

# INSPECTION REPORT

## WILLOW DENE SCHOOL

London

LEA area: Greenwich

Unique reference number: 133399

Headteacher: Ms P. Hardaker

Reporting inspector: Mrs F.D. Gander  
21265

Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> March 2003

Inspection number: 249920

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:	2-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Swingate Lane London
Postcode:	SE18 2JD
Telephone number:	020 8854 9841
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mary Hill
Date of previous inspection:	None

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21265	Mrs F. Gander	Registered inspector	Art and Design Information and Communication Technology	Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed What should the school do to improve further?
8941	Mr J Fletcher	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
9391	Dr N. Ball	Lay inspector	Educational inclusion	Pupils' attitudes, values, and personal development. Links with the community including Outreach Services
13101	Mr M. Kell	Team inspector	Science Design and technology Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
	Mrs G. Carter	Team inspector	English Religious education	
30243	Mrs A. Heakin	Team inspector	Foundation stage Music	
22391	Mr N. Smith	Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education History	
1782	Mr A. Lyons	Team inspector	English as an additional language	

2480	Mrs C. Gilder	Team inspector	Special Educational Needs	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Willow Dene School is a newly established primary special school in the London Borough of Greenwich that opened in September 2001 following the closure of five special schools. It provides education for children and pupils between the ages of 2 and 11 years with a wide range of learning difficulties. These include moderate (MLD), severe (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), complex medical needs, and pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). There are an increasing number of ASD pupils entering the school, and they presently make up a third of the school population. There are 159 pupils on roll with twice as many boys to girls. Almost a quarter of the pupils are in the nursery or reception classes. The pupils come from diverse socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds from within Greenwich and a few from neighbouring boroughs. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is very high at 59 per cent. Thirty eight per cent of the pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds. For almost 60 per cent of these pupils, English is an additional language. Other languages spoken include Somali, Punjabi, Gujarati, and Tigrinya. The school is on one site and is based in four buildings, of which three were previously separate schools. During the five terms since the school opened, the buildings have needed structural repair in order to make them safe, wheelchair accessible, and to provide necessary toileting facilities. The school provides a base for three outreach projects that are managed by the school. Altogether there are 20 classes in the school, with five of them for nursery and reception children. Attainment on entry is well below the national average.

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

Despite all the difficulties that the school has encountered since it opened, it is an effective school in which the very specialised teaching is good, and meets the needs of the different groups of pupils well. The school is very effectively led by the headteacher whose priority has been to ensure that the teaching has been of high quality and consistent through providing excellent in-service training for all staff, including the many who only stayed for one term. In the core subjects of English, mathematics, and communication, pupils achieve well and make good progress. However, the development of policies and the rest curriculum has been delayed, but the management has ensured that on a termly basis the curriculum meets the needs of the pupils and that they are making satisfactory progress. The school provides good value for money.

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

- The headteacher provides very good leadership, and with the good support of the governors has ensured that the school has overcome the difficulties arising from the amalgamation.
- There is excellent in-service training and constant monitoring of the changing situation; it has ensured that the quality of teaching and learning is good, meets the differing needs of the pupils, and is based on very good teamwork.
- The care, welfare, and personal development of pupils are of very high priority; due to the very good relationships pupils have very good attitudes and behave well.
- The school provides very good opportunities for social and moral development.
- The school, along with the outreach services, has developed a very good partnership with other schools.

### What could be improved

- The medium term planning of the curriculum does not yet provide a framework for lessons, and it is difficult to demonstrate that pupils' learning is based on previous knowledge \*
- The use of assessment to track the progress in subjects, and set statutory targets is under developed \*
- The roles of staff for managing and monitoring their subject responsibilities, including the nursery, are underdeveloped. \*
- The lack of equal access to therapy and technological aids for communication, and the difficulties with accommodation, has a detrimental effect on learning. \*

\* These are already identified in the school improvement plan and will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.

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

The school has not previously been inspected.

### STANDARDS

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

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

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

Overall, pupils' achievements and the progress they make are satisfactory. However, in communication, English and mathematics, which have been the focus for development and where staff training is ensuring that teaching is at least good, pupils achieve well and make good progress. Likewise, pupils achieve well in literacy and numeracy, as well as in music. They make good progress in PSHE. Nursery children achieve well, but the shortcomings in the curriculum for reception children does not ensure that they make even progress in all areas of learning. In other subjects of the curriculum, pupils' achievements are satisfactory, although in many lessons they achieve well. However, their progress over a greater period of time cannot be guaranteed as the medium term planning and assessment is underdeveloped. In the short time that individual education plans (IEPs) have been in place, it can be seen that pupils have made good progress against the targets. The school does not yet have enough information with which to set whole school targets.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	These are very good. Pupils are enthusiastic about coming to school and taking part in all the activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	This is good. The pupils behave well, and those who sometimes present challenging behaviour show improvement due to a consistent management approach by all staff.
Personal development and relationships	The relationships that pupils have with one another, and with staff, are very good. They make good progress in personal development.
Attendance	This satisfactory and close to the average for other special schools.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 6
Quality of teaching	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 quality of teaching and learning is good overall and consistent across the school. However, there is also a high percentage of very good or excellent lessons and in these lessons pupils achieve very well. Teachers' expertise and experience in teaching pupils with specific special educational needs has been very well matched to the different groups of pupils. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in English, mathematics, music, and in the nursery and reception classes. While teaching is good or very good in lessons, the overall teaching of subjects where the medium term curriculum planning has not been developed is only satisfactory. Across the school numeracy and literacy are also taught well. The teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory but teachers coming into the school have varying degrees of expertise. In lessons where the teaching is of a high quality, the teachers have very high expectations of both achievement and behaviour. They plan and organise a range of learning activities and outcomes that match the pupils' differing needs. This provides well for the different attainment levels of pupils, and for pupils of different ages, who are taught together. There is a consistent use of high quality signing to help pupils' understanding, and the teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants is very good.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is overall satisfactory. It is broad and relevant to the needs of the different ages and disabilities of pupils. It meets statutory requirements with the exception of the Foundation Stage where it does not sufficiently adopt the Early Learning Goals. The school has appropriately developed English, mathematics, and ICT but is at the stage of developing policies and schemes of work for most other subjects. For some pupils, the present accommodation and insufficient therapy services undermines their curriculum entitlement. Good use is made of the community to support the curriculum, and there are very good links with other schools.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)	This is satisfactory. The pupils receive help in class that enables them to make good progress in language development. However, there is insufficient information obtained when they enter the school to ensure that all pupils with EAL are sufficiently identified.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is very good. The very good opportunities for moral and social development help pupils to become more mature and understand right from wrong. There are good opportunities for cultural and spiritual awareness.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is overall good. This is a very caring school where high priority is given to the care and well being of all pupils. Assessment, which is developing along side the curriculum, is unsatisfactory, as it does not provide enough information to track pupils' progress and set statutory school targets.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Parents feel the school is good and improving. Overall the partnership is satisfactory and an area which the school sees as a priority.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Overall leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and has managed a very difficult transition situation with a very professional vision for the future of the school. The senior management team has worked hard to managed and monitor a constantly changing situation, and to develop teamwork. The roles of subject leaders have yet to be developed to include monitoring and assessment.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	This is good. The governors are very committed to making the school successful. They have detailed first hand knowledge about the school's strengths and weaknesses and therefore contribute very well to shaping the future direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is very good. A system has evolved which enables the leadership team and the governing body to match the identified educational development priorities and the ever-changing circumstances against the delegated budget.
The strategic use of resources	This is good. There are clear links between school development and financial planning. Spending is tightly controlled; money is used wisely to provide the support and resources where they are most needed. The school effectively applying the principles of 'best value'.
The adequacy of staffing,	The number of staff and their expertise are good. The school buildings

accommodation and learning resources	are unsatisfactory as they do not support the needs of pupils and are in poor repair.
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## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They felt their children liked the school.</li> <li>• They judged teaching as good</li> <li>• They felt that the school was well led and managed.</li> <li>• They felt comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.</li> <li>• They thought the school expected their child to work hard and achieve his or her best.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They want an increase in the therapy services available to the school, and more contact with therapists so to discuss their children's programmes.</li> <li>• They felt the school could improve the partnership and communication with the parents.</li> <li>• They wanted a greater range of after school activities.</li> <li>• They identified many issues relating to the transporting of the pupils to school</li> </ul>

The inspection team endorses the positive comments of the parents and agrees that the level of therapy available to the school does not meet the needs of the pupils. The late arrival of transport is not acceptable. The partnership with parents is satisfactory but could be improved. After school activities cannot be provided due to transport arrangements.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. In the short time the pupils have been in the school, their overall achievements and the progress they have made has been satisfactory. However, in communication, English, mathematics, and in personal and social development pupils are achieving well and making good progress. The school's focus for development has centred around these areas, with an emphasis on teaching, staff training, curriculum development, and, to some extent, in assessment. These are having a positive effect on standards. Likewise, achievements in literacy and numeracy are good, as well as in music. Where teaching is at least good, pupils achieve well and make good progress. In some lessons pupils achieve very well, especially when the quality of teaching and learning are very good. The achievements and the progress pupils make cannot presently be guaranteed over a longer period of time for two reasons. Firstly, although the school has a long term curriculum in place for all subjects, there is no detailed medium term planning, which teachers can use to plan the next stage of learning, or to plan lessons. Secondly, the assessment of learning outcomes is not in place and is to be developed alongside the curriculum. Pupils are making good progress against the targets set in IEPs. In the short time since the school opened, pupils have made good progress against individual targets set. This is because the quality of the targets is good and they provide information on progress in major areas of the curriculum. However, the school does not yet have enough assessment information with which to set whole school targets.

2. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well and make good progress due to the very good collaboration between teachers and therapy personnel, the very good relationships within the department, and the good teaching. However, the curriculum is not securely planned so that children work towards the Early Learning Goals, assessment is underdeveloped and therefore the progress they make over a longer period of time is therefore uneven.

3. There are no differences in the progress made by pupils of different ages or by pupils with different types of special educational need. This is due to the use of staff with expertise to teach children with specific special educational needs, such as ASD, or PMLD, or hearing impairments. There are many examples of strategies and approaches developed to promote the achievements of the pupils with the most complex needs. The effective management and support of pupils who have complex medical needs in classes enables these pupils to take a full part in activities, and helps overcome the physical barriers to learning they face. For example, a reception age pupil with severe cerebral palsy, whose legs become fixed in extension, has his muscles massaged by the learning support assistant until he relaxes sufficiently for him to sit upright, facing his classmates and take part fully in the group. The progress pupils make in communication is the result of a consistent approach to signing across the school and the time given by everyone to enable pupils to give a response. Good records in classes confirm that individual communication is well recognised by all staff, and as a result pupils make good progress in personal development. They are given good opportunities to contribute to decisions in class, to choose and to follow instructions.

