

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BROOKFIELDS SCHOOL**

Widnes

LEA area: Halton

Unique reference number: 111516

Headteacher: Mr A Chryssafi

Lead inspector: Mr T Richardson

Dates of inspection: 1 – 4 March 2004

Inspection number: 258878

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special (Severe Learning Difficulties)
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	2 – 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	83
School address:	Moorfield Road Widnes Cheshire
Postcode:	WA8 3JA
Telephone number:	0151 4244329
Fax number:	0151 4953460
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C Holleran
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Brookfields is a large community special school for pupils aged 2 to 19. The nature of the pupils' special educational needs is changing. There is an increasing number of pupils with autism (ASD), with a decrease in the number of pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). There are 83 pupils on roll and twice as many boys as girls and almost every pupil is of white British origin. No pupils have English as an additional language, and all pupils have a statement of special educational need. The school population is static, with very few pupils joining or leaving other than at the usual times of admission, and most students transfer to college courses at the age of 19. The socio-economic background of the pupils is just below average. The majority of pupils are from Halton and Warrington local education authorities (LEA), and a small number of pupils from other LEAs live in foster homes in the area. Around 30 per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals and their attainment on entry to the school is significantly below national averages. At the time of the inspection, two children under the age of 4 were on the school's roll and five pupils were also attending their local primary schools for part of the week. The school achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark; the Healthy Schools Award; and the DfES Achievement Award in 2003. It is currently working to gain accreditation to the National Autistic Standard.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
16500	Mr T Richardson	Lead inspector	Foundation stage; science; art and design; music
9981	Mr S Hussain	Lay inspector	
16747	Mr A Jones	Team inspector	Special educational needs; mathematics; information and communication technology; physical education
1224	Mr G Todd	Team inspector	English; religious education
2971	Mrs K Hooper	Team inspector	Provision post-16; personal, social and health education and citizenship; design and technology; geography; history

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Brookfields is a **very effective** school where every pupil is included and valued. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and pupils show very good achievement, especially in communication, reading, mathematics and personal and social education. The headteacher and senior staff provide very good leadership and management and the school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils are included and valued exceptionally well and show very good achievement as a result.
- Teachers and assistants are very skilled and work as a high quality team to the benefit of the pupils.
- The school is very well led and has very successful procedures for evaluating and improving its performance.
- Pupils receive very good support and guidance and have very good attitudes and behaviour.
- The curriculum is very good and there are very good relationships with parents, other schools and the community.
- Despite the school's best efforts, there continues to be a problem with the layout of classrooms.
- The quality of teaching and learning for students post-16 is not as high as in the rest of the school.

Very good improvement has taken place since the last inspection in March 1998. The key issues identified have been addressed, although further improving the buildings continues to be a difficulty. In addition, the quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly; the school has adapted very well to meeting the changing needs of its pupils; very good monitoring, evaluation and development are now routine; the curriculum has improved, and standards have risen. The school is now in full control of its development; has already identified what needs to be done next and is continuing to improve and strive for excellence.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
Year 6	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
Year 9	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
Year 11	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
Year 13	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Good</b>

*Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.*

Achievement is **very good**, especially in communication, reading, mathematics and personal and social education. Throughout the school, pupils make very good progress against the targets set in their individual education plans. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well in communication, language and literacy and in their personal, social and emotional development. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) achieve very well because they respond very well to the stimulation provided by being included with their peers. Those pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) achieve very well because adults understand their needs and structure their learning accordingly. Some pupils attend mainstream schools part-time and this adds

value to their achievements. Students post-16 show very good added value over the whole of their time in Brookfields, and satisfactory achievement in the subjects they currently study in school.

Pupils develop **very good** personal qualities. Their **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good**. Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and have very good attitudes, values, attendance and punctuality.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education is **very good**. The quality of teaching and learning is **very good**, especially in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 11. Teachers and assistants work very well together and this teamwork leads to all pupils receiving the support they need so that they can learn effectively. Staff have very good specialist skills and make very good use of resources, including information and communication technology (ICT). As a result, pupils who need signs, symbols, pictures and electronic devices to communicate are fully included in lessons and learn better because they know what is expected of them. Teachers assess pupils' achievements very well and use this accurate information to set new targets and to plan activities to include in lessons. As a result, lessons are planned very well and this leads to pupils being interested and continually making progress in small steps. The courses provided in school for students post-16 are satisfactorily taught but the quality of teaching and learning is not as high as the rest of the school because lessons are at a slower pace.

The curriculum is very good and there is excellent provision for the inclusion of the different groups of pupils. Despite the school's best efforts to make improvements, the buildings continue to be unsatisfactory. However, the school is successful in making sure that this does not restrict pupils' learning. Pupils are given very good support and guidance and the school values and acts upon the pupils' views very well. Parents' involvement is very good and they receive very good information about the school and their children. There are very good links with the community and other schools that add value to pupils' education.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **very good** and supported by a good governing body. The headteacher provides a very clear direction for the school's improvement based on an outstanding ethos for valuing and including every pupil. Senior managers have very good systems for evaluating what is done well and what needs to be improved. As a result, there is very good teamwork for continually developing the school and staff are confident about what they do well. Governors give good support in strategic planning and in managing the school's finances, and in making sure all statutory requirements are met.

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

Questionnaires were returned from more than half of the parents. These show very good support for the school and no significant areas of disagreement. Some parents expressed concern over the recent changes in provision for pupils with PMLD. Inspection shows these changes are of benefit to the pupils.

The school helped all pupils complete a questionnaire about their views. These show very positive support and that pupils like working hard and enjoy being in school.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Make sure that the quality of teaching and learning for post-16 students is improved to match that found in the rest of the school.
- Continue to work to improve the quality of the accommodation.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Throughout the school pupils achieve very well and make very good progress against the targets set in their individual education plans. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well and students post-16 show very good added value over time, and satisfactory achievement in the courses they currently study in school.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve very well in developing their communication, literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills.
- The quality of target setting is very good and this helps the pupils to achieve more.
- Pupils with PMLD achieve very well through being included in class with their peers.
- Pupils with ASD achieve very well due to teachers' understanding of their needs.
- Attending mainstream schools helps those pupils involved to achieve very well.
- Achievement for students post-16, in their lessons, is not as high as in the rest of the school.

#### **Commentary**

1. The school compiles very accurate and useful data about how well all the pupils are doing. This is analysed very well, and from this information, new targets are set in individual education plans for what the pupils should learn next. The quality of these targets is very good and teachers use them very well to plan and teach what pupils should do and learn in lessons. As a result, pupils are always challenged and keep up a very good rate of progress that leads to their high achievement. In addition, the school uses this information to set performance targets for the whole school. These are ambitious and challenging targets and are based firmly on what pupils can already do and on what they should be able to do next. These whole-school performance targets are usually met, and demonstrate that the school is very effective in promoting very good achievement each year for the vast majority of its pupils.
2. Throughout the school pupils achieve very well in developing their speaking, listening and communication skills. This is because teachers and assistants make sure their own communication is very clear and support it with a good range of signs, symbols, picture exchange communication systems (PECS) and switches. Staff also value, praise and respect the pupils' contributions, and this makes them try all the harder to communicate. In Years 1 to 11, the National Literacy Strategy has been implemented and adapted very well to meet the special educational needs of the pupils. Phonic skills are promoted very well, and pupils extend their reading and writing skills in a wide range of subjects. This leads to pupils achieving very well in their development of these key skills. Similar attention is given to developing numeracy skills and pupils learn to successfully use numbers, money, bar graphs and mathematical language.
3. Children in the Foundation Stage show very good achievement in their personal, social and emotional development and in their communication, language and literacy skills. Children also achieve well in their mathematical development. School data also shows that children achieve very well over their time in the Foundation Stage and some children, for example those with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), show marked improvements in their communication and social skills before they enter Year 1. Recently appointed staff are quickly learning to use signs, symbols and PECS but are not yet doing this as a routine throughout the day. Consequently, at the time of the inspection, some pupils were showing good, rather than very good, achievement in their communication skills in lessons.



