

INSPECTION REPORT

OAKDALE SCHOOL AND ACORN NURSERY

Dukinfield, Cheshire

LEA area: Tameside

Unique reference number: 106281

Headteacher: Mrs Irene Howard

Reporting inspector: Mrs Sue Aldridge
8810

Dates of inspection: 6 – 8 May 2003

Inspection number: 249320

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	2 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Cheetham Hill Road Dukinfield
Postcode:	SK16 5LD
Telephone number:	0161 367 9299
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Dennis Fogg
Date of previous inspection:	11 May 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a mixed, special school that caters for 97 pupils from 2 to 11 years; 21 attend Acorn Nursery, and 76 are at Oakdale. Well over a third of pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties, just under a third have autism, and roughly a quarter have severe learning difficulties. A very small number of pupils have moderate learning difficulties. There are more than twice as many boys as girls. Most of the pupils are white; seven are of Asian origin. Ten pupils come from homes where English is an additional language. Thirty-three pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is average. Seventy five pupils have statements of special educational needs; others are undergoing assessment which may or may not end with a statement being drawn up. Oakdale adjoins a mainstream primary school, and shares the management of Acorn Nursery with this school. Acorn nursery has recently been designated as the local education authority's sole provider of assessment for pre-school children with special educational needs. It operates as an inclusive nursery; most of the children with special educational needs attend full-time after the first year. Attainment on entry to the nursery is mostly well below average but it varies widely, and a few pupils leave for mainstream schools or units following assessment in the nursery. The school receives a budget from the local education authority to support inclusion activities with pupils from the adjoining mainstream primary school, and also to enable some pupils to attend their neighbourhood schools for part of the week.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a highly effective school. Pupils achieve very well because the teaching is very good; pupils enjoy school, have very positive attitudes to their work and behave very well. The headteacher and senior management team provide excellent leadership; the school is well managed, and provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Highly skilled teaching ensures that pupils achieve very well in literacy and numeracy.
- There are excellent opportunities for all pupils to develop socially, including learning alongside their mainstream peers.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and their work; their behaviour and personal development are of a similar high quality.
- The quality of care of the pupils is very good.
- Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is excellent. Very good relationships and strong teamwork contribute to the positive learning environment in the school.
- Governors have a very good range of relevant skills and give excellent support to the school.
- There is a well trained and highly committed staff.

What could be improved

- Evaluation of the school's work, which is at an early stage of development.

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

Improvement since the last inspection is very good. The amount of taught time has increased, and it is now well above recommendations for all pupils in Years 1 to 6. The balance of the curriculum has improved and outstanding plans of work have been developed. The roles of curriculum co-ordinators have been extended to include the checking of teaching and the curriculum. The school has responded well to the increasingly diverse needs of pupils admitted, and has further developed provision suitable for different groups of pupils. Arrangements for arrivals and departures have been improved; as a result punctuality is better. The school has continued to develop its inclusion links, and has strengthened its provision for pupils who need support to communicate. It now provides support to colleagues in mainstream to improve their practice in teaching pupils with special educational needs.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by Year R	by Year 2	by Year 6	Key very good A good B satisfactory C unsatisfactory D poor E
speaking and listening	A	A	A	
reading	A	A	A	
writing	A	A	A	
Mathematics	A	A	A	
personal, social and health education	A	A	A	
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A	A	

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

The school sets challenging targets for pupils in their individual education plans (IEPs), and monitors achievement of these carefully. Most targets are reached; these are the basis for the setting of whole school targets for raising achievement. Children in the nursery and pupils in the school make very good progress overall in the key areas of literacy, communication, numeracy and personal and social development. The very wide range of learning experiences provided and the quality of teaching promote progress very well. Pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) make excellent progress; expectations of this group are particularly high, and assessment and recording are outstanding. For a very small number of pupils with complex physical, medical and sensory difficulties, progress in establishing a means of communication has been limited by difficulties in acquiring suitable equipment. This is outside of the school's control, although the school has done all it can to intervene.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children in the nursery soon settle and start to learn. Pupils love coming to school, they show interest during lessons, and co-operate very well with staff.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Behaviour in lessons helps pupils to make progress. Break and lunchtimes are pleasant social occasions. Pupils with behavioural difficulties show clear progress in developing acceptable behaviour. Inspectors saw no bullying or oppressive behaviour, and there are no exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils' self-confidence and independence increase as they grow up through the school. A few are successful in returning to mainstream schools. Pupils willingly accept responsibility, share resources, and show respect for the school environment; they get on very well with one another and with staff, who they respect.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Although attendance falls below 90 per cent this is mainly due to a small number of pupils who have many absences because of their medical conditions; if these pupils were not included in statistics,