4. The pupils who are in the early stages of the acquisition of EAL make similar progress to their peers. They receive focussed help in class that enables them to make good progress in their language development. The pupils are at early stage of language development and the school produces a curriculum that clearly matches pupils' learning to their individual needs. However, there are instances of where the achievements and the progress of a few pupils are undermined by inequality of opportunity. The most significant is

caused by the late arrival of transport. This means that pupils can miss the first session of the school day. For those pupils who it affects every day, there is a loss of over two hours a week. This affects the progress they make as they do not have access to a balanced curriculum.

5. The placement of pupils, because of the limitations imposed by the accommodation, in class groups that are not appropriate to their age and ability has a negative impact on their personal development. The sharing of social and recreational areas limits their capacity to build age-appropriate friendships. In addition, some pupils need to be in groups with a wider range of ability so that they have opportunities for more appropriate language development.

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

6. Children in the Foundation Stage and pupils in the rest of the school have very good attitudes to school and to other people. They like coming to school and often show great excitement in their lessons. Pupils take great care in their work, try to do their very best and respond very well to the opportunities they are given. Through the consistent and good use of praise given by teachers and support staff, pupils try hard to achieve the objectives set for them. Pupils involve themselves in the work set for them, are curious, and concentrate well. For example, in a Year 4 geography lesson, pupils thought hard about the journey that 'Barnaby Bear' had made from Ireland to France and showed great delight when a parcel from him was opened to reveal cards and gifts from Paris. In a Year 1, design and technology lesson pupils had a very happy and lively time working together making scones, measuring and mixing the ingredients and then rolling out the scone mix. Parents are very appreciative of the enthusiastic approach that their children have to school and to learning.

7. The majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, and this is also the situation in the Foundation Stage classes. A range of interesting and stimulating activities helps to encourage good behaviour and staff work hard to involve pupils and ensure that they are able to participate and share in the lesson. Pupils generally move around school without disrupting others, and in the playground they mix in small groups and often join in games around the play equipment. Teachers and support staff show great care in their supervision of pupils. Staff deal very quickly and sensitively with any pupils who do not behave as well as they should, or whose attention wanders, so that the learning opportunities for other children are not lost or disrupted. Despite there being a significant number of pupils and students with challenging behaviour, the majority of pupils have a good understanding of right from wrong and respond appropriately in most situations. The incidents of difficult behaviour are usually restricted to children or pupils for whom communication is particularly difficult and is the result of frustration. The school is an orderly community where the policies for encouraging good behaviour and eliminating bullying are well understood and used. Pupils behave well on trips and visits made outside of school and express pleasure in seeing and doing new things.

8. The personal development of children and pupils, and the relationships in the school at all levels, are very good. Parents and carers are pleased with the progress their children make in independence skills and in dealing with new situations. In lessons, pupils are expected to be, or become, more responsible for their work. Very good opportunities are created in all classes for pupils to take a range of responsibilities, such as handing out the work for the lesson or helping to tidy things away. Some pupils also have school-based tasks such as delivering the fruit to all classes in the morning and they do this with great pride and enthusiasm. Pupils are encouraged to help others in lessons and usually respect others by being quiet and allowing them to concentrate. Adults provide good role models for pupils. They are encouraging and show respect for the children and pupils in their care. Pupils respond well to each other, for example, two pupils arriving on different buses in the morning were thrilled to see each other and greeted each other with waves and smiles. Lunchtime is

a well used social time where all classes mix well with each other and pupils are encouraged to do as much as possible for themselves. In a short time the school has been functioning the pupils have formed strong bonds with their peers

9. As attendance is satisfactory as it is close to that of similar schools and unauthorised absence is broadly average. A number of children and pupils have severe medical problems and their absences from school are related to these and there are also some family holidays that are taken in term time. The main significant concern, both to the school and to the parents, is the late start to the school day, which is the result of the very variable arrival times of the school transport. This can be up to 45 minutes later than the starting time of the school, and is both distressing for the pupils and disruptive for the school as part of the morning learning programme is regularly interrupted or lost. Parents are particularly unhappy with the amount of time they spend waiting for buses to arrive, and the pupils who are collected first, spend more than an hour on the transport. This causes some difficulties with their personal needs.

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

10. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. However, during the inspection there were many examples of very good lessons where children and pupils achieved very well. It was very good or excellent in 36 per cent of lessons and good in 41 per cent. This profile of teaching and learning is consistent across the whole school and there is no difference in the quality of teaching between groups of pupils with different learning difficulties or disabilities. The emphasis on monitoring and in-service training for all staff, including temporary teachers, has been enormous, and has had a very positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. The school has, after an unsettled start, recruited staff who have experience and expertise in teaching pupils with specific special educational needs, such as PMLD or ASD. This experience has been used well when deploying staff to different groups of pupils. As a result, teachers have a good range of strategies for teaching, motivating, and managing children and pupils. For example, patient work by a team of staff enabled a severe ASD pupil, who has a history of finding physical touch threatening and uncomfortable, to take part in a welcome song with the group, following the actions and gestures, and then experiencing a massage activity for almost ten minutes before requiring time out. After individual time, he returned to the group for the next activities. Every effort is made to enable pupils with autism to experience interaction with others, where this can be achieved.

11. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage classes are consistently good, and sometimes very good or excellent. It is particularly good in language and communication where there are good supporting links with the therapy services, and in personal and social development. The staff have worked together from before the amalgamation of the schools, and as a result they have established very strong teamwork.

12. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in English, mathematics, communication, and music. Across the school, literacy and numeracy are also taught well, although teachers emphasise literacy more than numeracy in lessons. In other subjects there were many good or very good lessons observed. However, the quality of teaching and learning over a longer period of time cannot be guaranteed. This is because there is a lack of medium term planning which means that teachers do not have an overall framework to use when planning lessons to ensure that the content will be based on previous learning. In addition, the assessment in many subjects is also not in place and as a result there is no systemic way in which pupils are assessed against the expected learning outcomes. Therefore teaching in some subjects is only satisfactory because lessons do not always build on what has gone before. In ICT many teachers are very skilled and competent, especially in using the interactive whiteboard to demonstrate a concept or assess a pupils'

understanding. However, because of the turnover of staff over the last year, the level of expertise teachers have varies across the school. The school is working hard with all staff, including temporary staff, taking part in the National Opportunities Funded (NOF) training. Overall teaching and learning in this subject is satisfactory,

13. Where teaching and learning are of high quality, there are very high expectations of both achievement and behaviour. Teachers plan and organise a range of learning activities and outcomes that match the pupils' differing attainment. This means that pupils of different ages, or attainment levels, who are taught together, are presented with work or engaged in activities in which they achieve and make progress. There is a consistent use of high quality signing in all classes and this helps pupils' understanding of tasks set. For example, teachers of ASD pupils help them to make sense of the timetable and the order of events in the day by using symbols, objects, or music. This technique helps pupils to anticipate what might happen next. As a result of all staff having to work hard, and together, to overcome the difficulties and the constant changing situation, the teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants has developed very well, and there are many instances where learning support assistants take groups of pupils for activities, They do this well, with very good signing, communication and knowledge of the activity.

14. There are a large number of pupils in the school who not only have language and communication difficulties but also have EAL. Currently there is no whole school detailed policy for implementing a learning strategy for these pupils. Because teachers know their pupils very well, including those EAL, they adapt their approaches to communication and teaching so that it matches the needs of pupils very well, and as a result the quality of teaching and learning is no different to that of any other group. The school is aware that this provision could be enhanced by more focussed support for teaching and learning for this group of pupils. In one class, where there are a large number of pupils with EAL, a learning support assistant has been employed specifically to support these pupils.

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

15. The curriculum for pupils is satisfactory overall. It meets statutory requirements and provides a satisfactory range and quality of experiences and learning opportunities for the majority of pupils in Years 1 to 6. However, the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements as the Foundation Stage curriculum in the early stages has yet to move sufficiently towards adopting the Early Learning Goals as a framework for the curriculum. There is insufficient emphasis placed on mathematical development or knowledge and understanding of the world. These areas are covered, but are incidental rather than specifically planned as part of the curriculum.

16. Traditionally, the Foundation Stage has regarded itself as a nursery even though there were reception age children attending. Consequently much of the curriculum is taught through play. This is effective for nursery age children but insufficient emphasis is placed on implementing the Foundation Stage curriculum to extend reception age children in preparation for possible mainstream integration. While giving appropriate high quality attention to children's care and communication skills, teachers have not reviewed the curriculum provision with sufficient urgency or resolve.

17. The main focal points in the current school year have been English and mathematics, with an appropriate emphasis on implementing the principles and practice of the national strategies in these subjects, along with the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. This is providing a good basis on which to build further curriculum development in all subjects. The school has a good strategy for teaching literacy skills while its strategy for

teaching and promoting numeracy skills is satisfactory. However, the lack of documentation in other areas of the curriculum means that there is no planned and formal mechanism for showing how each subject can help to promote these basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Similarly, there are no identified opportunities for using ICT to enrich pupils' learning or planned circumstances within which pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development can be enhanced.

18. Due to the many changes of staffing, curriculum development is at an early stage and there is some inconsistent practice across the school. The long-term curriculum mapping is good, and reflects the programmes of study in different subjects of the National Curriculum. However, medium term planning in the form of schemes of work for most subjects has not been developed. Consequently, there are no clearly defined learning objectives, which form the basis for lesson planning and assessment. Teachers who are not subject specialists, or who are new to the school, or who have limited experience of pupils with a range of special educational need, do not have the benefit of a framework with which to plan their lessons.

19. The school's provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is satisfactory. The culture and ethos of the school promotes this very well informally, but the planned provision suffers from the same shortcomings as other taught subjects. Therefore, although pupils achieve very well in some lessons, such as Year 6 pupils who considered anger management, these are not yet part of a planned programme that covers the whole of the pupils' time in school. The school's provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory because transport arrangements do not permit such activities to be provided at the end of the day. There are only limited attempts to offer pupils any programme of planned activities at lunch times, mainly due to the time it takes to support the personal needs of pupils.

20. Curriculum provision for a minority of pupils is limited by inadequate accommodation. There are several pupils who, as a result of issues of physical access and pupil numbers, have to be placed in class groups that are not appropriate to their age and ability. Whilst this affects only about 10 per cent of pupils this year, for many of these pupils it is a significant shortcoming. Some pupils who need to be in groups with a wider range of ability, especially in language development. Careful planning of work helps, but is no substitute for the experience of being in a group of peers whose age, abilities and capacity to interact provides challenge. In addition some pupils aged 7 to 11 have to be taught in groups in the area set aside for pupils aged 5 to 7, sharing social and recreational areas. This limits their personal development and capacity to build age appropriate friendships. For others, time is lost for pupils and staff alike, as pupils are moved via the complex series of walkways across the site to access specialist facilities not accessible to them in their teaching area.