4. In Years 1 to 11, inspection evidence shows that pupils achieve very well in personal and social education, English and mathematics. Pupils' achievement in science is very good in Years 1 to 7, and good in Years 8 to 11. In art and design and information and communication technology (ICT), pupils show good achievement in Years 1 to 11. In all other subjects, insufficient evidence was obtained to judge achievement in detail, but school records and examples of pupils' work indicate that pupils generally do equally as well in all the subjects they study. As well as academic success, pupils do very well over time in their personal development and a number of examples were seen in lessons of pupils learning to co-operate with one another and to understand the nature of their special educational needs. In addition, the school provides a wide range of interesting activities, additional to the standard curriculum, and these motivate pupils to achieve in these areas. As a result, for example, some pupils do very well indeed at sports and gain medals and trophies at regional and national levels. One pupil is attaining excellence in gymnastics and is ranked seventh in the world in his age group in the Special Olympics.
5. Since September 2003, pupils with PMLD are being educated with other pupils of their age, rather than being taught in a separate class. School assessment data shows that these pupils are making significant gains in their achievement, especially in their social and communication skills, and are progressing at a much faster rate than they were in previous years. Inspection evidence supports this, and these pupils are included by teachers and assistants very well in lessons, and are enjoying the additional stimulation this brings. They are valued, welcomed and supported by their peers, and are achieving very well as a result. The school is admitting increasing numbers of pupils with ASD and staff are increasing their knowledge and understanding of autism very well and applying this with success to daily routines and lessons. In particular, communication is made clear and routines, signs, symbols and photographs are used very well to reduce confusion and limit anxiety. More and more children with ASD are benefiting from the school's delivery of the National Autistic Society's Earlybird programme and are showing higher achievement in communication and socialisation than would otherwise be the case. These benefits are seen in a lower incidence of challenging behaviour as these pupils move through the school. Where challenging behaviour occurs, staff deal with this very well and the outcome is that lessons continue with minimal disruption. The result of the school's understanding and management of pupils with ASD is that this group of pupils is achieving very well. The strong emphasis on inclusion results in every pupil being valued and boys and girls with SLD, ASD, PMLD and other complex learning difficulties are all achieving equally as well. Five pupils are currently attending their local primary or nursery schools for part of each week and this initiative is proving successful and these pupils are being challenged to increase their achievement.
6. Students post-16 show very good achievement in their academic and personal development over the whole of the time they have been at the school. They benefit from a wide curriculum that includes work experience, accredited courses in life and vocational skills, and part-time placement at a local college. This is in addition to lessons in school. Insufficient evidence was obtained to judge achievement in these external aspects of the provision. However, in the school-based provision, students currently show good achievement in their personal development and satisfactory achievement in literacy, numeracy and most other subjects (the exception is their unsatisfactory achievement in ICT, because it is not used with sufficient consistency or regularity). This achievement is not as high as in other areas of the school but does not detract from the school's overall effectiveness, as individual students continue to show very good value is added to their education over their whole time at the school. This difference is because the quality of teaching, whilst satisfactory, lacks pace and enthusiasm so students are not as stimulated and motivated to learn as they are in other classes. The school has already identified this as a priority for improvement in its planned development of the curriculum for pupils and students aged 14 to 19.

## Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and other personal qualities are very effectively developed. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Attendance and punctuality are also very good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils and students develop very good relationships with others.
- They have very good attitudes to learning.
- The school sets very high expectations for behaviour and works very hard to maintain an orderly environment.
- The school promotes attendance very well.

### Commentary

7. The school has made good improvements since the last inspection. Pupils and students enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their very good attendance and punctuality. Attitudes to learning and behaviour are mostly very good. These factors contribute significantly to the ethos and achievement at the school. The school rewards the pupils with many stickers, certificates and treats for good work, effort, attendance and behaviour. Parents also play their part by making very good efforts to ensure their children's attendance and punctuality. The majority of absence is for health reasons and there is no unauthorised absence. The school has effectively addressed the concern about attendance records since the last inspection and now does this very well.

### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.1	School data	0
National data	8.5	National data	0.5

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

8. Pupils show very high levels of interest in lessons and other school activities. For example, in a Year 5 and 6 art and design lesson pupils listened very well to adults and concentrated very well as they produced pictures of the lion and mouse characters from a recent story. Post-16 students show a good level of interest in their lessons and work.
9. The school promotes good relationships, including racial harmony, very well. The race equality policy is of very good quality and is a particular example of the school's commitment to inclusion in education. Pupils make very strong friendships and are quick to offer help to others. In lessons they listen to each other's views positively and respect each other's feelings, values and beliefs very much. Pupils also learn to respect the learning needs of one another. For example, in Year 3 and 4, one pupil asked how he could best help a pupil with PMLD, and was keen to learn how to do this from the assistant. In a lesson in Year 11, a pupil with ASD was feeling particularly anxious and others appreciated that he needed space and time to become calm before continuing with the lesson. Members of the school council liaise closely with their class-mates so that they can act in their best interest at council meetings. The council and other responsibilities on offer enable pupils to develop their confidence and self-esteem very well.
10. The school is a calm and orderly environment. Students and pupils generally behave very well and there have been no exclusions over the last year. There are occasional incidents involving those pupils who have challenging behaviour, and a few pupils say there is bullying. However, there is very good staff supervision at all times and pupils appreciate the action taken by staff if they experience any problems. Theatre productions include plays about bullying and pupils

often consider school rules. This supports their understanding about the need for order in school and society.

11. The school nurtures personal development very well. Assembly themes, personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons, circle times and religious education are all very effective. The inspection team found many examples of very strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, in a Year 7 geography lesson pupils gasped with amazement as they looked at digital pictures of floods and how they affect landscapes. Pupils learn very well about their own feelings, the beauty of the natural world and the inspirational nature of human achievement. They have learnt principles that enable them to distinguish right from wrong. For instance, in a Year 8/9 PSHE lesson about 'conflict' they made very telling comments about what they thought about the current situations in Iraq, Africa and Northern Ireland. Pupils enjoy contact with a wide cross section of society through many visits and visitors and this contributes very well to their social development. They have many opportunities to appreciate their own cultural heritage and the traditions, customs and values of others in Britain.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. Pupils achieve very well because of the very good teaching, learning, assessment and curriculum provided. The school cares for its pupils well, and they receive very good support and guidance. There are very good links with parents and the community.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is very good. This is supported by very good assessment.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning is provided in the Foundation Stage, and Years 1 to 11.
- Teachers and assistants work very well together.
- Staff have very good specialist skills and make very good use of resources and ICT.
- Assessment is of high quality, and is used very well to set the targets in pupils' individual education plans.
- Teachers plan their lessons very well.
- Whilst satisfactory, the teaching of courses for students post-16, that take place in school, is a relative weakness.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 58 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (3%)	26 (45%)	22 (38%)	6 (10%)	2 (3%)	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

12. During the inspection, almost half of all the lessons seen were very good or excellent. This level of quality was observed in all classes, and for children and pupils of all ages, from the Foundation Stage to Year 11. Teaching of the highest quality was observed in Year 7 with key features as follows:

### Example of outstanding practice

**The teacher successfully enthused a wide range of pupils, including those with ASD and PMLD, so that all were fully engaged and striving very hard indeed to improve their learning.**

The teacher is an expert practitioner, knows in detail what each pupil can do, and challenges each one to do their utmost to build on this in lessons. Together with the assistants, the teacher values what each pupil does and passes this on to other pupils so that the rest of the class wait in eager anticipation for a pupil with PMLD to respond, then show huge delight at her success. During lessons, a wide range of methods are used, including visual images on the interactive whiteboard, tactile numerals, practical investigations, switches and closed circuit television. As a result, the learning needs of every pupil are exactly met, and pupils make significant progress against the targets set in their individual education plans.