	attendance would be 95 per cent. There is no unauthorised absence. Most pupils arrive on time in the mornings and lessons start punctually.
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1- 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good

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

The quality of teaching in English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education is very good. All staff are well trained to teach pupils with the range of difficulties found in the school. Teachers and support staff work most effectively together as a team to ensure that pupils are engaged well throughout lessons. Pupils are managed skilfully, including those with challenging behaviour. The key skills of communication and numeracy are taught very well. Since the last inspection, a communication assessment team has been established in the school, and this helps to provide pupils with suitable equipment to help them communicate. Staff use signing and symbols well to help pupils communicate. Teachers are skilled in planning a wide range of suitable tasks and methods for pupils of all abilities and special needs; as a result, all pupils make very good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils try very hard to complete tasks; a few older ones have begun to work independently for some of the time. Excellent teaching of younger PMLD pupils ensures that they are well aware of their successes each day. Teachers are developing their skills in reviewing learning at the end of literacy sessions although it is not consistent across all classes.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. All pupils have a broad range of learning experiences. The school ensures that different groups of pupils have a balance that matches their particular needs. There are good extra-curricular clubs and a play scheme that operates during the summer and Easter holidays; pupils in Year 6 have a residential experience before they leave. Links with its adjoining primary school, and with a few pupils' neighbourhood schools ensure that every pupil has an opportunity to integrate with mainstream peers.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. There is no separate funding for this but the school makes good use of external facilities to provide interpreters and translation services for parents. The strong provision for developing pupils' communication skills ensures that these pupils achieve as well as those whose first language is English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Opportunities for pupils to develop socially are a strength. There are very good opportunities for pupils to acquire moral values, and good arrangements for them to develop their cultural and spiritual awareness.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Overall, care is very good. The school's part in this process cannot be faulted, as arrangements for child protection, personal care, and health and safety are excellent. Levels of occupational therapy provision are low, and this affects the progress of a very small number of pupils.

The school works very well in partnership with parents; many feel very well supported, and several reported that support from the school had helped children to continue making progress during the school holidays.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership is excellent. There is an outstanding commitment to providing the very best inclusive education and care for pupils, and this is shared by all staff. The headteacher demonstrates confidence in her staff and delegates very well; staff respond by being pro-active in establishing ways of continuing to improve the school. The school works very well in partnership with other establishments, parents and professionals to secure high standards. Management of the school could be further improved by increasing evaluation of the school's work. Overall, leadership and management are very good.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Good. Governors ensure that statutory requirements are met, and through their committees they keep the school's work under review. Their role has developed well since the last inspection; they approve policies and the school development plan but governors are not directly involved in formulating these.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school has formally recognised in its improvement plan the need for further development in this aspect of its work. Much evaluation is informal. The school's monitoring and evaluation policy says little about how the school intends to measure its success. Data on pupils' achievements is collected, but analysis of this, to establish strengths and areas for further improvement, has not yet begun.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Governors and the headteacher ensure that the school is well staffed, that learning resources are of the highest quality, and that the accommodation continually improves. Very effective use is made of the funds allocated to support inclusion. A small overspend in last year's Acorn Nursery budget, brought about by an unforeseen need to employ another member of support staff, has been eradicated in the current year's forecast. The principles of best value are applied well, particularly consultation with parents.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching is good. • Staff are approachable. • Children like coming to school. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of homework. • Progress made by a few pupils.

Inspectors agree with parents' very positive views of the school. They judge that arrangements for homework are satisfactory; where parents work in partnership with the school to support children's progress, results are most encouraging. Inspectors agree that the progress of a very small number of pupils is limited by delays in acquiring the right equipment, such as seating and switches, but the school is not at fault in this respect.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Highly skilled teaching ensures that pupils achieve very well in literacy and numeracy.