21. The contribution available from therapists to enable pupils to access the curriculum is not yet adequate. In addition, long delays in receiving specialists communications and ICT assessments requested via the local education authority (LEA) Service Level Agreement are having an impact on pupils and staff. Equipment is available in school to help pupils to communicate their understanding, make choices and take part more fully in lessons. This cannot be used as there has not been access to the occupational therapy assessments needed, followed up by specialist ICT assessments to provide the right aids, such as switches and communicators, and then enriched by training for staff and parents in its use. The pupils affected are at present not able to make the progress of which they are capable and take a more active and satisfying part in lesson and social activities.

22. Overall the provision for personal development is very good. Provision for spiritual development is good, and the school has established a strong ethos in which pupils can flourish, can explore the views and values of others and feel respected and supported, whatever their difficulties. Very good emphasis is placed on giving pupils the opportunity to



understand human emotions and feelings. For example, in a Year 6 class pupils discussed openly and honestly the issue of anger and how to manage it. Daily collective worship in classes gives pupils a chance to review and reflect on the events of the day or week.

23. The very good provision for moral development assists the school in setting clear boundaries for behaviour, which are consistently applied in all classes and situations. Although it is difficult for some pupils to conform to the rules laid down, teachers continue to reinforce them patiently and firmly. Whenever possible, pupils are encouraged to discuss and work out for themselves the rights and wrongs of situations and learn strategies for behaving appropriately. In some cases, this may be nothing more than to remain seated during story time. Attention and concern for the rights and entitlement of pupils, regardless of their individual disabilities, race, colour, or religion, are impressive. Provision for social development is very good. Pupils, when in the playground, are helped to develop the skills necessary for interactive play and cooperative effort, and as a result pupils become aware of others. In lessons, many opportunities are taken to encourage pupils to work in groups on projects, and the school provides many opportunities for pupils to learn appropriate social skills on their visits out of school. Opportunities are constantly provided for the most dependent pupils to become independent, for example, in hanging up their own coats, looking after classroom equipment and managing their own changing routines for physical education. Many pupils show a developing sympathy towards others, such as showing compassion for a friend who was upset by spontaneously hugging her.

24. The good provision for cultural development is supported whenever possible, by opportunities to visit the library, local places of worship and museums. Relevant topics are studied to extend pupils' awareness of the outside world using activities, such as shopping. Visitors, such as a parent talking about her religion, or a local elder talking about experiences of the area in the past, enrich the curriculum provision. This is especially so in religious education and history, and participation in musical events and performances heightens awareness of what can be achieved. In addition, the school has built a good and effective range of links within the community that support and enrich the learning of pupils. Local elderly residents visit the school and share their memories with the pupils. This is particularly helpful to junior pupils who are looking at the history of Britain in the last century. An impressive range of visits in the local area and further afield are well used to extend the work done in the classroom and provide pupils with a range of stimulating experiences. A project on water in a Year 1 class had been linked with visits to the local park, the Woolwich Ferry and Thames Barrier and then a trip on the London Eye to see the river Thames winding through London.

25. The outreach projects, based in, and managed by the school, are very valuable links to other schools in the local area and beyond. The SENCO project, ASD team, and Specific Learning Difficulties team are an integral and valuable part of the school but also provide efficient and professional support for other teachers and pupils. Pupils are well supported when they arrive at the school with a sensitive and carefully planned programme to help them settle. Similarly for pupils moving into mainstream schools there are carefully constructed programmes to help that transition to be successful. The arrangements with the secondary schools to which pupils move for their secondary education are similarly carefully organised and sensitive to the needs of the pupils to help ensure as smooth a transition as possible. The constructive partnerships that have been forged with other schools are very good.

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

26. There is a strong ethos of care and support at Willow Dene that helps pupil to feel safe and relaxed and contributes positively to their achievement and personal development. Teachers and support staff know pupils and their disabilities very well and have their best

interests and well being in mind at all times. Good procedures for child protection are embedded into day-to-day routines and the school is vigilant and sensitive in exercising its responsibilities. On site medical provision has been recently reviewed and is now good.

27. However, the school's capacity to meet the provision as outlined in the statements of special educational needs is unsatisfactory. It is limited due to problems with physical access, accommodation, and inadequate levels of speech and language, occupational and physiotherapy to meet pupils' stated needs. The Headteacher and Governors have been active and had some success in securing increase in some services, but the picture overall is unsatisfactory. Programmes are well written, but the necessary discussion with class teachers to integrate these with IEPs and the timetable does not take place

28. Physiotherapy support is improving as learning support staff become more involved, but a third of pupils require physiotherapy and for the school's first four terms there was very poor service. Provision has improved this term, but a backlog has built up. Occupational therapy provision is also required by a quarter of the pupils and a further 21 children have been identified as benefiting from this service. However, the school only has half a day a week available to meet these needs. There is a similar picture for support for visually impaired and hearing impaired pupils. Music therapy, which is paid for from the school's delegated budget, is currently available to a fifth of the pupils but the school has identified a further 75 pupils who would likely to benefit from such provision if it was available. There is a Service Level Agreement with the Health Authority, but none of whose therapists visit the school.

29. Without effective action in this area, this unsatisfactory situation is likely to deteriorate further. There are twenty new LEA referrals for the coming two terms, and are all for pupils with increasingly complex needs, six of whom start school after Easter. Evidence indicates that these pupils will add further to the levels of unmet therapy needs .

30. Health and safety procedures are good and all staff conscientiously ensure that pupils know and adhere to safe practice. Good systems are in place to ensure that identified hazards or safety concerns around the site are quickly reported. The school is very well aware of the hazard represented by the uncovered walkways in wet weather and is constantly bringing it to the attention of the LEA. Premises staff work diligently to keep surfaces clean and hence minimise the risks but a permanent solution is needed. There are many, urgent issues associated with disability access and provision on the site. The school has effectively minimised the impact of facility problems but changes in the population from September mean that a significant number of the older pupils will not be located with their peer group. Urgent action is required to review access and lifting facilities in the building.

31. The school has regular evacuation practices and records show that electrical, alarm and fire prevention equipment is frequently inspected. First aiders hold up-to-date accreditation and there are appropriate first aid supplies at a number of locations around the site. There are clear procedures relating to medicines on site. Comprehensive records of incidents and accidents are maintained and there are good procedures to ensure parents are quickly informed of any illness or injury. During the inspection and on off site trips great care was taken to ensure that pupils followed safe procedures and practices.

32. The procedures in place for monitoring and improving attendance are good. Registers are completed accurately. Escorts, administrative staff, the headteacher, and the educational social worker operate very effectively as a team monitoring and following up absence on an individual pupil basis. The early identification of attendance problems and the use of imaginative and flexible intervention strategies minimise absence and help families and pupils experiencing difficulties to develop a greater interest in school and the learning programmes.

33. The school's good procedures for monitoring behaviour and personal development are used well to contribute to the level of care and support provided for pupils. All pupils have targets in their IEPs that relate to aspects of behaviour and personal development. Longer term progress is monitored effectively at formal termly and annual reviews. Close day-to-day observation of pupils enables year group staff to constantly review individual pupil progress and development. Any pupils experiencing difficulties are quickly identified and the school in conjunction with parents is quick to agree suitable short-term intervention strategies. Merit schemes are used well to promote good and caring behaviour and are popular with pupils. Staff throughout the school use praise consistently to recognise achievement and effort and to encourage pupils to try hard. Pupils' personal and social skill development is encouraged effectively through the day-to-day routines in the school and extended through the good links with the local community and a large number of outings and residential visits.

### **Assessment**

34. Assessment overall is unsatisfactory but it is clear that a whole school approach to assessing pupil progress and planning for the next year needs time to develop. When the school was opened in September 2001 it inherited some information about pupils' levels of attainment, but found it too varied in quality and inconsistent in format. The very wide range of special educational needs of pupils in the new school, coupled with staff difficulties has made it difficult for the school to address the problem. New approaches, coupled with a baseline assessment and a termly evaluation of progress is not fully developed, and therefore there is not enough data for the school to make accurate statements about attainment and progress.

35. When children arrive at the school a detailed assessment report is written after a period of settling and observation. The report forms the basis of the individual plans for children's education in the Foundation Stage. However, though the quality of the target setting has recently improved, there is confusion about the assessment procedures and developing a convenient system to link assessment, teaching, children's progress, and curriculum planning.

36. Because assessment is not developed, the use of the information it generates to inform curriculum planning is also unsatisfactory, as are the procedures for supporting and monitoring academic progress. There is also insufficient information to monitor pupils' academic progress. The school management teams have made good progress in establishing systems, and have begun to collect data from baseline assessments and are working well with the nationally recognised 'P' levels. These have not yet been monitored, and there is an inconsistent approach across the school. In some cases the wrong levels are being used. However, there are some examples of satisfactory systems, such as in mathematics. Annual review meetings have taken place and these are used to set targets for pupils and are reflected in pupils' IEPs.

37. The pupils with EAL have their attainment assessed in the same way as other pupils, but when they enter the school there is insufficient information gathered to ensure that these pupils are sufficiently identified and gain the maximum support.

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

38. Parents' and carers' views of Willow Dene are very positive. The relationship, which exists with the vast majority of parents, contributes positively to pupils' learning and development. Responses to the questionnaire and comments at the meeting reveal positive views of the school and confirm parents' pleasure at the progress they see their children

making. There is universal agreement that their children enjoy attending the school. Parents are particularly pleased with the leadership and management of the headteacher, the dedication and commitment of classroom staff, the fact that the school is always approachable and the individual level of care that is given to their children. The main area of concern raised by a few parents is homework. In the context of the school, inspectors feel that the homework set is suitable to consolidate classroom learning and to encourage the development of personal and social skills.

39. The school is quick to involve parents if there are any concerns and ensures parental involvement in improvement programmes very effectively. Parents understand well that they can raise worries and concerns at any time. Since opening the school has been faced with many crises, which have taken priority over the parent partnership development work, originally envisaged. At the present time, links with parents of children in the Foundation Stage are very effective. The Goldilock's club for these parents provides practical help and instruction with physiotherapy and is to be extended to all age groups.

40. In the rest of the school links are less well developed but there are pockets of good practice. A new initiative to improve the frequency and consistency of interaction with parents is currently being implemented. The popular and successful workshops for parents on signing and autism awareness are to be repeated and the first meeting of a parent staff association is due to take place in the next few weeks. The school, with assistance from the LEA is able to support home to school liaison with the use of bilingual staff. It is able to translate key documents using the LEA translation services. To help support parents with the development and education of their children at home and to encourage further involvement in the school, a bid is being submitted for funds to help establish a parent training/education programme. The school is very committed to getting parents closely involved with the education and development of their children.

41. The currently inconsistent use of home school diaries is being reviewed and the practice of contacting home at least twice a week is starting to become the standard. Newsletters, both class and school, are increasing the information flow on a more regular basis. Home visits, already well established for Foundation Stage children, are being planned for older pupils and may well involve the educational social worker or other specialist therapists. Parents are to receive detailed statements of the learning programmes and detailed learning targets for their children on a termly basis. A new programme of parents' evenings to discuss progress but also to explore how parents can contribute to learning targets are set to start in the next few weeks. The formal annual progress and development review, which involves parents, will be supplemented by termly reviews of individual education plan targets.