13. In every class teachers and assistants work very well together. All staff are very knowledgeable about the needs of pupils and share their expertise with each other. The school has recently included pupils with PMLD in other classes and their assistants have been strategically deployed so that other assistants and teachers have quickly learnt how best to include these pupils in learning. Some pupils with ASD also have challenging behaviour and staff use their knowledge of individuals very well to anticipate, prevent, calm and manage any incidents that may arise. A key feature in lessons is that assistants are very clear about their roles and know what to do with each group of pupils, and what they should go on to learn next. Assistants also work with the teacher as a team so that pupils who need additional individual support receive this from a variety of adults, who all provide a consistent approach to learning and behaviour management. The outcome of this teamwork is that lessons are focused and pupils are challenged to concentrate, think hard and improve their skills, knowledge and understanding at all times.
14. Staff have very good specialist skills. They sign well and help pupils to understand what is required through the clarity of their communication. For example, in the nursery class, adults keep their requests to just the key words and the children with ASD learn to develop their communication skills in response to the clarity of information they receive. Adults use symbols very well to provide visual timetables that not only show pupils which lesson is next, but also which parts of the lesson are still to come. As a result, pupils are clear about what is expected and can focus on their learning without feeling anxious about the sequence of events in their day. Teachers and assistants use the 'light room' with careful control of the stimuli provided and, as a result, pupils with visual impairment are learning to track lights and recognise some visual features. Interactive whiteboards are being used effectively in most classes and staff make sure they set a good example in their use of ICT that encourages pupils to use it routinely in lessons. Where appropriate, pupils are given switches to indicate their preferences and also enjoy using devices such as a 'Big-Mac' to contribute pre-recorded answers in routines such as morning registration. Staff also use the picture exchange communication system (PECS) well and this enables pupils to show their feelings and contribute to communication in class. In the majority of lessons, a wide range of such specialist skills is employed at all times and pupils gain benefit from this variety of approaches. As a result, pupils know what they are doing and give effort to their learning because they are clear about what is expected of them. At the time of the inspection, a number of staff in the Foundation Stage were newly appointed and, whilst quickly learning these skills, were not yet using them consistently at all times throughout the day.
15. Teachers assess pupils' skills very well. Accurate assessment information is provided that shows very clearly how well pupils do and, in addition, staff note in each lesson any significant achievement for a pupil. This provides a very detailed picture of how well each pupil is learning and gives very clear indication for what they should go on to learn next. As a result, the targets in individual education plans are set very well and match the learning needs of the pupils very closely. Teachers use this information when they are planning their lessons so that the content and activities are designed to both extend subject knowledge as well as improve personal development. The quality of lesson planning is very good, and the delivery of lessons is further

enhanced by the teamwork of staff and the clarity of communication. As a result, very little time is spent on behaviour management or gaining attention and pupils are able to get on with their learning. Pupils enjoy this, and are motivated to work hard and do their best, because they have a secure framework in lessons that helps them to gain success.

16. Students post-16 are taught satisfactorily in the lessons they have in school. The atmosphere in these lessons is calm, and pupils consolidate their understanding of basic skills well. This is because the teacher pays good attention to helping students develop their reading, writing and spelling, with activities that are well matched to their ability. However, the pace of lessons is somewhat slow and, as a result, students lack the inspiration and motivation seen in pupils elsewhere in the school.

## **The curriculum**

The school provides a very good curriculum. Statutory requirements with regard to religious education, sex and relationships education, alcohol and drug misuse are fully met. The curriculum is enriched very well. Accommodation is unsatisfactory overall and resources are good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Inclusion of the different groups of pupils is excellent.
- National strategies have been implemented effectively.
- Additional activities provide very good enrichment to the curriculum.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory, particularly for the Foundation Stage.

## **Commentary**

17. Throughout the school, there have been very good developments in the curriculum since the last inspection. In particular, there has been the very good implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and they are now firmly established. They have provided a very effective planning structure that has been extended to other subjects of the curriculum. Each subject now has detailed guidance that is very helpful for teachers in planning their lessons. In addition, the school has refined its systems for assessing pupils and setting new targets for their individual education plans. This work is of high quality and is used very well so that every pupil is following a curriculum that builds on what they already know, and is fully relevant to their special educational needs.
18. The school has worked very hard to provide a curriculum that meets the needs of the wide range of pupils attending Brookfields School. There is excellent commitment from all staff to inclusion, and valuing every individual. The success of this is in no small part due to the way in which communication has been improved. The use of signing, visual timetables, picture exchange cards, ICT and peripheral devices such as switches and touch screens is excellent and keeps the pupils fully engaged. The move away from separate provision for PMLD pupils and their inclusion in different classes has been very successful. The monitoring of this initiative shows how their progress has markedly improved and is now very good. Recent developments and staff training have contributed to a significant improvement in the use of ICT. It is now being used well to support learning in most subjects of the curriculum.
19. The pupils' learning is enriched by a very well planned range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits. A few examples of this are the poetry workshop run by a multicultural poet, the work done by the Vikings (Widnes RLFC), to support literacy and numeracy, and a visit to see the Halle Orchestra in Manchester. There is an excellent range of physical activities giving pupils numerous opportunities to participate in sport. Swimming, gym and the funky fitness clubs are but a few. The pupils participate in inter-school activities and there are some outstanding achievements at local, regional, national and international levels.

20. Children with ASD benefit significantly from the provision of the National Autistic Society's Earlybird programme in the Foundation Stage. This initiative is run jointly by the school and the local Child Development Centre and means children have a very well planned and supported start to their education while in the Foundation Stage. There is a very good curriculum in the nursery and reception classes that is highly relevant to the needs of the children. This experience also prepares them very well for entry into Year 1. At all times, pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. In Years 7 to 11, they benefit from careers advice and work experience, and the Key Stage 3 curriculum has been improved very well. Throughout the school, there is very good provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education. Students enter the post-16 provision and benefit from a good range in the curriculum that emphasises life skills, personal and social education, and citizenship, as well as literacy and numeracy. Appropriate accreditation is provided and students also attend a local college, in preparation for transfer there at the age of 19. The quality of the post-16 provision within the school is relevant and satisfactory, but is not as high as that in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 to 11. This is already scheduled by the school as an area for improvement.
21. There is a good match of teachers with specialist skills in teaching pupils with ASD, SLD and PMLD. They are very well supported by an experienced and well-trained group of teaching assistants; they show genuine care for the pupils and work very effectively in teams with the teachers. The work of therapists contributes significantly to pupils' very good achievements; programmes devised by them are incorporated effectively into teachers' planning and pupils' individual education plans.
22. The accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. Improvements have been made since the last inspection; for example, a library has been provided, and the school is doing what it can within the limitations provided by the buildings. However, specialist facilities are limited; there is, for instance, no specialist science area and no workshop for design and technology. The accommodation for pupils in the Foundation Stage is poor. During the inspection, pupils in Year 1, involved in food technology, had to go through another classroom to wash their hands and this caused a great deal of disruption. In Year 2, the room is far too small and limits the individual working spaces needed for ASD pupils. The resources for learning are good and are used very effectively to support pupils' learning.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school makes good provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. It provides pupils with very good support and guidance and involves them very well in aspects of the school's work and its development.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Induction arrangements are very strong.
- Pupils have very good access to well-informed advice, support and guidance.
- There are very strong arrangements to seek, value and act on pupils' views.

### **Commentary**

23. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection regarding support and guidance and very good improvement regarding child protection procedures. Pupils and students are treated as individuals in a very strong family atmosphere. The school ensures their care, welfare, health and safety well. New children to the school are gradually and sensitively introduced. The school's policies and learning routines are explained very carefully to parents and they receive very good written information. Some children have benefited from the Earlybird programme and are already known very well by their teachers when they enter the nursery class. Consequently, children settle in quickly.