1. Since the last inspection, the school has further developed its strategies for literacy and numeracy and this has helped to improve the teaching in these two key areas. Much has been done in terms of staff training and developing teachers' skills through monitoring, and both teachers and support staff are now skilled in the use of signs and symbols to encourage the development of communication skills. There is also much more widespread use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support pupils in developing communication skills and to support learning generally. The intervention and advice from speech and language therapists, as well as the work carried out to establish an electronic means of communication for those who need it, all help to promote progress well. Pupils with autism, and those with PMLD, benefit from being taught mostly in discrete groups, and their individual needs are met very well in these settings. Particular strengths of teaching of pupils with autism include the structured environment, calm, patient approaches, very good management of behaviour and an excellent understanding of how these pupils learn. There is a similar level of understanding and expertise in the teaching of pupils with PMLD and SLD. For all pupils, communication skills are reinforced very effectively in subjects other than English, and throughout the school day.
2. In the nursery, good use is made of circle time to encourage communication. A range of interesting resources is used, and pupils are attracted by these. Lower attainers learn to say 'hello' using chime bars, and make 'loud' and 'soft' noises on a drum. Higher attaining older children develop a good understanding of exchanging symbols for items such as food. In language and literacy sessions, children become familiar with books and stories; they listen and show understanding of these. The most able turn the pages, and select 'favourite' books. Good opportunities are provided for children to learn writing skills and several higher attainers learn to write over an adult's words and letters before they leave the nursery.
3. In Years 1 to 6, pupils continue to develop their understanding of signs, and a few learn to sign too. Others use a system of exchanging symbols to communicate their needs. Staff use switches very effectively to empower pupils, and there is high expectation of pupils with PMLD using what voice they have to good effect. By Year 2, all pupils can use a simple switch to activate a recording, although some need to be prompted to do this. Higher attainers improve their speech, and talk in sentences. For example, they say, 'Where did you go to school?'. By Year 6, pupils with PMLD will vocalise when listening to a song, and press a switch to take the part of a character in a story; higher attainers recount what they have done, on their holidays for instance.
4. Pupils are introduced to a wide range of books, stories and poetry. They understand the events and characters in stories because good use is made of props that are associated with these. There is a highly structured, whole-school approach to the teaching of letter sounds and this helps pupils to acquire skills in reading words that are not immediately familiar. Those with PMLD in Year 2 will share a book using an interactive whiteboard, and can use ICT to sequence a story, such as 'The Three Little Pigs'. Higher attainers read whole words and symbols, and their reading records show that they make very good progress in reading a wide variety of books. These records have very useful information in them, such as details of what the pupils have read well and which words they struggled to read. This gives a good indication of what needs to be worked on again. Pupils grow in confidence too; by Year 6, higher attainers read a page of a big book out loud to the class, and will recite a poem.
5. Writing skills are taught very well. Where pupils have the capacity to write independently, skills are systematically developed. Others make use of symbols to put together sentences. There is also good use of ICT to enable pupils to write using a mixture of symbols and text. Pupils grow in confidence as they use whiteboards to practise their skills. By Year 2, lower attainers make

marks, by using a stamp in dough, for example. These pupils extend their skills to making marks on paper by Year 6. Higher attainers in Year 2 write over an adult's letters and words with increasing accuracy; by Year 6 these pupils write under an adult's model; all the words are recognisable, although not all the letters are correctly formed.