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

42. Overall, the leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher, provides very good leadership and has managed the very difficult transition situation with a high level of professionalism, a clear vision for the future of the school, and a systematic approach to school improvement and development. For example, it was decided that, of utmost importance was the quality, and consistency, of the teaching and learning rather than the production of policies, which would have had little impact on the work of the school, or on its aims and values. Although the development of the curriculum has been slow, this approach has been effective, and through the excellent in-service training and continual monitoring, the quality of classroom practice meets the needs of all the different groups of pupils. The school's priorities have included appropriately: the stabilising of class groups, the recruitment of experienced staff and the provision of high quality care and welfare for a wide range of physical, medical and emotional needs of pupils.

43. The senior management team has worked hard to manage and monitor a constantly changing situation, and to develop teamwork throughout the school. However, due to the constantly changing staffing situation, the roles of subject leaders are in their infancy. They have developed well for English and mathematics, but the practice of devolving curriculum responsibilities to teams is a relatively new development for other subjects. While this procedure has the benefits of sharing the workload and involving a wider range of staff, as each team comprises teachers from both key stages, it has the disadvantage of at times appearing unwieldy. Consequently, curriculum development is not evolving sufficiently rapidly with the sense of urgency that is now required. Therefore, even though targets associated with developing aspects of the curriculum are identified in the school development plan, the current situation is one in which its whole school management, and co-ordination within different subject areas, still require significant further development. Documentation is still in draft form or only partially in place, and although the school recognises the principle of planning, monitoring and evaluating its curriculum provision it does not yet have in place systematic procedures for doing so. As a result it has no way of judging formally the quality, effectiveness and appropriateness of the curriculum received by all pupils.

44. Staff in the Foundation Stage are very experienced and committed to working with children with a wide range of learning difficulties, and in order to meet the changing needs of the children coming into the school. However, leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are unsatisfactory, because despite the existing good practice, the school has not moved forward with sufficient urgency in adopting the nationally recognised Foundation Stage curriculum or in developing appropriate consistent assessment procedures.

45. The governing body is a very professional body of people who are very committed to making the school a success. They have taken a leading role in getting the school to the position it is in today. For example, they have been actively involved in school funding issues, overseeing the closing of four school budgets, as well as setting up of the new one. They have tackled the issues surrounding the building, and health and safety, the constant interviewing and appointment of staff, and the ongoing issues concerning transport and therapy support. Because they have detailed first hand knowledge about the school's strengths and weaknesses they contribute very well to shaping the future direction of the school, but along with the headteacher they have had to prioritise developments. As a result, some of the statutory requirements have not yet been implemented, such as target setting and performance management.

46. All future developments are detailed in the school improvement plan. There are no areas omitted and their completion is just a question of time. There are good links between school development planning and financial planning. Items in the school development plan are fully costed and there are clear targets identified to monitor the progress of spending. A good model has evolved which enables the leadership team and the governing body to match the identified educational development priorities against the delegated budget to produce a workable school development plan. The school effectively ensures that overall income is supplemented with grant funds wherever possible and maintains clear records to show that these funds are used for the designated purposes.

47. There is effective and close control of day-to-day finances and all relevant parties are kept well informed of spending against agreed budget headings. The senior managers and the governing body have managed the finances and funding well over the transition period and are now starting to evaluate the effectiveness of specific spending decisions. However, more whole school plans are required to fully develop the work and the monitoring of the teaching and learning of all this group of pupils.

48. The school works hard to ensure that it gets good value for money in all its spending decisions and is starting to apply the principles of "best value" to ensure that is giving good value for money in relation to the use of available resources. The headteacher and resources manager run a very tight ship and have been supported well by staff helping to sort out many of the problems with the site and facilities that have been encountered since amalgamation. The use of the site and accommodation since opening has been very effectively organised to minimise the impact of deficiencies but urgent action is now required to ensure full access for all pupils from September.

49. Staffing and resources are overall satisfactory. Despite considerable difficulties in recruiting and retaining teaching staff over the past two years the school have persevered in their efforts to recruit suitable qualified teachers and now have a full compliment of staff including a supportive senior management team. The rapid turnover of staff has been both costly and disruptive to the school with some classes having several short-term appointments and temporary staff. Overall staffing is now good. Resources are at least satisfactory in all subjects. Resourcing of mathematics has benefited the auditing which the school has completed, and the development of good range of resources across the school. Likewise, ICT has benefited from a range of new technology and is good. Resources in the Foundation Stage are also good with a suitable range of sensory toys and large outside play equipment. Resources, including those that are specially made by teachers themselves, are well used in lessons and contribute well to the learning of the pupils

50. The school buildings are unsatisfactory overall. Many areas of the external parts of the building are in very poor repair. The teaching staff have carried out a lot of work to ensure that inside the school buildings are attractive and lively, with stimulating displays on the walls. The buildings are clean and very well kept by the premises staff who show dedication and great pride in their work. The hygiene facilities currently available in the Foundation Stage building are unacceptable in terms of pupils' privacy and dignity. The structural weaknesses in the buildings prevent ceiling tracking being installed to support the use of electric hoists, increasingly needed for moving children safely. There is insufficient space for quiet individual learning and sensory areas are not available in all buildings. The external play space is adequate, but the access area at the front of the school is cramped.

51. The Headteacher has been tireless in her efforts to resolve the wide range of challenges posed by the suitability of the site chosen for the new school. In this she leads by example, showing excellent knowledge of all her pupils' needs, progress and continued challenges. In agreeing to build a new school for 2006, the LEA has recognised that the buildings remain unsuitable. Plans do exist to help make the current buildings more accessible to all pupils, but some older pupils are based in the same building as younger pupils because the other building is not suitable adapted for their needs. Of greater concern is the change in the pupil population projected for the coming years. The building work planned for this summer will provide some improved access to play areas and changing facilities for pupils aged 7 to 11 but still leave only two out of six classrooms accessible to all these pupils. It is the only remaining adaptation possible in the current site. At the time of the inspection, the Headteacher has managed to create the best fit possible in terms of placing the majority of pupils in teaching groups that would support their physical, learning and social needs and, for younger pupils, an appropriate peer group. As pupils with moderate learning difficulties leave, increasingly complex pupils with severe and multiple learning difficulties take their place. In September 2003, there will be at least twelve more pupils aged 7 to 11, as well as 14 new pupils, all with complex needs. This changing population poses difficulties for the school in integrating pupils with different difficulties, including the vulnerable with those who have outbursts of challenging behaviour, within the constraints created by the building.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

52. The headteacher and Governing Body need to:

1. Put in place medium term curriculum planning which:
  - provides a framework for teachers to plan individual lessons and builds on the long term planning;
  - provides learning activities and expected outcomes for pupils of differing attainment levels;
  - provides a balance within individual subjects as pupils progress through the school
  - ensures that the Foundation Stage curriculum takes into account the Early Learning Goals. (Paragraphs: 1,2,12,15,18,75,79,84,88,89,93,108,112).
2. Develop and implement assessment procedures so that:
  - children and pupils are assessed against the learning outcomes in the medium term planning of subjects, and in lessons;
  - the data derived from the assessments can provide information on the progress individual or groups of pupils are making.
  - the information can be used in school improvement
  - statutory targets can be set. (Paragraphs: 1,12,18,34,36,44,55,70,75,79,84,86,88,93,96,99,100,104,108,112).
3. Reduce the barriers to learning for some pupils and increase their equality of opportunity by:
  - increasing and securing the amount of therapy and support services available to the school so that it matches the needs of the population;
  - increasing the use of technological aids for supporting pupils' communication;
  - ensuring that pupils have access to accommodation for learning, social experiences and personal care that allows them to be educated alongside their peers and own age group;
  - ensuring that the all pupils arrive in school before the start of the first lesson. (Paragraphs: 4,5,9,11,19,20,21,27,28,29,45,48,50,51,75,97).
4. Develop, with urgency, the roles and responsibilities of subject co-ordinators, including in the Foundation Stage, so that:
  - they develop curriculum planning, assessment and resources in each subject;
  - they monitor teaching and learning of subjects across the school;
  - they determine the developments needed to their subject areas and evaluate the progress of any improvements;
  - performance management can be initiated. (Paragraphs: 43,44,47,79,84,112).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	84
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	46

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	26	35	17	2	0	0
Percentage	5	31	41	20	3	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 one percentage point.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	159
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	93

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	38

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	29
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	11.7

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.6

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***

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	85	3	
White – Irish	1		
White – any other White background	3		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2		
Mixed – White and Black African	1		
Mixed – White and Asian	2		
Mixed – any other mixed background	3		
Asian or Asian British - Indian	4		
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	4	1	
Black or Black British – African	32		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2		
Chinese	1		
Any other ethnic group	0		
No ethnic group recorded	0		

*The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

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

### ***Financial information***

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	31*
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.9
Average class size	8

\* This includes staff employed in the Outreach Service

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

Total number of education support staff	62
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1777

Financial year – for 7/12ths of the year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	1560115
Total expenditure	1492560
Expenditure per pupil	7538
Balance brought forward from previous year	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

Balance carried forward to next year	67555
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### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	11.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	43.7

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	7
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	7
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 returned

68
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### **Percentage of responses in each**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	82	15	0	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	54	39	4	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	45	37	3	1	12
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	28	18	7	13
The teaching is good.	75	19	1	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	67	24	3	6	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	79	16	3	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	31	1	0	7
The school works closely with parents.	63	28	3	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	75	18	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	34	1	3	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	57	22	7	3	4

### **Other issues raised by parents**

All parents who attended the meeting felt that their children did not receive the therapy that they were entitled to. The parents recognised that the school had had many changes of staff but felt that after 18 months they should be receiving better communication regarding progress, events and homework.

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

53. As children come into the school with an increasingly diverse range of learning difficulties, the school has seen the grouping of children in age and ability appropriate groups as extremely important. They have recently decided to make one class for children who are identified as ASD, and four groups for children who have severe or profound learning difficulties. One class created within the last two terms is for reception age pupils, while the other three provide for children of reception and nursery age. An implication of this arrangement is that class groupings have to be reviewed regularly on the basis of the needs of new children being admitted to the school. The provision for children in the nursery and reception classes is a mixture of good aspects, and some unsatisfactory aspects that need further development. The individual needs of children are well met because of the consistently high quality of the teaching, and the commitment amongst all the adults working in this area of the school. The very good collaboration between teachers and therapy personnel, and the very good relationships within the department contribute to the high quality provision for the children. The school is fortunate to have a mainstream playgroup on site and regular successful links are made with children from both groups.

54. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage classes are consistently good, and sometimes very good or excellent. The staff have worked together from before the amalgamation of the schools. The children are continually stimulated and encouraged to learn. However, because for the reception children there is little difference in the way the curriculum is planned and taught from that of the nursery children, and the fact that some developmental areas, such as mathematical development are taught through play experiences, the teaching and learning overtime is not as good. There is a need for staff, both teaching and support staff, to become more aware of the next stage of learning and the strategies used in teaching pupils in Years 1 and 2.