24. The school's designated officer for child protection is fully trained and deals with any issues effectively. All staff are issued with good written guidance about their roles and responsibilities. There are good arrangements for emergencies and first aid and risk assessments are undertaken as required. The school works well with external agencies to promote health and safety. For instance, a road safety officer and the fire service are regular visitors giving talks.
25. There are very good relationships at all levels. Pupils are happy during the school day and are very well supported in their learning. Students post-16 have good access to very well informed support, advice and guidance. They receive good, impartial guidance about further study and careers opportunities. Nearly all pupils and students say they receive help when they get stuck in their work. Any personal problems are handled with sensitivity and care, for instance, if they feel bullied. Much information is held about academic and personal development and it is very well used to inform teaching. Support specialists are well involved. For instance, the school engages the educational psychologist, speech and language therapist, physiotherapist, school nurse and doctor effectively.
26. There are many opportunities for pupils to make their views known to staff and become involved in the school. A measure of the school's valuing of pupils' views was seen before the inspection where the questionnaires for pupils were adapted with photographs, symbols and 'yes/no' answers so that all pupils could contribute their views. These showed that pupils like their school, adults support them when they are worried or stuck, other pupils are friendly and they enjoy working hard and learning. The school council is very well established and a very good vehicle for members to develop as young citizens. Councillors take great pride in their work. It is pleasing to see that the school takes their suggestions very seriously, for example, about clubs and learning resources, and implements some of the changes they suggest.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has a very good partnership with parents and the community, including other schools and colleges.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school involves parents very well through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.
- It generally provides very good information to parents.
- Parents make a very strong contribution to learning at school and at home.
- The school has established many links in the wider community that enrich learning.

### **Commentary**

27. The school has made several good improvements since the last inspection. Educational support programmes for parents are very good. Post-16 links with the community and other schools are good. Both parents and the community make a significant contribution to achievement. The headteacher and staff are always happy to meet parents to discuss any concerns or problems. The school asks for parents' views on particular matters. For example, a 'summer school' was developed following a consultation exercise in conjunction with the local health authority. Parents' views were taken into account and this led to very good provision over the last summer holidays. Feedback on the success of the provision then led to a decision to make similar provision over the Easter holidays too. The questionnaires sent before the inspection were returned by more than half the parents and showed overwhelming support for the school, with no significant disagreements recorded.
28. The school provides very good information to parents about its policies, provisions and their children's standards and progress. Bright newsletters are issued each term and there is helpful advice and guidance about how parents can support learning at home. Review and 'general progress' reports provide much information to parents about how well their children are doing

and how they can improve in future. Occasionally, the computer-based progress reports contain simple errors or use educational jargon and the school must guard against this.

29. The parents and teachers association (Brookfields Support Group) works very hard in organizing many popular social and fundraising events. They have helped to provide minibuses and many learning resources and items of equipment for the school. Many parent helpers give their time generously by helping in lessons or with school trips. The school organises workshops for parents regularly. These have included literacy, numeracy and PECS.
30. Links in the community include the Child Development Centre (CDC), local business, universities and colleges. The Earlybird scheme operates in partnership with the CDC and this gives parents very good chances to take part in training programmes regarding autism and behaviour management. Many sports clubs and organizations provide skills coaching in school. This includes cricket, football and rugby. A wealth of visits and visitors enrich learning and support spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. For example, there are links with churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, theatre groups, classical and contemporary musicians and poets. There are very good educational links with primary schools regarding mainstream inclusion, and good links with local colleges for students post-16. In addition, developments in English, mathematics, science and ICT are helped by the links with special schools in the 'Liverpool Basin' region. The school puts much back into the community through fundraising for many charities and good causes.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the headteacher and of other key staff are very good. Financial management is also very good. Governance is good. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well and statutory requirements are met.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher provides very clear direction in establishing the school's key aims for inclusion.
- He and the senior management team have established very good systems for monitoring and evaluation that ensure continuous improvement.
- There is very good teamwork and leadership from key staff.
- Governors give good support in strategic planning and in managing the school's finances.

### **Commentary**

31. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. He successfully communicates a very clear vision of an inclusive school. This vision is understood and shared by governors, teachers, pupils and most parents. The leadership of the senior management team and subject co-ordinators is very good. The headteacher and his senior management team ensure that the school continues to improve and develop by building on its strengths whilst steadily eradicating any weaknesses. Subject co-ordinators are following this example and leading the improvements in their subjects very well. The school has a strong sense of direction and a determination to succeed.
32. Management is very good at almost all levels. The headteacher is very well supported by the senior management team and by other members of staff. There is very good teamwork and very good management by middle managers. The previous and current deputy headteachers have been very influential in promoting robust monitoring systems. The Foundation Stage is managed well by the deputy headteacher, who also provides very good leadership for the Earlybird programme. The senior management team keeps a good overview of the provision for the post-16 students and is already working to improve the quality of teaching and learning, as part of their review of the provision for pupils and students aged 14 to 19. Teaching assistants



and other non-teaching staff show very high levels of commitment to the school and are much more involved with pupils and their education than is often the case.

33. The leadership and management of the governing body are good. Governors provide the school with good support in its determination to improve provision. They are well involved in strategic planning and financial decision making and have a good overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, governors could be even more involved in monitoring the work of the school through ways other than just receiving feedback from staff.
34. Since the last inspection, the school has made very good improvement. This is due to the quality of leadership and the determination to bring about changes, in a planned programme, that will be of lasting benefit to the pupils. To set its priorities, the school has developed sophisticated and high quality procedures for monitoring and evaluating what it does well and what could be improved. As a result, school leaders and staff have confidence in their strengths and support one another, as a team, to improve any areas of weakness. The school is now in full control of its development and is, rightly, determining for itself how best it should improve in the future.
35. The very successful systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are based on accurate and reliable data from two sources, pupils' assessments and from the very good monitoring of classroom practice. Teachers' plans are based very firmly on the evidence from assessments and lessons meet individual pupils' needs very well. Assessment data is also used very effectively to set objectives for teachers' performance management. The rigorous monitoring of classroom practice also ensures that teachers understand how to improve their work. The outcomes from monitoring across the school are used to draw up a curriculum development plan. This is then meshed with the strategic management plan. Because the priorities for development planning are based on what will be of benefit to the pupils, the needs of pupils are considered as paramount. This ethos is exceptionally evident and the school does its utmost to ensure that every individual has the very best deal possible. As a result, there is an outstanding level of inclusion and each pupil is cared for as a unique individual.
36. The school has been successful in attracting very good teachers. Staff are encouraged to use their experiences and initiative to enhance provision at all levels. As a result, there is an optimistic and energetic approach to improvement throughout the school. There is a very good induction system and teachers receive support that improves their practice. As a result, the morale of teaching and non-teaching staff is high and it is coupled with very high levels of commitment and professionalism.

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,185,419
Total expenditure	953,312
Expenditure per pupil	11,486

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	76,273
Balance carried forward to the next	308,380

37. Financial management is very good and governors support the school very well in this regard. There are very clear links between planning and spending. There has been a continuous cycle of improvements to the accommodation and resources are well targeted. There is currently a large amount of money being carried forward. This underspend is deliberate and is being saved to carry out the planned, and much needed, building work to improve the accommodation. The day-to-day management of finances is very careful and financial reports to governors are well designed to give them the information they require. The school is implementing the principles of best practice well. As a result, the school makes regular improvements to its facilities. The very good achievement of pupils is due to the development of very good teaching and has led to the

significant improvement in all aspects of the school since the last inspection. The school provides very good value for money.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

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

At the time of the inspection, there were 13 children in the Foundation Stage, seven in the nursery class and six in the reception class. It was only possible to inspect some of the areas of learning in detail, and the children's personal and social development; communication, language and literacy; and mathematical development are reported below. Since the last inspection, good improvement has taken place. Staff have become increasingly skilled at meeting the needs of children with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), as well as those with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties (SLD and PMLD). The quality of assessment is now very good, and the detailed information that results is used very well to set challenging targets for the children in their individual education plans. These plans are used very well by teachers and assistants, to plan activities in lessons that help the children to meet their targets. As a result, the curriculum provided is very good, and highly relevant to each child.