6. In Years 1 to 6, although the use of a plenary session at the end of a literacy lessons is not yet well established in all classes, excellent practice was seen in use in the class for younger PMLD pupils. Here, the teacher reviewed learning at the end of each day, and showed very high expectations of the pupils, who rose well to this. The 'special time' began with the singing of a song asking what pupils had done that day to make them proud. The teacher had gathered together a collection of objects that served as reminders, and pupils clearly recalled their successes. One demonstrated this by pressing a switch to activate a machine that blew bubbles, then smiled broadly.
7. The leadership and management of literacy is very good; extensive checking of teaching and pupils' progress has helped to raise achievement in this key area since the school was last inspected. The work of the communication assessment team contributes very well to securing high standards of achievement.
8. Teaching of numeracy skills is very good, and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers make very good use of a wide range of appealing resources, which interest and motivate pupils. ICT is used very effectively; a wide range of switches is used to help pupils answer questions, for example. An ICT presentation linked to action songs was a strong feature in a lesson for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Teaching enables pupils to experience mathematics through their senses. For example, when familiarising pupils with numbers, staff make these from materials with different textures and colours, and pupils enjoy exploring these. Resources are well prepared and organised in advance, so that no time is lost during lessons. Teachers also challenge pupils to think; in one lesson the teachers asked them to predict 'How many puffs it will take to blow up the balloon'. They were enthralled as they watched their predictions tested.
9. Teachers and support staff work extremely well together, ensuring that pupils receive the help, support and encouragement they require. This secures their participation in all tasks. Pupils are keen to do well and respond to challenges with enthusiasm.
10. In the nursery, staff provide a broad range of mathematical learning experiences, and use methods and resources that appeal to children, such as counting songs and rhymes. Children are introduced to shapes, and there are many sorting and matching games to play. By the time children leave the nursery, all join in counting rhymes; higher attainers count to five, sort objects by colour and size, and know the meaning of 'one more'.
11. Teachers up to Year 2 build well on these skills; all pupils at the end of this stage recognise some shapes and numbers. Higher attainers write and recognise numbers up to 9 and recognise a few coins. Staff use mathematical language well, and this helps pupils to understand the meaning of vocabulary, although few are able to use it correctly and in context. By Year 6, all pupils understand the meaning of words such as 'in', 'out', 'up' and 'down'. Lessons in the community give pupils an awareness of the principle of exchanging money for goods and by Year 6, higher attainers can exchange a 10p coin for ten 1p pieces. These pupils add to 10 using a number line, recognise and name a circle, square, rectangle and triangle, and a few are beginning to tell the time.
12. The presentation of pupils' work is very good, indicating the pride pupils have in their work and the way in which staff value pupils' efforts and achievements. Teachers use the last few minutes of mathematics sessions well to review learning, and support staff contribute well when they describe achievements or record pupils' responses during sessions led by the teacher.

13. Leadership and management in mathematics are very good. The co-ordinator has had time to monitor and support teaching and this has led to improvement. Where necessary, she has led training for colleagues, and as a leading mathematics teacher for the authority she has given demonstration lessons to staff from other schools.

There are excellent opportunities for all pupils to develop socially, including learning alongside their mainstream peers.

14. The school provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to socialise during the school day, in after-school clubs and even in the holidays. Good use is made of visits out into the local community, and visitors are welcomed into the school too. This ensures that pupils experience a wide variety of social situations and meet many different people. The strong provision for developing pupils' communication skills underpins their social development well. Staff make very good use of circle times and snack times during the school day. During circle time, pupils are eased into the day's timetable, which helps them to make the transition from home to school each day. There are good opportunities for them to engage in co-operative play, and a variety of well-prepared tasks is set out, from which pupils can choose activities. During snack time, there are clear objectives for each pupil, aimed at improving their communication and independence skills, and developing socially appropriate behaviour.
15. Inclusion opportunities are outstanding. All pupils have an opportunity each week to socialise with and learn alongside mainstream peers. Several curriculum areas utilise inclusion opportunities to promote learning. These include personal, social and health education, physical education, literacy, design and technology and art. Opportunities are co-ordinated very well by a team of staff consisting of a teacher and five support staff. Careful planning and close liaison with the adjoining primary school and another primary school nearby results in integrated sessions where Oakdale pupils join some classes in mainstream, and some mainstream pupils join lessons at Oakdale. Support staff make an invaluable contribution, supporting pupils well in mainstream and even leading integrated sessions at Oakdale. Oakdale pupils benefit greatly from these positive experiences. For example, integration diaries show the clear gains in interacting with peers made by pupils with autism. In one joint session observed, Oakdale pupils were able to learn from their mainstream peers too. For example, mainstream pupils draw attention to things they observe, which interests Oakdale pupils; they also work well together, completing tasks such as jigsaws.
16. All inclusion opportunities are carefully monitored, and detailed records, including integration diaries, are useful in this respect. During the inspection week, members of the inclusion team were supporting six pupils in mainstream schools, and four pupils in their neighbourhood schools. Following a period at Acorn or Oakdale, the school has successfully placed pupils full-time in mainstream schools or units attached to these.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and their work; their behaviour and personal development are of a similar high quality.