55. Assessment has been established over a period of time and every child is assessed during the first few weeks at the school and the information used to create individual programmes of work based on children's skills. However, the use of consistent assessment procedures linked to the review of individual targets, and to progress reports is underdeveloped. Although teachers know their children very well there is a lack of rigorous planning to extend children's skills to the maximum. The home-school book is an effective communication between school and carers.

### **Personal, social, and emotional development**

56. Children achieve very well and this reflects the very good teaching throughout the department in this area of learning. All adults foster children's personal and social skills at every opportunity. Children enjoy coming to school and the classroom atmosphere is friendly, happy, and welcoming. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging children to become as independent as possible not only in moving about the classrooms but completing their tasks and making decisions about their next activity. Each day a different child takes on with support, the responsibility of the 'Fruit Round' visiting each class with a trolley, wearing a peaked cap of office and leaving the fruit and drink order for each room. The 'Hello' or welcome sessions in the morning are used effectively to make a pleasant start to the day and to settle children into the classroom activities. Their classmates, through songs, welcome children individually. They learn to take turns as they respond with 'thumbs up', smiles, or communication aids to show their recognition of being part of the group. Lunchtimes are a

very good opportunity for children to extend their social skills and this is recognised by the adults. Lunchtime is planned so children eat their meals in a sociable and unrushed atmosphere; a high level of adult support is required for many children who are not independent eaters. After lunch, a wide range of well-supervised activities including sensory work, outdoor games with balls, bikes and swings amuse and stimulate children.

57. Children learn to think of others as they pedal bikes and wait for their friends to move out of their way. Teachers make very good use of *Tac Pac* and circle activities such as parachute games, Tap It box and blanket games to encourage all children to be aware of each other, to listen and watch and to develop personal skills such as turn-taking. Though not seen during the inspection, video evidence and preparation by children indicate the Friday 'sharing' assembly is used well for all children to show samples of their work such as paintings or the bulbs they are growing to the rest of the department. Certificates are given to children who have achieved well in, for example, joining in or listening well. The result is that children are proud of their efforts and encouraged to continue trying hard. Throughout the department adults model turn taking, listening, and responding to children and this helps children to learn how to react to each other with kindness and sensitivity. The regular links maintained with the mainstream nursery that is on site means that groups or individual children visit and participate in the play and more focused singing games. This is of benefit for both groups of children with the children from *Saplings* showing interest, concern, and wanting to play with their visitors.

### **Communication, language, and literacy**

58. A great deal of emphasis is rightly placed on improving children's ability to communicate. As a consequence of very good teaching children achieve very well. For many children, the prime focus is to encourage them to engage in looking at whoever is talking to them and making a response. The high level of staffing means that when children make a positive response or choice, there is always an adult to praise and encourage further responses. Children learn that symbols have a meaning and, with adult support, children learn to use signs and symbols to communicate. A number of children express themselves verbally conversing with each other in outdoor play activities and, in response to adult questions, describe what has happened in a shared storybook. Daily story-time sessions are used well to share a favourite book such as *The Bear Hunt*. Adults give a good lead in chanting the story so children join in, appreciating the rhythm. Very good use is made of props such as water spray, horsetail, and squishy dough to emphasise the rain, grasses, and mud in the story. In these sessions more able children recognise that words in books have a meaning.

59. Children's interest in reading is encouraged and they discuss pictures, turn pages, and are thrilled to take books home in their book bags. Children learn to make marks when they use paintbrushes, developing from indiscriminate marks to improved control with circles or lines. Higher attaining reception age children are learning to transfer their skills in making circular movements into making a letter 'e'. These children learn that writing is a method of communicating. They have good opportunities to experiment in classrooms where, for example, an office is set up with a telephone and notepad for taking messages as children act out situations. Good use is made of the sensory room for children to learn how to re-enact a story, using props and the light stimulation facility to create effects to support understanding of a story. Good links with speech therapists and teachers from the Hearing-Impaired service support the classroom activities and encourage children to improve their communication skills. Both groups of therapists consult with teachers and work within classrooms developing children's ability to listen, understand, and relate to other people

## Mathematical development

60. Children are given good opportunities to develop early mathematical skills, and teaching and learning is overall satisfactory. This is done predominantly through songs, or through activities, such as water play. However, for reception children there are too few opportunities for them to begin take part in the routines of a more formal approach of the teaching of numeracy. Children learn the routines of the classroom and so start to develop an idea of order. This is further developed as they sing number songs such as '*Alice the camel has five humps*' and '*Five naughty monkeys swinging in the tree*'. Children have access to water and sand, and use containers to pour and tip. However, although children learn to understand and express 'more', adults working with them miss opportunities to use mathematical vocabulary, such as '*full*' or '*empty*', '*big*' or '*small*'. Children learn to match symbols to objects. For example, during a 'blanket' game they learned positional vocabulary, such as '*up*' and '*down*' as they held the edges in a circle. Teachers clearly indicate the start and finish of activities, thus helping children to become aware of routines and time. Reception age children enjoy the rap version of *Goldilocks*, where they improve their recall of one, two, and three as they listen to the adults singing '*When Goldilocks went to the house of the bears what did her blue eyes see?*' In this very good lesson, the song '*Hey there daddy bear*' also helped children to focus on the difference between '*huge*' and '*small*', as well as, matching bowls to bears. Children sort objects into colour groups as a preparation for sorting like objects and observing patterns. Through the regular use of tabletop toys, children stack bricks and fit pieces into simple jigsaws. This helps them to gain an awareness of shape and size. Teachers take pride in the presentation of their classrooms and have a wide range of accessible toys for matching or counting.

## Knowledge and understanding of the world

61. Children are given good opportunities to explore and investigate and as a result they achieve well in this area of learning. The classrooms are stimulating with a wide range of accessible items for children to examine. Teaching is overall good. One of the strengths is the commitment and thought that goes into ensuring that all children, regardless of disability, are given worthwhile opportunities to explore their immediate environment. This achieved by good organisation of the classrooms to provide sensory areas for children to be stimulated by light and physical sensation. In water play, resources are managed well so all children can experience the activity. Children plant their daffodil bulbs and proudly show their plants to the rest of the department during assembly. *Tac Pac*, which is a sensory activity planned to stimulate children's responses and interest, is used effectively. Children listen to relaxing or rhythmic music while adults create sensory experiences with large fans, feather dusters, or crinkly material, making children aware of their own bodies and the effect of touch. Hand and foot massage is a planned part of the curriculum. Giggles and smiles typify these sessions.

62. All classrooms are equipped with a range of switches to aid communication and these are used effectively. When one child indicated a wish to use the computer, his teacher very quickly supported him so he could use the touch-screen to control pictures on the monitor. However, although each classroom has a computer these are not widely used to help children learn. Children are given good opportunities to make visits out of school including outings to local farms. Visitors such as *The Insect Man* are welcome, and children take part in *Red Nose* activities to raise funds as well as their own sponsored bike ride. Birthdays are celebrated as well as special days, such as Harvest, Halloween, and Christmas. A video of the most recent Christmas concert showed full participation in the performances by all children. Chinese New Year and Divali are further examples of celebration and of the opportunities taken by staff to increase children's awareness of unfamiliar cultures. At the time of inspection preparations were being made for the forthcoming *Mother's Day* event and the *Daffodil Tea Dance* organised for grandparents.

## Physical development

63. Children gain confidence in their physical skills and learning these is promoted effectively through good teaching, and by support from the physiotherapy team. Children become more aware of their own bodies as they move around the rooms and play areas. Each class has a specific playground that is well equipped with wheeled toys and a range of swings. There is a larger shared playground with climbing frames and space for more robust activities. Outdoor activities are well supervised, with adults continually interacting with children, and encouraging participation in physical activities appropriate to children's developmental levels. The Foundation Stage building has a large hall with large soft play equipment, a soft playroom with ball pools, and a sensory room. There is a smaller hall, which doubles as a dining room, and is used for dance or physical exercise. All these facilities provide good opportunities for the wide range of physical activities provided by teachers and the therapy teams. Throughout the day, teams of adults work with individual children helping them to stretch and improve muscle tone and flexibility. Children, for whom it is appropriate, attend a regular group physiotherapy session called *Goldilocks*. The aim is to develop children's physical and social skills through singing. Family members are encouraged to attend and work with their child. Children are physically supported, prompted to clap and join in the actions for songs, such as *Wind The Bobbin Up*. The ball pool is a source of great excitement as children crawl and climb safely on equipment. They enjoy swinging and playing make-believe games with the adults. On visits out to the nearby stables children could not wait to go horse riding. Very well organised sessions allow children to increase self-esteem as they make friends with the horses, take part in horseback games. The most experienced riders hardly able to contain their excitement and delighted by their achievements. The weekly country dancing session provides an excellent opportunity for all children to enjoy movement to music. Wide smiles, laughter and elation typified the session as, with adult support, children in wheelchairs whizzed past each other in formation dancing and more verbal children joined in with whoops at appropriate times.

## Creative development

64. Children are given good opportunities to explore texture and space, and teaching and learning is good overall. Pupils learn to identify prime colours, and through collage work they cut, stick, and learn to match items that are the same colour. With physical prompts or support, they develop their co-ordination skills by using paintbrushes to daub paint, feel the texture of collage materials before sprinkling them on their work. In an excellent lesson where the teacher had planned carefully to meet all individual needs, children used scissors for cutting out, sorted objects according to colour and used roller sponges or brushes to complete their work. Cheerful music played in the background and staff made the whole experience enjoyable as they danced around the room holding less mobile children. There was a delightful moment when a higher attaining child who had been using a torch to explore the effect of light on shiny material decided to use the torch as a pretend microphone and with total lack of inhibition joined in the dance. Children use glue and spatulas to stick, and are encouraged to paint as an early stage of the mark-making process leading to writing. Higher attaining children draw faces and, after verbal prompts, include the features. As they make patterns with their hands, they enjoy feeling the texture of shaving foam or cornflour paint. Children print patterns with paint and become more familiar with prime colours. Throughout the department, there is a consistent focus on song and rhymes to support learning and to encourage children to participate in class activities. There are very good links with the Music Therapy service, the therapist sharing on a monthly basis detailed progress reports showing how individual children respond to music therapy and exchanging ideas for future work and classroom practice. In one of the therapy sessions, the child put in maximum effort as he listened to piano and guitar playing, and, with adult support, was able

to strike the guitar and the chime bars to accompany the piano playing. Intense concentration from this child made the whole lesson a magical experience. There is a strong ethos of learning through play and adults make the most of opportunities for children to develop imaginative play in the home corner or through the more focused circle activities.

## **ENGLISH**

65. There has been a significant and appropriate emphasis on developing this subject. This has included ensuring teachers have the skills to teach literacy to pupils with specific special educational needs. Along with the adoption of the National Literacy Strategy this has had a good impact on achievement and progress.