The assessment data on the children shows that, over their time in the Foundation Stage, most children show very good achievement against their special educational needs, and especially in their personal development and communication skills. A key factor in this is the success of the National Autistic Society's Earlybird programme. The school, in partnership with the Child Development Centre, runs this scheme very well and enables parents to understand autism and work together with the school in developing their child. As a result, there is a very strong partnership between parents and teachers that continues into, and through, the Foundation Stage. The long-term benefits of this programme were evident in a Year 2 class, where pupils who had been on the EarlyBird programme (some prior to attending school and some while at school) were more advanced in their communication and social skills than those who did not receive it.

The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers and assistants work very well together as highly effective teaching teams in each class. Children learn quickly in response to the consistent routines and expectations of staff and make significant gains over their time in the Foundation Stage. At the time of the inspection, new staff were settling into their roles well and their work was of good quality, with most of the very good lessons observed being in the reception class. The deputy headteacher leads the provision well. However, the accommodation is poor. The reception class is divided from a Year 1 class by temporary screens and lessons for both classes are often disturbed by noise, and adults and children needing to go through to other rooms. Access to both these classes is through the nursery classroom and the result is that all classes face too many distractions. Despite this, the children give good attention to their teachers and assistants and there is no apparent negative effect on their achievement. The school is very aware of this problem and is doing what it can to alleviate it.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children, especially those with ASD, achieve very well because teaching is very good.
- Teachers keep detailed records that show clearly how well children do.

#### **Commentary**

38. Analysis of children's records of achievement shows that most children learn to recognise, acknowledge and value others. They also learn to concentrate and give attention to others for longer periods of time. For example, one child entered the Foundation Stage only able to sit fleetingly with an adult. Now, the child plays alongside others, co-operates with adults at his

work station, and volunteers to help lay the table at snack time. During the inspection, children in the nursery class were obviously happy to be in school and felt safe and secure in their group. Those in the reception class were clearly aware of one another and wanted to work and play together with their friends and adults. These gains in social awareness are due to the consistent routines in both classes where children greet each other each day, look at what others have done at the end of lessons, and help with activities such as tidying away and preparing snacks. Teachers plan very good activities during the day that help the children relate to different adults and they are steadily encouraged to play alongside, and then with, their peers. Staff record these developments very well with photographs and written evidence and compile them in a most useful record of achievement.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good and children achieve very well in their communication, reading and writing skills.
- Adults use clear and unambiguous verbal communication.
- Signs, symbols and other aids to communication are not used consistently enough throughout the day.

### **Commentary**

39. Children's records of achievement show that they make very good gains in their communication skills over their time in the nursery and reception classes. For example, one child entered nursery able to exchange a symbol for a snack, and with no verbal communication. During the inspection, this child was heard in the reception class to say, "I want red plate" when the table was being laid. Children with PMLD respond very well to the stimulation provided for developing pre-communication skills. For example, an assistant used the light room very well to highlight a fluorescent face in ultra-violet light. This led to the child showing recognition of a face and tracking it left to right, and up and down, keeping a fixed gaze. The children in the reception class can name most of the letters of the alphabet and recognise days of the week by looking at their word. They enjoy stories and are aware that books and text carry meaning. These gains are due to staff communicating with clarity. In the nursery, unnecessary words are not used so that the meaning is always very clear to the child. As a result, children are not confused and come to learn what is expected of them, and how to talk to others. Adults also use symbols, signs and photographs to help with communication. For example, teachers use symbols to show which part of the lesson they are working on now, and what is still to follow. As a result, children know what they are working on and that, for example, play time is not until after their writing is finished. Some children are using photographs well to identify, for example, what they would like to drink, or play with. However, whilst these signs, symbols and other aids to communication are used well for set routines in lessons, they are not used consistently at all other times, for everyday communication. This is because new staff are still learning these skills.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good and children achieve well.
- Daily routines and songs help children to develop their number skills well.

## Commentary

40. Records of achievement show that children achieve well over their time in the Foundation Stage. In the nursery class, one child can count to four, another can choose between two options and all are aware through counting, that there are different numbers of adults and children in the room. In the reception class, most children can count to ten, and show they understand positional words, such as, 'in, on, under'. Children are less secure in their use of number and recognising, for example, when three objects are present, without counting them in sequence. Adults use daily routines well to help children to count and recognise numbers. They count how many children are present, how many cups will be needed at snack time and how many bricks they are using to build with. In addition, adults use a good range of number songs with the children, each with clear illustrations so that children can actually count how many 'ducks went swimming one day' and how many remain.
  
41. In developing their **knowledge and understanding of the world**, children learn cause and effect through their use of switches and computers. They visit the local environment and experience different situations relevant to everyday life. Children's **physical development** is enriched by a good quality outdoor play area and large toys and cycles. They play energetically and enjoy the challenge of riding their bicycles and going up and down slopes. Children also have effective opportunities to develop their physical skills through lessons with apparatus in the hall, and develop their fine motor skills through activities such as building with blocks and using scissors in class. **Creative development** is promoted effectively through many opportunities to sing, play instruments, paint and take part in role-play.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 to 4

### ENGLISH AND FRENCH

*English was inspected in detail and is reported in full below. There was not enough evidence to report fully on the provision for French, but in the one lesson sampled, high quality teaching was helping pupils to communicate with the teacher using everyday words and simple phrases.*

#### English

The provision in English is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievements are very good.
- Alternative forms of communication are used very effectively.
- Teaching is very good and work is very well matched to the differing needs of the pupils.
- Assessment and target setting are very good.
- High quality leadership is helping to raise standards.

#### Commentary

42. In Years 1 to 11, the pupils' achievement in English is very good. Their speaking, listening and general communication skills show very good development. They make very good progress with reading and good progress in writing. The pupils enjoy their English lessons and display very good attitudes to learning.
43. The very good progress being made by pupils, particularly those with communication difficulties, owes much to the school's very effective development of alternative methods of communication. The use of symbols, signing, switches, ICT and a wide range of visual and sensory resources is very carefully planned. This ensures that all pupils are fully included in lessons. For instance, in Year 6, where pupils were reading Aesop's fable, 'The Lion and the Mouse', a pupil with PMLD successfully used switches to choose between the lion and the mouse. Visual timetables are used so pupils have a clear understanding of the daily activities. Many examples were seen when signing and symbol cards were used to signify the start and end of activities, for example, moving from text work to writing.
44. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The National Literacy Strategy has provided a very good structure for teaching English and has been instrumental in the development of high quality planning. In all classes, teachers and assistants work as a team and plan extremely well for the different groups of pupils. The good use of ICT is stimulating pupils' interest, helping them to communicate better and reinforcing learning objectives. The higher attaining ASD pupils receive challenging work, and their responses and contributions to lessons are valued. In Year 2, for example, a pupil was able to talk about, 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff' and the characters in the story. The handling of soft toys, modelled on the characters from the story, enabled very successful participation in the lesson by the lower attaining pupils. The development of phonic skills is a strong feature of most lessons. Alphabet work, initial sounds, letter and word blends are extremely well taught and are key to the development of the pupils' very good communication and reading skills. Provision for developing writing skills has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good. In Year 11, a good example was seen of pupils constructing sentences containing a word beginning with the letter 'u'.
45. Assessment is very good. The school is using ICT effectively to analyse data and accurately measure pupils' progress. The information is then used to set challenging targets for future learning. The next stage is for the pupils themselves to be more involved in assessing the progress they have made, and determining how they can improve their work. Good work is

being carried out with similar schools in the Liverpool area, to look at pupils' work and compare standards and the effectiveness of assessments.

46. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Subject leadership is excellent. The co-ordinator has ensured that staff have been very well trained in teaching key elements of the National Literacy Strategy and in adapting the curriculum for the pupils at Brookfields. High quality monitoring of teachers' planning and of teaching and learning have been instrumental in raising standards of achievement.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

47. The development of pupils' literacy skills is planned for carefully and systematically. Teachers constantly reinforce language and communication skills, for instance, the use of different adjectives when describing the changing state of materials in science. In swimming, vocabulary is taught included, 'deep' water and 'round' and 'round'. In art and design, one higher attaining pupil had remembered key facts about weaving following a visit to Manchester Industrial Museum. He was able to share his knowledge with others and likened a bobbin of thread to a cocoon.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good teaching is raising standards and pupils achieve very well.
- The very strong curriculum and high quality assessment supports very effective planning for the range of needs in each year group.
- Mathematics is very well led and managed.

### **Commentary**

48. The achievement of pupils, including those with PMLD, is very good in all year groups. During Years 1 and 2 pupils progress from needing prompts to recognise numbers to consistently reading and writing numerals and counting accurately to 100. With support they begin to sort big and little items, and can identify common shapes in the environment and name coins. Pupils with PMLD respond to number rhymes and explore associated objects, and remember learned responses. In Years 3 to 6 pupils can count in 10s to 100, measure lines in centimetres, sort and rank objects by shape, size and ordinal position, and begin to tell the time. Pupils with PMLD can follow and link items to a count of 3, and attend to the ticking of a cooking timer to be aware of the passage of time.
49. Pupils with SLD in Years 7 to 9 continue to achieve very well in number work, and make good progress in their use of application on mathematics and in shape, space and measurement. Some pupils can independently count in 5s and 10s beyond a hundred, and begin to correctly name 2D and 3D shapes. In Years 10 and 11 they use a range of mathematical vocabulary, create simple bar graphs, measure to the nearest metre, hectogram or litre, recognise shapes such as octagons and pyramids and make good attempts at explaining how they have solved problems.
50. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers are very ably supported by teaching assistants, and in every lesson there is a strong emphasis on inclusion. Staff know the needs of each pupil very well, and use symbols, signs and pictures to aid communication as well as computers and other strategies. Adults provide the pupils with very good challenge, give step by step directions, and demonstrate very well. They ask probing questions, and balance this sensitively with constructive intervention. This leads the pupils to concentrate on their

mathematical thinking. They know what is expected, work hard to solve problems, and enjoy their practical tasks.

51. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Resources are good and used well, with particularly good and motivational use being made of ICT to develop and reinforce mathematical skills. The curriculum has been adapted very successfully to include the National Numeracy Strategy in all classes. Teachers make very effective use of assessment. They record pupils' achievements immediately, and use this daily and longer-term assessment very well to produce targets and create activities relevant to each pupil.
52. The subject is very well led and managed. The co-ordinator has a clear vision and is committed to increasing pupils' achievement. Training has been provided and positively received by staff, and computers are used very well to help pupils develop their numeracy. The quality of provision is monitored very well. There are strong links with other special schools, and these have supported the development of the subject very well.

### **Numeracy across the curriculum**

53. The development of numeracy is well planned for in other subjects. Other opportunities are also well taken, such as teaching 'first', 'second' and so on when pupils are lining up for lunch. Pupils compare the size of baby and adult clothes, and measure themselves and adults when learning about growing up in PSHE. They carry out traffic surveys in geography. Speed, distance and time are measured during friction work in science. In history, times in the pupils' own day are used to compare the life in a day of a slave. Emphasis is put on 'big' and 'little' strides in PE and comparing the size of rocks in science. The systematic approach in all subjects ensures numeracy is applied in a range of practical situations and the language of mathematics is reinforced very well.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve very well in Years 1 to 7.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Pupils' literacy and numeracy needs are addressed very well in science lessons.
- The curriculum is very well planned with very good guidance for what should be taught.
- Development in the subject is very well led.

#### **Commentary**

54. Analysis of the school's data shows that pupils make very good gains each year in their knowledge and understanding of science. This is particularly evident in Years 1 to 7, where classes contain a large proportion of pupils with ASD. In Years 8 to 11, classes contain a larger proportion of pupils with SLD. Here, the progress made is at a slower rate than the other classes, but pupils are still achieving well for their degree of special educational needs. Pupils with PMLD achieve very well by being fully included in lessons with the other pupils of their age. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are aware of living things and understand, for example, that adults have larger hands than children. By the end of Year 6, pupils know the properties of different materials and that some change their state when heated or cooled. By the end of Year 9, pupils carry out experiments to measure, for example, air resistance or sound insulation, and know how to make sure their tests are fair. Students in Year 11 are aware of different forces and know, for example, which ones are used to bounce a ball.



55. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers plan their lessons very well and use a wide range of interesting methods that motivate the pupils to remember what they have learnt and to want to find out more. For example, in a lesson in Year 7, the teacher used digital photographs from a previous lesson and this led the pupils to recall with accuracy their use of force meters. Then, the new topic of air resistance was introduced very well with illustrations of parachutes on the interactive whiteboard, followed by pupils experimenting outside with parachute material. As a result, all the pupils were excited about the topic and very keen to carry out their experiments. The teacher also took the opportunity to enhance the social development of the pupils by encouraging a pupil to oversee another pupil with PMLD whilst a parachute activity took place. Both pupils held hands and expressed great joy and friendship throughout.
56. Teachers place a strong emphasis on pupils using scientific methods and this leads them to observe closely and reach relevant conclusions. For example, in a lesson in Year 9, pupils took turns to insulate a sound source with different materials and were careful to make sure that all other factors were constant. As a result, they were able to evaluate their results to see which materials worked best. Teachers also make lessons relevant by keeping them within the experience of the pupils. For example, in a lesson for Years 3 and 4, the teacher used eggs, bread and jelly as substances that changed their state with heating or cooling. The lesson was organised very well with assistants taking different groups, and this meant that pupils with ASD and those with PMLD were fully involved. The change of the materials into toast, boiled eggs and liquid gelatine really interested the pupils and they were further motivated to work carefully by the reward of egg sandwiches at the completion of the lesson! In most lessons, teachers take every opportunity to help pupils to learn and use new vocabulary and also use their number skills, for example, in measuring the sizes of hands, or plotting the results of an experiment on a table.
57. Since the last inspection, very good improvement has taken place. Standards have risen and the quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly. This development has been very well led and the subject co-ordinator has prepared very good curriculum plans so that teachers know what to teach next, and how to make it relevant to the special educational needs of their pupils. In addition, the co-ordinator meets regularly with science teachers from other special schools in the 'Liverpool Basin' and this is very helpful in the sharing of ideas and spreading of good practice, to the benefit of pupils in Brookfields.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well and use computers effectively to help with their learning and communication.
- ICT is taught well and teachers are confident to use new technology.
- There is a wide range of good quality equipment and resources.
- The provision for ICT, and curriculum development in the subject, is very well led and managed.

### **Commentary**

58. Pupils' achievement is good in all year groups. During Years 1 and 2, pupils learn to use a mouse, start to use the keyboard for writing their own name, and learn to use a digital camera. Pupils with PMLD use a range of switches to activate toys and on-screen information, and increase the time they focus on a computer screen. In Years 3 to 6, pupils learn to use simple programs independently for reinforcing learning. They use a mouse to click on icons for printing and also click on images, symbols and words to put numbers in correct sequence, and present ideas in stories. Understanding is gained about everyday devices being controlled, and pupils

enter instructions into a 'roamer'. Pupils with PMLD use switches on cue, for example to activate a light source during a story about a lighthouse.