17. Parents reported that most children love coming to school; some are upset that they cannot come during the holidays or when they are ill. Pupils clearly feel safe and secure in school and quickly settle to the daily routines. Very good attitudes were seen in most lessons, and on several occasions they were excellent. In a particularly successful session in the nursery, children with autism were seen sitting on their chairs for a substantial amount of time and taking turns; a few even joined in with the actions that accompanied songs. Older pupils with autism had been well prepared, through social stories, for visitors appearing in classes; one politely and solemnly greeted an inspector. In class, pupils concentrate well, are interested in activities and are keen to show their work to adults. In a class for PMLD pupils, it was clear that pupils were listening carefully; one vocalised to volunteer for a task, and another showed huge enjoyment when hearing her recorded voice being played back to her.
18. Pupils clearly respect adults and one another; their behaviour is very good in class, around school and at break times and lunchtimes. Learning resources are treated with respect, and pupils are

happy to clear away when asked to do so. They line up sensibly for lunch, and those that do not need support to eat collect their lunch on a tray from the serving hatch. Behaviour is equally good when pupils are taking a walk around the school grounds as part of a lesson, or when they are in another school. Inspectors saw no bickering or instances of pupils appearing to be intimidated by others, despite the presence of pupils with challenging behaviour in most classes.

19. Pupils' personal development is promoted very effectively through the atmosphere and life of the school, carefully planned and prepared personal and social development sessions and a high quality programme of personal, social and health education. All of these strands help pupils to mature; they develop a clear sense of right and wrong, acquire social skills, awareness of society and how it works and increase their independence and self-confidence. For those children that move on from the nursery to other schools, there is good preparation and support from staff; they accompany children to their new placement for a familiarisation visit and take photographs of staff and classmates, to show to children and their parents.
20. By the time Oakdale pupils reach Year 6, all are able to make choices, and have a means of communication. Many interact well with others, and some have formed friendships; the most able can deal with conflict and negotiate with others. All will share with others, and are pleased to do so. Pupils are pleased to take responsibility, such as taking the register. The most able pupils can solve simple problems and make decisions themselves; they organise themselves, and can find and replace equipment. The most confident ones will lead a class, during a music lesson, for example. Pupils leave Oakdale well prepared for secondary education.

The quality of care of the pupils is very good.

21. The school cares very well for its pupils and provides a very secure and safe environment that promotes learning very well.
22. Child protection procedures are excellent. The head teacher is the child protection officer and has established clear procedures to be followed in the event of suspected non-accidental harm occurring to children. She has an excellent level of insight into child protection issues, achieved through long experience and attendance at numerous courses and she is scrupulous in sharing her insight with her teachers and classroom assistants. The school's procedures conform fully to policy guidelines published by the local education authority.
23. Staff and governors have an excellent awareness of health and safety issues. A full review of health and safety issues is completed annually by governors. Regular and comprehensive risk assessments and the testing of electrical and other equipment checks are undertaken. The school has developed comprehensive procedures for risk assessment for educational visits.
24. Teachers and all support staff know pupils very well, treat them as individuals and take very good care of them. For example, staff ensure that pupils are positioned carefully and comfortably, so that they are ready to learn, and movement of children from one piece of equipment to another is carried out efficiently and discreetly. Children are quietly alerted to changes. At the last inspection, there was criticism of the way in which the meeting of personal care needs disrupted lessons. This is no longer the case. As lunchtime approaches, mealtime supervisors enter classes quietly, and children are taken to the toilets and swiftly returned, with the minimum of disruption. Children's privacy and dignity are respected well when they are being assessed or taught, and when their personal care needs are being attended to.
25. Professionals such as speech therapists, physiotherapists, teachers of the visually and hearing impaired provide very good levels of support. There is excellent teamwork in the school, helping pupils to overcome or reduce their difficulties. Historically, low levels of occupational therapy support have had an adverse effect on the progress of one or two pupils. The school has done all that it can to rectify this, but the matter remains unresolved, and is outside the school's control.

Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is excellent. Very good relationships and strong teamwork contribute to the positive learning environment in the school.

26. The effective leadership reported at the last inspection have been sustained and improved further. The headteacher is a most experienced and successful leader who is highly regarded by her staff and governors. Her ability to establish and maintain very good working relationships with staff and others is an important feature of her success. She is very well supported by the deputy headteacher, and members of the senior management team, who also lead most successfully in their designated areas of responsibility. Delegation works very well, as members of the senior management team are highly skilled and competent. Together they provide clear direction and very good support to all staff. A strong spirit of co-operation makes teamwork a key feature of the school's organisation.
27. Staff have the confidence and skills to be pro-active in developing good practice. For example, the deputy headteacher and another member of staff, both of whom have considerable skills and expertise in the field of communication for pupils with complex difficulties, teamed up to establish a multi-disciplinary communication assessment team in the school. They had recognised a need for this themselves. Both subsequently went on training courses provided by a national organisation recognised for its work in the assessment of communication. The communication assessment team, made up of the class teacher, and appropriate professionals such as physiotherapist, speech therapist, hearing impairment support teacher or visual impairment support teacher meets with a pupil, parents and one of the two lead teachers. Specially purchased equipment, and teamwork between those gathered at an assessment meeting, enable staff to find a suitable switch system for an individual pupil. Care is taken to ensure that a switch can be used at home as well as school. The existence of such a team within the school means that pupils do not need to make a journey away from home for assessment, and it places the school in an advantageous position when applying for national funds that are now available for purchasing equipment to assist pupils' communication.
28. The headteacher leads very well by example; her lead is closely followed by staff, and this results in the school being a very welcoming establishment with a positive ethos. Her strong commitment to inclusion has been a feature of the school for several years, and has led to outstanding opportunities for all pupils to socialise with and learn alongside mainstream peers. She is skilled at securing goodwill and a commitment to achieving the best for the school's pupils. Parents are treated as equal partners in the education of their children, and staff work very closely with many parents to ensure that the good work in school is carried over to the home. Equally, parents report that they feel able to make suggestions, about targets that children should be working on, for example. This has helped children make progress in important areas such as personal care skills and feeding, as well as develop academically.
29. The work done to support inclusion extends beyond the school gate too. Part of the role of members of the senior management team involves them in giving advice, training and support to colleagues in mainstream. Headteachers, class teachers and special educational needs co-ordinators have spent time at Oakdale observing strategies used in teaching, behaviour management and communication. Several letters of thanks to Oakdale staff testify to the value of this support.

Governors have a very good range of relevant skills and give excellent support to the school.

30. Governors include those who are parents of children with special educational needs; two governors have long experience of governance, and one is a retired headteacher of an infants' school. Others have expertise gained in industry, working in personnel, finance, and quality management. There are also those who have experience of nursing, management in the National Health Service and experience as a member of the local education authority. Their experience and skills give them a good understanding of pupils with special educational needs. However, they

take their roles well beyond this, offering excellent support to the school. For example, the Chair was at school last Bank Holiday organising an annual plant sale to raise much needed funds for the school. One particularly long-serving governor works in a voluntary capacity for a national charity that provides services for people with learning disabilities; every Easter and summer holiday she co-ordinates a play scheme for pupils of Oakdale school, and this is greatly appreciated by parents and pupils alike. Recently the Chair took the initiative of organising a different format for the annual governors' meeting with parents, in an attempt to raise attendance at this event. The headteacher and staff feel well supported by the governors, many of whom are familiar faces around school, and all work closely together to improve the school's provision.

There is a well-trained and highly committed staff.