66. The development of communication is seen as a priority throughout the school for pupils of all ages and with different special educational needs. The school promotes the development of speaking, listening and understanding well in all areas of the curriculum, and pupils make good progress. For example, by Year 6, pupils with MLD are fluent and confident in expressing their views and concerns. They take turns appropriately in discussions and respect the views of others. For example, in a discussion in personal, social, and health education (PSHE), they discussed emotive issues, such as anger management in a sensible and articulate way, being sensitive to the difficulties of members of the group. Pupils with ASD work hard at responding appropriately to simple instructions, reviewing what they have done during outings and activities and planning ahead, using their (PECS) communication books or other forms of picture cueing. Well-established routines, such as the weekly walk to the library, help pupils to link experience with vocabulary so as to consolidate their understanding. All pupils develop both their understanding and expression through the use of signing which is used well throughout the school. In classes of younger pupils, those with profound difficulties show good response to sensory stories, anticipating events, such as going under a velvet curtain to denote being in a cave, and contributing to a story by pressing a switch to provide part of the dialogue. Others progress well in making choices, using switches, eye-pointing, or hand gestures to indicate preferences.

67. Pupils achieve well in reading and the progress they have made since coming to the school is good. This is because of the great emphasis, which is placed on books, and story telling, in all classes. There is a wide range of reading ability and attainment across in the schools. For example, some pupils in Years 1 and 2 sign their way through a book and listen and watch intently as a story signed to them. Others pupils recognise symbols that help to identify meaning. All pupils show delight during the reading sessions, and even when they are unable to decode the text, they show enthusiasm for books, turning the pages and commenting on the pictures. Some pupils refer to wall displays or classroom objects to indicate that they know what a story is about. In Year 4, some pupils read fluently and confidently from books that are appropriate for their chronological ages. Some pupils answer questions about the meaning accurately, while others who have ASD cannot generalise from the book to the world outside. In the classes for MLD pupils in Year 6, pupils show a real enthusiasm for reading books and are confident about demonstrating their reading skills. They generally manage to work out words well, using phonic and whole word strategies when they come across something they do not know. Some, but not all, use the meaning or context to guess new words, answer questions about what the story, or predict what might happen next. However, the majority read simple instructions, are proud to read back to their class their own writing, and manage to use reference books, such as simple dictionaries to help them with their writing.

68. In the classes for MLD pupils there is real evidence of writing, and here pupils are achieving well and making good progress in developing an awareness of different kinds of writing. For example, in a class of Year 3 and 4 pupils, the work on display shows pupils



understand the characteristics of a fairy story, and in response to the lessons had produced their own imaginative stories, containing the main features of this type of writing. In other classes pupils are beginning to trace over their name over their name, or writing inside stencils. Other pupils use symbols in their structure of sentences, which denote what they want to say. By Year 6, the higher attaining pupils write short, but largely accurate pieces of writing in a range of styles and for a variety of audiences. For example, they produce simple stories, factual accounts, some poems, and letters. Although their handwriting is not joined, it is mainly legible and clear, and simple spelling and punctuation are accurately used. Some pupils make good use of word processing to make their work clear and attractive.

69. The quality of teaching and learning are good overall with a significant proportion of very good lessons where pupils achieve very well. Teachers show very good awareness of the different needs of their pupils, and use a variety of strategies to develop communication and expression. This has a positive impact on the progress they make. Communication includes signing, the use of pictures, the use of switches and symbols, sensory story telling, and the skilful use of questioning so that pupils develop an understanding and extend their vocabulary. For example, in a Year 1 lesson on colours, signing was used consistently to maximise pupils' understanding. In other lessons and activities, such as assembly, real objects are used so that pupils' learning is reinforced. Teachers make good use of familiar songs and rhymes, and use a multi-sensory approach with PMLD pupils. Work is always well matched to learners' needs. For example, teachers of MLD pupils use well-planned news-time sessions, where the focus is on developing conversational skills. Because they know their pupils very well they phrase questions for individuals in different ways so that answers build on previous learning or understanding, and this has a positive impact on the progress hem make. Lessons are well planned with a range of activities that interest and motivate pupils, and the atmosphere is set for working. Teachers have a good understanding of the subject and set tasks that match the pupils' abilities and understanding. Learning support assistants are used very well and form a very valuable part of the teaching team. They provide pupils very good support, both in individual and small group tasks, working closely with the teacher and recording pupils' responses carefully. This contributes to the overall assessment of pupils' progress. The use of ICT in teaching is satisfactory overall with some very good examples of teachers and assistants confidently using the interactive board to aid their teaching and pupils' learning.

70. Individual lessons are well planned to a set of clearly defined objectives, but the curriculum guidance is not sufficiently detailed to ensure that there is no repetition of previously used materials, or that progress is cumulative and appropriately sequenced. The curriculum team is aware that policies and schemes of work for the subject need developing, and they have prioritised what it needs to do in order to improve the situation. The subject co-ordinator has monitored teaching across the school, and this has been particularly successful in ensuring that staff new to the school, and particularly those who have no previous experience of teaching the National Literacy Strategy, are well trained and consistent in their approach. Assessment is satisfactory but there are too many systems in place and practice is not consistent across the school. However, teachers are following the National Literacy Framework and are beginning to build up a record of what pupils' skills are. There is a great deal of work to be completed so that the school can track of pupils' progress and the in setting and monitoring of individual and group targets.

## MATHEMATICS

71. The provision for mathematics is good and as a result all pupils achieve well and make good progress. The adoption of the National Numeracy Strategy has had a good impact on achievement and progress of pupils throughout the school. Pupils develop a mathematical vocabulary and increase their basic skills. By the time that they are in Year 2, pupils are making good progress, overall. They are able to build a mathematical vocabulary that is suitable for their own needs and attainment level. By the time that they are in Year 6, pupils continue to improve their mathematical skills and grow in confidence.

72. The pupils who are in the ASD groups are making good progress. Some pupils have difficulties with sequencing, but by the time they are in Year 6, they complete clocks using halves and quarters and are aware of time passing. The higher attaining pupils count to fifty using a number square; others match by placing cards on top of a card in a number line. All draw pencil lines around the shapes they have used. Amongst the pupils in mixed groups, ASD pupils make simple estimates about how many pupils in a room. Others in Year 6, produce good work on number bonds up to twenty, while those with severe learning difficulties, with help from support assistants, count to 20 and match objects, and often use signing to indicate their answers. They demonstrate their understanding of number through the use of the interactive board, for example about the number of frogs in space. In this group pupils use activities to develop basic skills in matching and sharing. PMLD pupils, through the use of sensory lessons, experience different shapes, and with help from staff match up to five. The MLD pupils use number lines to complete investigations, and use the school weekly focus of giving and sharing to form part of their exercises. Numeracy skills are practised and reinforced in lessons across the curriculum. For example, in physical education lessons where pupils follow the leader '*through*', '*over*' and '*under*' apparatus, are used to reinforce basic mathematical language.

73. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. There are examples of excellent and very good teaching especially in lessons where pupils are challenged throughout the period and they learn to respond and achieve. Lessons are well planned with a range of activities that interest and motivate pupils, and the atmosphere is set for working. Teachers have a good understanding of the subject and set tasks that match the pupils' abilities and understanding. Teachers use the interactive boards very well and these make a considerable impact on the lesson. It ensures that all pupils are included and understand through the visual experiences. The learning support staff have established very good relationships with the pupils in their classes, and are constantly enabling pupils to be part of the learning experiences, and teachers use their time fully. Teachers plan their lessons as close as they can to the National Numeracy Strategy, with a good combination of mental and written work where possible. Teachers provide many opportunities for talking about mathematics and this enhances learning through consolidation.

74. The subject is well managed by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic co-ordinator. She has a clear vision and understands the needs of particular groups and their teachers. The subject management team responsible for mathematics is developing appropriate policies and documentation. The team is well organised, and is dedicated and enthusiastic about developing the subject. The planning documents are thorough and address the needs of pupils well. Teachers are collecting and collating information concerning the levels pupils are working at but it is not yet being used to monitor progress over time. Monitoring of teaching has taken place, and there has been good in-service training for teachers who have not worked with the National Numeracy Strategy. The school has conducted an internal review of resources and following this the resources have been well organised to support planning, teaching and learning

## SCIENCE

75. The school's provision for science is satisfactory overall and the strengths are in long term planning, which maps out a broad curriculum, and in the quality of teaching. However, the medium term planning has not yet been developed, and as such there are no clear and appropriate learning objectives relevant to pupils' age and ability set down for teachers to use as a framework for planning lessons, and for assessing pupils' learning outcomes. The inconsistent assessment arrangements do not allow the school to track pupils' progress in the subject over time or to set targets. The shortcomings in planning and assessment therefore mean that pupil progress over time is only satisfactory. Currently pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve satisfactorily in lessons in developing their knowledge and understanding of the living and physical worlds. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve well in lessons, and are making good progress in developing an understanding of scientific investigations and the skills required to carry them out.

76. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 begin to develop a growing understanding of the world around them. By Year 2, higher attaining ASD pupils follow a sequence of symbols when planting bean and cress seeds. Those pupils who have moderate or severe learning difficulties begin to record what they have seen and done, such as completing charts to show the growth of seeds they have planted, and also distinguish between the differences between living and non-living things. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties know the difference between textures that are rough or smooth. They show their appreciation of cause and effect by laughing or responding vocally when reacting to sounds. However, in there are some instances when pupils could demonstrate their choices more effectively if they had access to a range of appropriate communication aids.

77. By Year 6, pupils extend their understanding of living things, materials, and physical processes and their knowledge of outer space. Pupils sort objects into magnetic and non-magnetic items and they know that materials exist in different states like solid, liquid and gas and can change from one state to another. They identify simple forces like pushing and pulling with the higher attaining ones showing developing understanding of concepts such as friction and gravity as they experiment with cars moving down a ramp. By this age, pupils are also beginning to develop some of the early skills associated with carrying out investigations. These include making predictions before testing them, evaluating results, using scientific apparatus like a force meter, and developing appropriate scientific vocabulary and units of measurement, such as Newtons. These investigations have included measuring and recording the lengths of shadows at different times of the day, examining which materials are most effective in mopping up spillage, and evaluating the progression of vibrations as they travel through different materials. MLD pupils carry out very interesting work associated with outer space which includes personifying each planet in the form of large two-dimensional models as they pictured and imagined them after having listened to *The Planet Suite*.

78. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with some being very good. Lessons are characterised by high quality relationships between adults and pupils and between the pupils themselves, and very good pupil and classroom management. Very effective learning support assistants very well support teachers. All adults provide guidance and support, and provide additional multi-sensory experiences to enrich the learning of pupils with more severe and profound difficulties, but still retain a level of challenge with expectations of higher attaining pupils to work independently. In the better planned lessons pupils are able to do this because they are provided with worksheets or other activities that build on their prior learning and therefore they know what they are required to do. Consequently, they have a positive attitude to their work and tackle it enthusiastically. In these instances teachers plan clear learning objectives for the lesson, teach to these objectives, and then provide activities that

enable pupils to demonstrate their learning. For example, planning and teaching of this quality enabled a class of ten year olds with moderate learning difficulties to make very good gains in understanding the concept of a year and the idea of four seasons. Appropriate resources are used and with the help from learning support assistants ensures that all pupils work with understanding and purpose, and achieve success.

