoroughly enjoyed choosing the 'Monster Song'. The teamwork of the staff, the management of behaviour and the relationships between pupils and staff are very good. This results in the pupils being eager to participate in musical activities. They learn to listen carefully, try hard to concentrate and take pride in their achievements. Staff make effective use of songs as 'markers' at the beginning of sessions or changes in the day's routines. They also work well together to form a staff choir and perform a range of songs for the pupils, such as 'Rose Rose', to help them develop skills in appraising music.

94. Overall the co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory. In the short time, since taking on the role, the co-ordinator has managed to ensure that staff are aware of the policy for teaching music and provide them with a clear scheme of work, which includes an appropriate song list for each year group. Much has been done to ensure that there is a good supply of resources to support the teaching of music and to make these easily accessible. However, whilst staff do informally assess the pupils' progress, there is no assessment system in place to support the monitoring of the music curriculum and the skills taught or to effectively inform report writing and future planning. Nevertheless, music is now effectively used to support other subjects such as physical education and religious education. The use of ICT is being introduced at a gradual pace through the use of keyboards and tape recorders but more could be done. Pupils also benefit considerably by joining in events within the community, for example, they were successfully involved in the 'Montrose Festival' when they sang 'All You Need Is Love' within a large group of other people.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (PE)

95. Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily in PE. There has been satisfactory improvement in this subject over time.

96. Pupils have suitable opportunities to undertake all the areas of activity outlined in the National Curriculum. Many pupils throughout the school establish a good level of co-ordination and control of their movements and are developing a good awareness of space and others. In physical education lessons, pupils sustain a reasonable level of energetic activity and many recognise the effects of exercise on their bodies. Older pupils are developing a sound knowledge and understanding of a range of games activities and can show, for example, when playing football, a

good appreciation of the need to work with others. Pupils learn to plan ahead and they show that they have some good ideas. However, they are not sufficiently involved in the evaluation of their own efforts or those of other pupils to fully appreciate how they might improve their own performance. In swimming, pupils make good progress and many attain in line with the levels expected.

97. The teaching overall is satisfactory leading to satisfactory learning. There are some good individual lessons. Planning is undertaken conscientiously and an appropriate range of activities is organised. However, there is not always sufficient focus on the specific skills to be developed and this is linked to the fact that assessment procedures are not in place. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Staff work particularly well as a team and manage pupils' behaviour very well. Pupils are enthusiastic about taking part in physical activity and generally try hard. Resources are organised and used effectively. Staff dress appropriately for physical education and in this way set a standard for pupils, who in turn dress appropriately. Overall, best use is made of the time available, although there are occasions where the pace of learning slows since pupils work for too long a time without direct intervention by an adult. This was noticeable in one swimming lesson, when the ratio of adults to pupils was less than usual. In all activities there is a good focus given to warming up and cooling down. Staff are keen and in particular areas demonstrate techniques very effectively. Generally, however, demonstration, either by staff or by pupils, is not used to full advantage. Teachers often praise pupils' efforts but there is not always attention drawn to the particular elements that need to change in order to achieve further improvement. There is not always sufficient focus given to the key vocabulary needed to evaluate different types of activity effectively although in one good lesson seen there was particularly successful use of signing to challenge the pupils to achieve more.

98. Helpful programmes are drawn up by the school's physiotherapist which form part of individual programmes, that are followed in PE lessons. This aspect of the work is effective.

99. Co-ordination is satisfactory overall. The headteacher is covering the subject on a temporary basis until a new co-ordinator can be appointed. She has very clear ideas about how to take the subject forward including the further development of the planning and assessment procedures. With the help of the parents, there are plans to ensure a high level of adult input into all swimming lessons. Resources are generally good and accommodation is adequate. There is suitable attention given to the importance of safe practices. There are a number of extra-curricular activities that effectively support the work undertaken in physical education, these include clubs for aerobics and disco dancing. The school has recently started to take part in local competitive events and in one of these a pupil won a gold medal for swimming. In a school assembly everyone showed a great sense of pride in his success.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

100. The achievement and progress of pupils in religious education in relation to their prior learning is good. The standards the pupils achieve are better in their knowledge and understanding of the subject and in the way they respond to others than in their written work.

101. Throughout the school, pupils are developing a good awareness of themselves and others and have a basic understanding of what is right and wrong. They make good links between the 'Golden Rules' displayed in each classroom and how they should behave and show care and respect for others and living creatures. The pupils are steadily building up their knowledge of different cultural and religious events such as Harvest Festival, Divali and Eid. This is achieved through well-planned assemblies, by wearing clothes associated with different religions and through a wide range of interesting classroom activities. Pupils enjoy stories from the Bible, such as Jonah and the Whale and Noah's Ark. They are beginning to understand their own and the feelings of others through their topic work, for example, in, 'What Makes Me Special'. A good knowledge of different faiths, and the artefacts and symbols related to them, is being gained. This is a result of

the new resources purchased since the last inspection and the fact that the staff are following the school's scheme of work well.

102. Teaching and learning throughout the school are good overall with some very good features. Very effective use is made of the range of different faiths represented by the staff in teaching the pupils. Collectively, the staff's knowledge and understanding of the subject are good. The school's scheme of work, appropriately adapted from the Barnet Agreed RE Syllabus, is good and is used to good effect in teaching the pupils. Lessons are thoroughly prepared and the learning objectives to be developed are clearly identified. Activities are carefully thought out to interest and motivate the pupils and in one lesson observed, a very calm and serene atmosphere was created. Resources are introduced, where possible, to allow pupils to have first hand experiences and to help them develop their knowledge and understanding of different religions, religious artefacts and symbols. During the inspection, for example, pupils were able to see a model of a Hindu Temple, handle items on a puja tray and taste food as they engaged in role play related to entering a house of a person of Hindu faith. Of particular note is the occasion where the pupils visited a local church and experienced talking to the vicar, using the organ, seeing the font and viewing the Easter garden. Opportunities for pupils to record their knowledge and use and extend the writing skills they have developed receive less attention. Teachers provide good opportunities for quiet thought and reflection within lessons and are very much aware of the individual needs of the pupils. They read religious stories very well, for example, the story of St Francis, and this stimulates the pupils to ask questions and share their thoughts and ideas.

103. The religious education curriculum is broad and well balanced and the subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The policy and scheme of work have been successfully reviewed and developed since the last inspection and provide staff with clear guidelines for teaching. The co-ordination of the subject is good. The co-ordinator is committed and has created a well-organised co-ordinator's handbook that is used effectively as a management tool. A clearly organised action plan to promote the development of the subject has been successfully implemented. Improvements have been made to the range and organisation of resources since the last inspection and the co-ordinator is effectively building up resources for all the major faiths. Overall, there are sufficient good quality resources to support the teaching of the subject. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject, to ensure the continuity and the progress of pupils through the school, have appropriately begun through examination of the teachers' planning and informal observation of classroom teaching. However, a system to assess the pupils' progress to more effectively inform report writing, monitoring procedures and future planning has not been established. The content of whole school assemblies and circle times considerably enhance the overall curriculum provision, as do visits to places of worship, such as a Mosque, the Hindu Temple in Neasden and St Michael's Church in Mill Hill.