31. There are good staffing levels in the school. A conscious decision to employ a large number of support staff, and very good arrangements for ensuring that staff skills are continually updated contribute well to pupils' achievements. There is a most comprehensive induction programme, performance management is well established in the school and support staff benefit from a professional discussion about their training needs each year. The school prioritises training needs well. For example, all staff have now been trained in the use of a system of picture exchange as a means of communication, and this means that all are able to interact with pupils with autism. Lunchtime supervisors and support staff can utilise the system to enable pupils to make choices of menu, for example.
32. Administrative and clerical staff ensure that the school runs smoothly and efficiently, and that staff are supported well. They provide a warm welcome for visitors.
33. Parents were fulsome in their praise of staff, speaking highly of their commitment, patience and dedication; they 'go the extra mile', they said. Staff always make time to talk to parents who drop in to school, where there is a well-appointed room for parents to use. Many staff have been to visit homes in the evening, and several regularly volunteer to work in the holiday play schemes, providing useful continuity for pupils. Staff are described by parents as 'very accommodating' when it comes to providing special diets for pupils, giving advice or preparing materials for use in the home. One parent was most appreciative of an instance where a member of staff volunteered to help out with weekend child care when the family found they needed this unexpectedly. Another said the staff 'will do anything to help'.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Evaluation of the school's work is at an early stage of development.

34. The school sets out to demonstrate its success through pupils' PIVATS (Performance Indicators for Value Added Testing) scores in English, mathematics and personal, social and health education. It now has data for two years, and from this staff can see what progress each pupil has made. The school improvement plan clearly identifies the need to analyse this information to see whether all groups of pupils do equally well.
35. Similarly, success is measured by reviewing how many targets each pupil achieves out of those set on individual education plans. These plans include information about when or where targets will be worked on rather than specific strategies, and so there is no means of evaluating strategies that are used. As a result, if one target is achieved with great success and another not achieved there is no formal means of identifying what contributed to success or failure.
36. Since the last inspection the school has developed a monitoring and evaluation policy, and this sets out in great detail how all aspects of the school's work are to be monitored. However, it does not deal with evaluation as a separate process. As a result, evaluation is not as well developed as

monitoring, and opportunities for carrying out this activity are missed. In general, the school's policies are not explicit about evaluation.

37. Governors make regular visits to the school, some checking on areas of the curriculum for which they have a named responsibility. Although these visits are reported to the full governing body, reports do not systematically identify strengths or areas for development. For example, since the last inspection, a considerable sum has been spent on story sacks, so that pupils can experience and understand characters and events of a story by handling or seeing associated artefacts, or even listening to sounds. The governor responsible for literacy has been into school to see these being used, and reported back verbally to the governing body on the visit. However, this was not used as an opportunity to measure the value added through the purchase of these resources.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

38. The governors, headteacher and staff should
- (1) Improve the school's evaluation of its work by*
 - revising the monitoring and evaluation policy to ensure that it describes how the school intends to measure its success;
 - ensuring that all policies set out clearly what the arrangements for evaluation are;
 - ensuring that there is a means of evaluating strategies used to help pupils achieve their individual targets;
 - strengthening the governors' role by providing them with a means of evaluating those aspects that they currently monitor;
 - analysing assessment information to check that all groups of pupils are equally well served.
- (Paragraphs, 34, 35, 36, 37)*

**School self-evaluation is formally identified as an area for further development in the School Improvement Plan 2002-2005.*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	35
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	15

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	17	13	4	0	0	0
Percentage	3	49	37	11	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	97
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	33

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	10

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	12.5	School data	0.00

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

13 pupils were eligible in Summer 2002.

All are disapplied from formal assessment associated with the National Curriculum.

All were assessed by teachers at below Level 1 in English and mathematics.

No assessment in science was carried out.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Fewer than 11 pupils were eligible in Summer 2002, so results are not reported here.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
52	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
6	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YN – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.9
Average class size	8.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: YN – Y6

Total number of education support staff	45
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1405.5

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	1, 279,069
Total expenditure	1,323,047
Expenditure per pupil	12,481
Balance brought forward from previous year	36, 862
Balance carried forward to next year	-17,595

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1.0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	97
Number of questionnaires returned	77

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	83	16	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	69	23	4	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	64	27	3	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	48	23	4	1	23
The teaching is good.	83	16	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	79	19	0	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	90	9	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	27	0	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	77	22	1	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	79	16	1	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	25	0	1	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	60	21	1	3	16