79. The management of science is satisfactory but the recently constituted management team responsible for science is at the very early stages of providing leadership through the development of appropriate policies and documentation. They have not yet assumed their roles in monitoring teaching and learning, or evaluating assessment and setting whole school targets. The group has audited resources, correctly recognising some deficiencies for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and acknowledges inconsistency in assessment procedures. The overall weaknesses in provision have been identified but these have not been translated into priorities for developing the subject and collated into an action plan. This is an important next stage because standards of achievement are unlikely to improve until robust medium term planning and assessment procedures become embedded.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

80. Standards of achievement in art and design are satisfactory throughout the school. Pupils with different types and degrees of special educational needs are making satisfactory progress in all year groups.

81. Younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 have been experimenting with producing self-portraits, and choosing colours to produce handprints and collage work. They been introduced to symmetry in their artwork, and have produce patterns which have been changed into butterflies. They choose colours and materials to complete their designs, decide which colours are stand out better than others, and when producing portraits have made use of ICT as another means of producing art.

82. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' work is closely connected with the topics they are studying in other areas of the curriculum. For example, in Year 6 the higher attaining pupils have produced large three-dimensional models of people who are made and dressed to represent the planets in the universe, such as 'Jupiter'. This links very well with their science curriculum. Pupils produce these models, and others of 'Rockets', and 'Aliens' by making use of paper mache, plaster and wire. Pupils have many other opportunities to use materials other than paint. For example, they have decorated the acetate covers of special books retelling their experiences on visits out of school and Year 5 pupils are currently investigating the use of charcoal for drawing stick figures. Other pupils with more complex and challenging behaviour, are studying pattern making but with an appropriate emphasis on following instructions as part of their overall communication targets. They create patterns by blowing the paint, and some pupils manage to create repeating patterns using two colours and an art application on the computer.

83. In the small number of lessons observed, the teaching and learning is overall good, but does vary across the school depending of the expertise of teachers. In the successful, there are clear expectations of what pupils will achieve by the end of the lesson, with well-organised resources. For example, when investigating the use of yellow, there is a very wide range of yellow objects that vary both in shade and texture. The teacher allows the pupils to fully investigate and handle the objects so that pupils make progress in their personal development as well. When working with ASD pupils the teachers, because they know their pupils very well, plan short appropriate tasks that are introduced with good timing, when pupils are ready to engage in learning. Symbols are used very well to introduce the sessions so that all pupils understand what they will be doing and what is required of them. In these

lessons, the teamwork makes a significant impact on the management of the behaviour and the quality of the finished pieces of work. In the less successful lessons, the introductions last too long and although the pupils are attentive, the actual art and design activity of choosing colours and making patterns is too short. Pupils very quickly choose the colours and paint a flower, but are not provided with any guidance or opportunities to improve their finished pieces of work. When making patterns on their hands, pupils are provided with complex designs from the *'Elmer the Elephant'* book as examples to copy and this is too difficult an exercise for most pupils.

84. The co-ordination of the subject is in its early days of development, and the recently established team are qualified art specialists. They have not yet produced a whole school policy for the subject or medium term planning. Although teachers are keeping records of the levels pupils are attaining, and reporting on them in annual review reports, they are not firmly based on whole school assessment procedures. The co-coordinators informally provide support to other teachers but there is no monitoring of teaching of the subject. The displays of work around the school are attractive. They provide an insight in to the range of experiences pupils have, such as designing their own school logo and producing a contemporary piece of sculpture for a local art competition which they won.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

85. Provision for design and technology is satisfactory. Overall, pupils achieve well in lessons in both food technology and when working with resistant materials. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve particularly well. However, the picture of pupil progress over time is less positive. This is because there are no plans yet in place that present structured, progressive learning opportunities that meet the needs of the highest attaining pupils as well as those with the most profound and multiple learning difficulties, irrespective of which class they are in.

86. There is limited work completed by pupils to examine and few assessment records available to supplement information about what pupils know, can do, and understand. However, there is evidence that pupils' skills are developed in both the strands of the subject, that is designing / choosing, and making. By Year 2, the highest attaining pupils use simple kitchen equipment independently, such as stirring ingredients with a spoon, grating cheese, and rolling out dough. With varying degrees of support they cut out the dough to make scones. These pupils also demonstrate practical skills when working with resistant materials like card and textiles. They use scissors safely when cutting tops for the drums they are making and consider ways of joining together pieces of card for their 'guitars'. Older pupils extend this idea of design so that by the end of Year 6 they make objects such as a tablemat. They watch light, constructing simple circuits, and developing the idea of following a flow chart. Activities that promote these sequencing skills are also evident in food technology as higher attaining pupils follow simple instructions and make sandwiches. Pupils with more severe and profound learning difficulties are also presented with appropriate experiences as they handle pieces of construction kits and examine the school playground, with some matching the correct symbol to objects in the playground.

87. Overall the subject is taught well. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 but are very good for pupils in Years 3 to 6. The input from learning support assistants is an important ingredient in the success that pupils achieve in these lessons. They are very aware of pupils' individual skills and patterns of behaviour. They respond to them skilfully and appropriately. This teamwork, combined with good classroom organisation, such as the groupings of different pupils, and very effective communication strategies all combine to produce worthwhile learning experiences during which pupils have fun. Consequently, pupils are enthusiastic in lessons and keen to get on with their work, which they are able to do because teachers generally plan tasks that meet their diverse

needs. For example, detailed planning and the provision of appropriate resources enabled a class of older pupils with autism to achieve very well as they constructed electrical circuits and considered how they could package such a circuit to produce a simple torch. High expectations and appropriate level of challenge meant that, the highest attaining pupils incorporated a switch into their circuits, wrote a list of the apparatus they had used, and recorded their work using a digital camera. The needs of lower attaining pupils were equally well met as the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) enabled them to participate and be engaged throughout the lesson.

88. The management of design and technology is satisfactory. The recently formed subject management team has begun to evaluate the subject through activities, such as auditing resources. However, the group does not yet provide leadership for the subject and has not developed appropriate policies, planning, or how the subject is to be moved forward. Consequently, although pupils learn well in individual lessons and successes are recognised and celebrated at the time, these achievements are not assessed, recorded, and used to target future learning. This shortcoming in assessment processes is linked to inadequate medium term planning for the subject.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

89. The school's overall provision for this subject, and teaching and learning, are satisfactory. Pupils' achievements in lessons are satisfactory, and on some occasions where teaching is good or better they achieve well. However, pupils' progress over time is currently restrained by the lack of medium term planning.

90. Work, in Years 1 and 2, is on increasing pupils' understanding of their environment. The school site and surrounding area are used well to develop this knowledge. By Year 2, pupils have developed the skills to find their way around the school environment. Higher attaining pupils match everyday objects with photographs of places around the school and then find their way to these different places on the school site in order to return the object. Other pupils are unable to match these objects to the photographs, but they recognise the places in the photographs and, with adult support, locate them. Lower attaining pupils have more limited understanding of relating images to areas outside their immediate classroom, but they do have the skills to recognise a symbol and an object, such as a CD ROM, and know that it has to be returned to the computer in the classroom.

91. This encouragement of mapping skills and increasing awareness of the immediate and wider environments continues as pupils move through Years 3 to 6. Therefore, by Year 6 have developed sufficient understanding of the school environment that they have the confidence to move around it with increasing independence. They understand how places can be represented in drawings, such as a plan of the school, and use this information to follow simple routes like moving from the classroom to the school gates. The higher attaining pupils have extended this idea of symbolic representation of places and identify the school site on a simple street map, as well as the locations of Plumstead and Swanage on a map of the British Isles. This work is linked well with a residential visit to Swanage so that some pupils can identify similarities and differences between the two places. These pupils also know about an area that is completely different to their own as they consider places, such as France and India, and think about ways to get there.

92. The quality of teaching ranges from good to unsatisfactory, but is satisfactory overall. Teaching that has many good features, such as high teacher expectations, very good lesson preparation and effective learning resources, result in pupils being motivated and challenged through a variety of well-chosen activities. These teaching qualities promoted good learning when a class of eight and nine year olds considered how 'Barnaby Bear' might travel from

Ireland to Paris. A creative start to the lesson captured pupils' attention immediately as the teacher introduced a parcel that had been sent from Paris containing extremely good artefacts, such as photographs, tickets, maps, a guide book, a letter from 'Barnaby Bear' and even a croissant. A combination of perceptive questioning and direct teaching enabled pupils to examine travel by aeroplane, boat, and car and learning was supplemented by a good focus on developing literacy skills. Pupils completed a variety of worksheets that were well matched to their abilities as they wrote replies. However, other teaching is much less effective because pupils do not make satisfactory gains in knowledge. On these occasions activities are not planned systematically with a considered purpose of how they contribute to consolidating and then extending pupils' learning.

93. The unsatisfactory features of some teaching reflect one of the shortcomings of leadership and management of the subject. Although management by the curriculum team is satisfactory in the context of the developing school, there is limited understanding of the role of medium term planning in presenting pupils with an increasingly challenging and planned subject curriculum. Consequently, there is no guarantee that pupils have access to continuous and progressive learning experiences, with clearly defined learning objectives, that develop their geographical skills and knowledge as they move through the school. In addition, shortcomings in assessment procedures mean that pupils' achievements are not sufficiently well recorded and therefore this information cannot be used effectively to track and evaluate their progress against learning objectives.

## **HISTORY**

94. The provision for history is satisfactory. The school has chosen to work through a cycle of inter-related themes and subjects as a result of the wide ranges in ability and need in the school when it opened. The difficulty of having pupils with mixed ages and abilities was partly overcome by this procedure. The week of the inspection was not directed at history and only one lesson was observed. Examples of work from pupils across the school were analysed to enable judgements to be made. The topics promote a sense of time, sequence and order, as well as increasing pupils' knowledge and understanding of lives and lifestyles, significant people and events, and comparing and contrasting the past with the present. The topics are designed to relate to individual needs.

95. The quality of teaching and learning during the inspection was good. However, due to the limited evidence available in the form of work, it is only satisfactory over time. The good teaching and learning which occurred in a class for pupils with PMLD was successful because the experiences and activities planned matched pupils' abilities well. The staff have a good knowledge and understanding of pupils' needs and abilities, and the good teamwork in the classes enables all pupils to succeed. Resources are well chosen to support the activities, such as Tudor implements, and this makes the lessons more relevant for pupils. It especially supports the learning of those pupils who need a sensory approach to their lesson. Lessons are well planned to include information and communication technology, and staff ensured that pupils use switches to indicate preferences when asked to choose their favourite toys or utensils.