59. In Years 7 to 9, pupils improve their mouse and keyboard skills, recognise an increasing range of icons, use a menu, and navigate the Internet with help. They work increasingly independently and are motivated to complete tasks. In Years 10 and 11, pupils use ICT to communicate meaning and express ideas, making good use of digital photography. They respond to a wider range of instructions for using the computer, and make greater use of the Internet through access to search engines and web pages. Throughout the school, pupils become competent users of ICT to interact with others, and use a range of well-selected communication devices.
60. Most classrooms are well equipped with computers, interactive whiteboard, a variety of switches, touch screens and electronic communication aids. A very good range of software is used to support learning, especially in literacy and numeracy, and also to stimulate responses and develop awareness in pupils with PMLD. The investment in resources continues, including current plans to provide laptops and develop resources in music.
61. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Classroom teams are knowledgeable and skilled as a result of their enthusiastic response to the use of resources and training provided. Lessons and activities are planned very well to take full account of what pupils can already do, so that they build on their skills. As a result, pupils are increasing their ICT capabilities and are motivated to use computers by the challenge and content of the software provided. Also, pupils are developing the skills of independent learning, and show enjoyment and pride in their work. Pupils often use interactive whiteboards well in class, although some younger pupils are not always able to reach them.
62. Since the last inspection, the ICT co-ordinator has very successfully led the very good improvement in the subject. There are high quality schemes of work and curriculum plans, teaching and learning are monitored, and there is a clear vision for future development. Good links with other special schools and the strategic use of external consultants have also helped this development. The school is one of ten selected nationally to pilot modules in the Key Stage 3 ICT strategy for special schools. Two of the units now being used nationally were developed within the school, which very strongly reflects the high quality of the curriculum development.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

63. The very good use of ICT is a regular feature of teaching and learning in other subjects. Digital photography is used by staff and by pupils to extend learning in many lessons. It is used creatively in art and science, as multi-media presentations. The Internet is used well in humanities, for gathering information about the water cycle and rivers in geography. Limited opportunities in music are starting to be addressed. The use of ICT makes a major contribution to raising achievement in literacy and numeracy. Opportunities are also taken in ICT lessons to extend numeracy skills, such as pupils calculating where a 'roamer' will finish on a number line laid on the floor.

### **HUMANITIES**

*Too few lessons were seen in geography, history and religious education to judge the overall quality of education and provision in these subjects.*

64. Two lessons, and two parts of lessons, were observed in **history**. In addition, teachers' and pupils' records were examined and discussions held with the history co-ordinator. There is a well-conceived scheme of work, and pupils are progressively taught about historical events. Pupils learn about history through a good range of practical activities that help them to understand the life of ordinary people in the past. Teachers make good use of real resources so that pupils can imagine life in the past. The best lessons are also used to reinforce literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. The subject is monitored regularly

and rigorous feedback is given to teachers after observations. Since the last inspection, the provision has been very much improved as a result of this very good leadership and management.

Two lessons in **geography** were observed. One was excellent, as follows:

#### **Example of outstanding practice**

**In a geography lesson, the teacher used a very good range of activities and resources that captured and held the pupils' interest extremely well.**

A wide range of resources ensured that pupils' attention was maintained. The use of the interactive whiteboard was very effective and prompted 'Oohs' of excitement from the pupils. Excellent interactions of the learning support assistant with the pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties resulted in her full involvement in the lesson. The challenging behaviour of pupils with difficulties on the autistic spectrum was extremely well managed. Learning objectives were reinforced from a variety of angles and activities were frequently and smoothly changed. The pupils were very well supported by positive feedback and learnt extremely well as a result. The lesson was planned with a very close match to the previous assessment of the pupils. As a result, pupils' needs were extremely well met.

65. There have been considerable improvements in the teaching of geography since the last inspection as a result of very good monitoring and evaluation. The planning for geography is well designed to appeal to pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties in every year group.
66. In **religious education**, only two lessons could be seen during the inspection; it is, therefore, not possible to make judgements about the quality of teaching and overall provision. The lessons observed were both very good and contained a real spiritual element. In one, the higher attaining pupils recognised a picture of Jesus and used reference books to look for scenes about the 'Parable of the Lost Sheep'. Religious education contributes significantly to aspects of social and moral development; for example, pupils show respect and appreciation for the beliefs and values of others. In morning class prayers, pupils reflected about being kind to others. A poetry workshop run by a multicultural poet, and visits to local places of worship, such as mosques and churches, enrich the curriculum and help pupils to understand different religions.

#### **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

*Art and design was inspected in full and is reported below. Lessons and pupils' work were sampled in design and technology, music and physical education.*

67. Only part of one lesson in **design and technology** was observed and pupils' work and teachers' records were examined. The work on display in classrooms and in pupils' records show that pupils have a wide range of relevant experiences in design and technology lessons. The quality of the work on display is very good. Pupils work with a very good range of materials and processes and there is a good emphasis on design as well as making. There has been a significant improvement in provision since the last inspection as a result of very effective leadership and management. Schemes of work have been adapted to better meet the wide range of needs of the pupils. However, there is no specialist accommodation for the subject so the opportunities for pupils to work with heavy materials are limited.
68. In **music**, too few lessons were seen to judge the quality of teaching and learning and the overall provision. In the two lessons seen, pupils were achieving well and following a secure curriculum, based on published materials. Discussion with the subject co-ordinator shows that the school is working appropriately to further develop the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with ASD and make more use of computers for composition and recording.
69. **Physical education** was sampled. It is evident from teachers' planning that a very good variety of opportunities are provided for pupils to acquire and develop skills, to know how they can

improve and to understand how their bodies react to exercise. Physiotherapy programmes are very well incorporated into the work for pupils with PMLD, including good use being made of the hydrotherapy pool. Other accommodation is limited, but off-site facilities are extremely well used. Pupils show excellent participation in sports training, inter-school tournaments, orienteering events, 'funky fitness' sessions, swimming and gym clubs. Records indicate that pupils achieve very well in response to the wealth of challenges offered. In some cases, pupils are achieving exceptionally high standards. Some pupils gain medals and trophies at regional level, and others are national trampolining champion and seventh in the world for gymnastics at the Special Olympics.

## **Art and design**

Provision in art and design is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils generally achieve well.
- The quality of teaching and learning are good.
- The pace of change has been slower than in other subjects.
- The current curriculum is effective, but out of date.

### **Commentary**

70. The pupils' work displayed in classrooms and corridors shows that they achieve well and make good gains in developing their painting, sketching and making skills. Observational drawings and paintings show that pupils are encouraged to look closely and pay attention to scale, proportion and detail. Pupils study the work of other artists and use an appropriate range of materials, media and styles in their own works. In addition, pupils make good use of computers to manipulate digital images and use relevant software to create scenes and images. For example, pupils in Year 9 have enhanced digital photographs of themselves so that they appear to be 'impressionist' portraits.
71. The quality of teaching and learning are good. In particular, teachers make very good use of the guidance they have about what to include in their lessons and how to teach pupils the necessary skills. As a result, lessons are focused on helping the pupils to improve their ability, as well as experiencing a range of different activities. In a very good lesson seen in Year 9, the teacher's enthusiasm was infectious and the pupils were keen to try to improve the quality of their photo-collages. This led to the pupils developing and trying ideas for themselves, then evaluating and improving their work as a result.
72. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement and pupils are now achieving well. The main reason for this is that the curriculum has been planned carefully so that teachers know what to do in lessons and how to make them relevant to the skills of the pupils. However, other subjects have been developing faster than art and design and the co-ordinator has yet to implement changes, so that the curriculum is relevant to pupils with ASD as well as to those with SLD and PMLD.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils make very good progress in their personal and social development.
- They develop an understanding of citizenship through the way the school functions.