96. The subject is well managed through the new management structure and they are very sure of the way forward. They have carried out an audit of the history curriculum and are aware of how the changes in the population may affect the planning for this subject in the future. The issues of curriculum development and assessment, and the quality of teaching are at the front of their planning. The subject has not had a high profile in the past, and links with geography are planned to deliver humanities through the National Curriculum plans adapted to meet the needs of groups of pupils.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

97. Standards of achievement in ICT are satisfactory. Pupils across the school make satisfactory progress in their use of the computer to support their learning in other subjects and in the development of skills. This is due to the emphasis the management has placed on resourcing the subject and increasing the computers with up-to-date new technology. They have also focused on ensuring that all teachers, including the temporary teachers have completed, or are completing, their training. As a result, some teachers are very competent, especially in the use of the interactive whiteboard to enhance their teaching and learning, while others are less confident but ensure that ICT is used to support other subjects. The school places a great importance on communication and the use of technological aids, such as Big Macs to help pupils communicate. However, some pupils are in need of very specialised assessment so that the correct combination of switches and software can be used which would allow them to access the curriculum, and in some instances use augmentative and alternative means of communication. Many pupils do not make the progress they should due to a long wait they have for external assessment.

98. In Years 1 and 2 higher attaining, or physically more able, pupils use the mouse and keyboard with help to access programmes. In English, pupils explore interactive books, and use mathematics programmes to reinforce learning. Some need verbal prompting while the lower attaining pupils need one-to-one support from learning support assistants. They also experience a sensory curriculum in which they control lights and effects by means of various switches. In addition they have access to a variety of toys that are also operated by switches. In Years 3 to 6, pupils have access to a wider range of opportunities to reinforce their learning of ICT skills. The school achieves this through the use of ICT in different subjects across the curriculum. It is used well in literacy where pupils demonstrate that they use simple word processing applications to write reports. Some write using a symbols' programme while others use the keyboard independently. Pupils use art applications to produce pictures and drawings connected with their topics. When teachers make use of interactive whiteboards in their lessons, higher pupils demonstrate that they understand how to open and save a piece of work to a file, and are able to print their work. Higher attaining pupils in Year 6 demonstrate that they understand that instructions need to be sequenced so that an object will move in along a particular route.

99. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, and although it was good on the inspection teachers' skills and confidence varies across the school. Lessons are usually well planned but teachers do not sufficiently emphasise what the expected learning outcomes for ICT should be, and with that there is also a lack of ongoing assessment. The majority of teachers have a good understanding of how new technology can enhance teaching and learning and there were some very good examples of the interactive whiteboard being used to support learning, such as in mathematics and in literacy. There was one unsatisfactory lesson observed where the management of the pupils' behaviour was not consistent and as a result some pupils were allowed to roam around the room switching computers on and off, and were not checked.

100. A subject management team is developing the curriculum. They have produced a draft policy for the subject and planning is in place and reflects the National Curriculum. The curriculum provision is broad, balanced, and relevant, but at the moment there is no assessment of skills, knowledge and understanding taking place. In subjects across the curriculum, teachers use ICT well, for planning, recording, research, illustrating lessons, and providing pupils with opportunities to reinforce learning. They make use of 'Power Point', digital cameras, and roamers to enhance classroom teaching. The addition of a technician to the staff, and as part of the subject management team makes a significant contribution to



the smooth running of lessons as he maintains, moves and sets up equipment around the school.

## MUSIC

101. The consistent good teaching results in pupils' achieving well in music. Class teachers, rather than a specialist, are responsible for teaching music. Staff are aware that music contributes to pupils' social and communication needs as well as their personal development. The music curriculum is underdeveloped and the school is hopeful that the arrival of the new specialist teacher will be instrumental in moving the subject forward. Pupils do not generally produce written work, although there is some evidence of the highest attaining pupils producing simple compositions.

102. By Year 2, pupils participate in music lessons, taking turns to copy or repeat actions or sounds, and naming or signing the name of the instruments they have used. Pupils follow instructions to play loud or soft, fast or slow, and keep beat with a drum. Those who have communication difficulties join in with action songs, such as '*One finger, one thumb keep moving*', '*If you're happy and you know it*', and '*Heads, shoulders, knees and toes*'. These songs provide good opportunities for pupils to sing and to develop their sense of rhythm and timing. Pupils watch carefully, listen well, and follow the adult lead to join in with actions. They show preferences for particular songs and match instruments to symbols. By Year 6, pupils continue to enjoy singing. They know the meaning of 'pitch' and vary the pitch of their singing as they slide between notes going higher or lower according to instructions. Adults and pupils persevere as they try to sing in two parts, resulting in final success. Pupils learn that music can be written and are at the early stages of recording their own simple compositions on a musical score. Pupils who have communication problems listen to contrasting pieces of music and join in with a familiar tune '*Blow the Man Down*', discovering that it is an old song and associated with sailors on board a ship. Where pupils could not read and sing the words they were able to sway and move to the rhythm of the song. Younger pupils successfully decide which percussion instruments should represent characters from their story about '*Elmer*', and learn when to play their chosen instrument during the sound story.

103. Teaching and learning is good. However, teachers' planning, including relating lesson objectives to the music curriculum, is insufficiently developed to provide a full range of diverse learning opportunities for pupils. In lessons, teachers successfully encourage children to participate or take turns with familiar songs and rhythms and music is used successfully to develop pupils' communication and personal skills. However, insufficient focus is placed on teaching the music skills of performance, participation and appraisal in a sequential way that allows pupils to progress appropriately as they move through the school. Where teaching and learning are very good, there is a lively pace that maintains pupils' interest; they assess their own skills, and how much they have achieved in the lesson. The very good teaching in Year 6 provided much fun and encouraged further understanding of pitch as pupils hid behind a screen. They listened carefully to their classmates using high or low voices to say '*Excuse me your Majesty*', and then correctly identifying the speaker. The topic approach is used successfully to support pupils' learning. The '*Space*' project in science is used very well as pupils consider the planets, such as *Mars*, *Mercury* and *Venus* and having discussed the characters in English and made collage in Art, they create their own music to represent these planets and start to record it on a musical score. Art is successfully combined with music as pupils use junk materials to create musical instruments to play and for display based on reading '*The Band*' in their literacy lesson, and in making drawings inspired by the '*Hebrew Mountain Song*'. In all lessons, pupils respond to the best of their ability enjoying different aspects of music, such as the action songs, beating rhythms, or listening to music. This is a good contribution to their social development.

Resources for the subject are satisfactory. Apart from switches for pupils to make responses, there is a lack of more sophisticated instruments, such as keyboards or a sound beam and this restricts pupils' learning.

104. The creative arts team manages the subject, but because there is a lack of appropriate curriculum planning linking long term planning with teaching, and a lack of consistent and informative assessment procedures, the subject is underdeveloped. Leadership of the subject is therefore unsatisfactory. Music makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' cultural awareness, as they listen to a range of music styles. Photographic evidence shows pupils on a visit to Hornimans Museum learning about instruments from around the world.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

105. Physical education has not been a priority area for development, but recent appointments to the staff have raised awareness across the school. The provision for this subject across the school is satisfactory. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are achieving and progressing satisfactorily. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are making good progress, and achieving well. By Year 2, higher attaining pupils, including those with ASD, engage and use games and music as a signal to the start of specific activities. They take part in tasks, which include a sequence of movements through an interesting and challenging course, and follow the leader through tunnels, across benches and under obstacles. They take part in warm-up exercises and move in different directions. Lower attaining pupils begin their lessons on the floor stretching, reaching and vocalise their happiness as they interact with their teachers and assistants. They take part in warm up exercises, moving limbs, or allowing movement. They are beginning to anticipate interaction. They track movements and become aware of their bodies.

106. By Year 6, pupils make good progress and they enjoy every aspect of the subject. As a result they behave very well, listen to instructions and help their friends. Higher attaining pupils follow instructions for the warm up, find space and change their size and shape to fit the instructions. They consider the characteristics of animals and birds, and produce movements to match these characteristics. For example, they become aliens to match the masks they have made, and push against the imaginary wind. Lower attaining pupils, with the help of learning support assistants, follow instructions and carry out small movements which are part of their physical mobility programmes. The teaching of swimming is a strong feature and most classes attend a number of local pools.

107. The quality of teaching and learning are always good, and on occasion very good. Teachers involve their pupils in every aspect of the lessons. For example, in a dance session, pupils are expected to create characters to take part in the 'War of the Worlds', and use these characters to develop movements and exercises to complete the large, sequenced production. Pupils are happy and want to try new moves, as well as consolidating the moves they have learnt in other lessons. There are good relationships with pupils, and as a result, pupils try hard, and in their dance, look for clues. A common feature of most lessons is the expectation by teachers for pupils to evaluate the efforts of their friends, and also give ideas on how to improve their own work. All teachers plan very interesting activities, such as a mirror matching exercise where pupils learn about the interaction and anticipation of pupils. As a result, pupils respond and produce good work in dance, and in the physical exercises. Teachers are following good planning formats for lessons. They introduce the lesson well, informing pupils of what they will be doing, and take time to evaluate the successes at the end. This enables pupils to follow instructions well and every achievement is celebrated.

108. The management of the subject is good, and the appointment of specialist teachers is beginning to influence the quality of teaching of the subject. The subject offers a wide, balanced curriculum with pupils having opportunities to ride, dance, swim, and have gymnastics lessons. Leadership of the subject is not yet developed, as policies, medium term planning and assessment are not in place and teachers do not yet have the opportunity to observe others teaching. However, the management team has clear plans for the future of the subject, which include the development of medium term planning, assessment of what pupils know or can do, and the use of this information to plan new targets for pupils.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

109. Along with other subjects, religious education has not been a priority in the school, and the curriculum team has only been in place for six weeks. However, the subject has its place in the long-term curriculum planning of the school, is taught to all classes, and therefore meets statutory requirements.

110. Across the school pupils' achievements and progress are satisfactory. In Years 1 and 2, pupils consider the story of Noah, working hard on basic skills, such as naming the animals, identifying the colours of the rainbow, as well as beginning to think about the religious significance of the story. By Year 6, higher attaining pupils have an awareness of major world religions, such as Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam. They demonstrate that they understand the importance of special places in the moral and spiritual framework of their lives. This understanding of the culture, values and symbols of these religions is enhanced by visits to the relevant places of worship and by visits from representatives of the faiths.

111. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The subject knowledge of the teachers' varies across the school and some teachers find it difficult to combine the dimensions of the subject with the factual information. This is especially so in the classes where pupils have greatest learning difficulties. However, in the lesson where teaching and learning was very good on the week of the inspection, the teacher managed to constantly remind pupils of why the story of Noah was significant, and to recap and rehearse the story frequently whilst at the same time reinforcing basic concepts.

112. Because the development of the subject is still in its infancy, there are issues to be resolved, such as increasing expertise and confidence of staff, as well as medium term planning, and assessment. Because of the nature of the special needs in the school, and changing population, work is now planned on a four-year rolling programme, which has its difficulties in developing understanding or extending experience. The co-ordinator is aware of the developments that are needed, such as an overall school policy and scheme of work that reflects the needs of the school more appropriately.