## Commentary

73. By the end of Year 2, pupils have made very good progress in developing their social and personal skills. They understand the routines of the day and many take responsibility for putting away their own belongings as they arrive in the classroom and at the end of activities. Higher attaining pupils begin to appreciate other people's needs and some of them show real sensitivity in their interactions with others in the class.
74. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a very good understanding of right and wrong and the need for rules. They consider the perspectives and feelings of others, taking part in role-play or dressing up and will offer, unprompted, to explain their work to visitors. They are beginning to take part in discussions and to make choices. Higher attaining pupils make choices and justify their decision making.
75. By the end of Year 9, pupils understand factors that affect their health and know how to keep themselves safe. They begin to be aware of conflict as it relates to world issues, such as the current war in Iraq. By the end of Year 11, pupils work productively in teams in lessons. They know about the Houses of Parliament and begin to address notions such as *hawks and doves* as they apply to government.
76. Pupils take increasing responsibility as they move through the school. They become progressively more confident and able to contribute to the life of the school community. They say that the best things about school are the care provided by staff and the support they receive for their learning and personal development. The suggestions they make for improving the quality of life in school are responsible and thoughtful. They have learned to expect their suggestions to be listened to and addressed.
77. Teachers and assistants provide very good role models and the quality of teaching is, overall, high. As a result, pupils know that they come to school to learn and are very clear about their responsibilities to pupils with greater difficulties than their own. They willingly take responsibility for themselves and others insofar as they are able. The school's consistent routines and determination to develop inclusive practices are very effective in developing pupils' personal and social awareness and their understanding of citizenship. The school has improved the provision well since the last inspection and has also, recently, gained the Healthy Schools Award.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES FOR STUDENTS POST-16

78. At the time of the inspection there were 10 students in the post-16 provision. Students follow basic skills courses in literacy and numeracy, as well as studying other curriculum areas for which they gain accreditation under the 'ASDAN' award scheme. Most of the students attend a local college for part of their week, and this aspect of their provision was not inspected. The provision made for English, mathematics and personal and social education is reported in full below. Information and communication technology, vocational and careers education and religious education were sampled. Within the school-based aspects of the provision, there are strengths as follows:
  - There are good relationships and students enjoy school.
  - Students show very good achievement over the whole of their time at Brookfields.
  - Students gain good personal, social and citizenship skills.
  - The range of the curriculum is good and enables students to gain experience of the community and the world of work.
79. Students' records and performance data show that they have achieved very well over the whole of the time they have been in school. Some students have made considerable gains in their personal development as well as in their literacy and numeracy. However, current performance data shows that students are achieving satisfactorily, but at a slower rate than in previous years. This is because the quality of teaching and learning provided within the post-16 class is

satisfactory and does not match the high quality found in other parts of the school. Students consolidate their basic skills and gain a secure and thorough grasp of phonics, reading and writing, and the use and application of their number skills. A weakness in the quality of teaching and learning is that lessons are often at a slow pace and lack sufficient excitement and interest to inspire the students towards higher achievements. The school has already identified this as an area for improvement and has appropriate plans to develop and improve the quality of provision for pupils aged 14 to 19.

## ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good in lessons where the students are encouraged to be actively involved.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to support communication.

### Commentary

80. Students' achievements are satisfactory overall. The writing skills of higher attaining students are at an appropriate standard for their degree of special educational need, and their work indicates that the length of sentences they write is increasing. Word processing is used well to support their presentation and accuracy. With support, students spell simple words correctly and capital letters and full stops are appropriately positioned. Students write for a good range of purposes. They write poems and simple book reviews. They write invitations and letters and address envelopes. Lower attaining students who could only trace letters six months previously, now form their letters with increasing accuracy. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) gain greater control of pens and their markings on paper are becoming more deliberate.
81. Students' reading skills are appropriately developed. Higher attaining students make sound progress in reading simple books and, when prompted, explain the story line. Lower attaining students match words with support. Students with PMLD choose from a choice of two images and students with ASD enjoy listening to stories.
82. Students make satisfactory progress in speaking and listening. However, there is insufficient use of ICT to allow for the involvement of the students with PMLD at all times in their lessons.
83. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, there is a good range of activities that are appropriately matched to the needs of all students. As a result, the basic skills of reading, writing and spelling are taught thoroughly, and students gain confidence in their ability through daily practice and routines. However, the pace of learning does not always extend the most able students, and limited use is made of ICT devices to improve communication.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' learning is good when they take part in games that help them to use numbers.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT.

## Commentary

84. Students' achievement in mathematics is satisfactory. The higher attaining students make sound progress in measuring and in their use of numbers. They use non-standard and standard measures and add two-digit numbers using a number square to support them. They are beginning to understand patterns. All students very much enjoy number games and their ability to count is well reinforced in these contexts. This is because they are more interested by the idea of a game and give more effort to concentrating and learning.
85. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The best features include a good range of individual, group and whole-class activities. Learning support assistants make a very good contribution to students' learning, for example, when they encourage students to predict the score they would like to get. Adequate time is given for students with PMLD to answer, and other students show genuine pleasure when they respond and show success. However, the pace of lessons is calm and measured, and this slows down the rate of students' learning.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE) AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of relevant activities helps students to understand the responsibilities of citizenship as well as supporting their personal and social development.

## Commentary

86. Students' achievements in personal and social skills are good. They develop their skills and self-esteem through a good range of activities. Some lessons in personal health and safety are taught as discrete lessons. However, students also have experience of home management, leisure activities, Young Enterprise, Duke of Edinburgh Award (Bronze), creative arts, and science and technology through trips into the community and through college links. In school, some students are part of the school council and they also help to plan and organise assemblies. Students develop good social skills. The most able students support others with greater learning and physical difficulties. They encourage, and take care of, each other very well. The most able students listen to each other reading and write down the words that cause the reader problems. They welcome visitors warmly. The pupils with more complex learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders, have made significant progress in their social skills and clearly benefit from being with their higher achieving peers.
87. Students' understanding of citizenship is developed through the school council and other whole-school events. The more able are expected to take considerable responsibility around the school and take part in putting together a business plan as part of Young Enterprise. They run the school tuck shop with increasing independence twice every week. Some students gained a Citizenship Award in 2003 for their role in making a sensory garden.

## OTHER COURSES

88. The use of **information and communication technology** is unsatisfactory because it is not used with sufficient consistency and regularity. During the inspection, one student used an interactive story, and the interactive whiteboard was used effectively to reinforce students' understanding of number. Records of students' work and teachers' records indicate that, over the last six months, the students with PMLD and ASD have used switches and followed images on the screen in some lessons. However, these supports and activities are not consistently used. The higher attaining students have word processed some of their writing, used e-mail

and the Internet to find information. However, overall there is too little evidence of students making consistent use of ICT to support their learning. In addition, non-verbal students do not always have sufficient access to technological aids to support their communication.

89. Students learn effectively about **vocational education, careers education**, and the world of work, in a range of different ways. They interview people in school to find out what they do. They make many visits into the community where they meet people who do different jobs. One higher achieving student wrote an e-mail message, with support, to ask the local ranger to come to school to talk to the class. The higher attaining students successfully take part in work experience outside the school, in local shops and the leisure centre, often working in pairs. Others take part in work experience inside the school. They benefit from good advice and counselling from the local Connexions service, including taking part in an Industry Week. As a result, students are well supported into the next stage of their education in work placements or training and day centres.
90. In **religious education**, lessons enable students to develop their awareness of different religions and festivals. Their understanding of spiritual, moral and cultural issues is appropriately addressed. Teachers make effective use of resources through which students learn to use all of their senses, for example, when learning about Passover. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to reinforce literacy through the use of communication aids such as flashcards showing words and symbols.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	2
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>1</b>
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7). In a special school such as this standards achieved are judged against individual targets and not national standards.*