

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MEATH SCHOOL**

Ottershaw

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125478

Headteacher: Ms Janet Dunn

Lead inspector: Steven Parker

Dates of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> March 2004

Inspection number: 258945

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils:	5 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	72
School address:	Brox Road Ottershaw Chertsey Surrey
Postcode:	KT16 OLF
Telephone number:	01932 872302
Fax number:	01932 875180
Appropriate authority:	The proprietor of the school, I CAN.
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Joe Eagle
Date of previous inspection:	20 <sup>th</sup> October 1997

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Meath School is a non-maintained day and residential special school for pupils aged between five\* and 11 who have severe speech, language and communication difficulties. It is one of two schools owned and run by the national charity I CAN. Both schools provide a programme of integrated therapy, education and care, through a highly structured multi-professional approach. All pupils at Meath have Statements of Special Educational Need and are funded by over 20 local education authorities across the south east of England. There are currently 72 pupils on roll, of whom three quarters are boys. This is a ratio commonly found in such schools, particularly when taking account of the significant proportion of pupils who also have autistic spectrum characteristics, attention control or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The great majority of pupils are of white UK heritage and none are identified as having English as an additional language. The attainment of pupils on entry is low, and often very low for those admitted below the age of seven. Seventeen pupils benefit from opportunities provided in the residential setting. This aspect of the school has been subject to inspection on an annual basis by the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC).

\* At the time of the inspection I CAN had just received approval for the school to educate pupils who are rising five.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
13033	Steven Parker	Lead inspector	Mathematics, art and design, design and technology, physical education
31754	Charlotte Roberson	Lay inspector	
32244	Barbara Mole	Team inspector	English, music, personal, social and health education and citizenship, religious education
30071	John Pearson	Team inspector	Science, information and communication technology, history, geography

The inspection contractor was:

Altecq Education Limited  
102 Bath Road  
Cheltenham  
Gloucestershire  
GL53 7JX

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>8</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>10</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>26</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **successful** school with a number of very strong and effective features. Teaching and learning are good. As a result, pupils achieve well in the subjects of the curriculum and their personal development is very good. The recently appointed headteacher has had an immediate, positive impact on the school through her motivating leadership. She works in a very successful partnership with her senior management colleagues. Governance of the school is good. Parents' confidence in the school is well placed. It provides **good** value for money.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The highly skilled and collaborative multidisciplinary team of staff, which generates a very strong learning culture in which pupils thrive.
- The very successful prioritisation of pupils' speech, language and communication skills.
- Pupils succeed in their learning because lessons are carefully planned to meet their individual needs, making them an enjoyable and satisfying experience.
- The new headteacher's visionary leadership and insistence on high standards.
- Outstanding care, support, and guidance, which results in pupils feeling secure and helps them to achieve well.
- The very relevant curriculum, which is enriched by a good range of extra activities and visits.
- The highly valued impact of residential education.
- Very effective partnerships with parents and the wider local community.
- Arrangements for demonstrating how well pupils are learning are not consistently applied.
- The management role of subject leaders is underdeveloped.
- There are not enough active links with other local schools.

There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The commitment and effectiveness of all staff has brought about continuous improvement in all of the weaker aspects identified at the time. In particular, the quality of teaching and the curriculum have both improved significantly and this has had a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievements. The school's current, very good long term planning should clearly ensure that this improvement can continue.

### 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>Good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
Year 6	<b>Good</b>	<b>Very good</b>

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

Achievement is **good** overall for all pupils, irrespective of age, special educational need, ethnicity or gender. The youngest pupils often arrive with extremely limited communication and basic social skills. During their early years in the school, they make good and often very good progress in those important aspects of their learning. In Years 3 to 6, this improvement continues across all subjects. Pivotal in this success is the very impressive progress that pupils make in their ability to speak and communicate, as a result of highly effective teamwork between teachers and speech and language therapists. Consequently, the confidence that this gives them, combined with the considerable support that they receive from classroom support and residential care staff, enables them to make impressive progress in their personal development. Achievements in reading and writing are very good. Standards in mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) are good, as they are in all the other subjects of the curriculum. However, in music and physical

education, pupils make very good progress. Occupational therapists and physiotherapists work in very successful partnership with teachers, support assistants and care staff, to help pupils overcome many of their fine and gross motor difficulties. These specialist programmes have a very positive impact on the wider learning capability of many pupils. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. Pupils are very enthusiastic and interested in their lessons and respond very well to the school's positive culture. Attendance is satisfactory.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The school provides **high quality** education.

Teaching is **good**. Pupils enjoy learning, because teachers plan work very carefully on the basis of finding out what pupils already know and can do, and take every opportunity to make lessons appropriately challenging and fun. The all important primary focus on speaking, listening and communication ensures that materials and teaching approaches are accessible and consolidate earlier learning. Impressive multidisciplinary teamwork, always with a focus on raising standards, is the key to pupils' overall successful learning. The curriculum is good. Topics offered cover the subjects of the curriculum well, providing a richness of experience and putting a very appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' skills in English, mathematics and ICT. Care and support of pupils is very effective, most particularly for those who benefit from residential education. Pupils work and play in a safe and nurturing environment, where relationships are of very high quality. There are very successful partnerships with parents, good relationships with the wider community and satisfactory links with other schools.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **very good**.

The headteacher has built on earlier good work of her senior management colleagues and has accelerated the pace of development in the school's quest to seek further improvement. Change is being carefully and sensitively managed, ensuring that staff are now feeling empowered by the proposed changes. Governors are now more closely involved with the school, are extremely supportive of its work and are keenly aware of what goes on and how well pupils are learning. The I CAN executive and trustees have an equally well informed perspective on the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

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

Parents' confidence in the school is well placed. They are extremely pleased with many aspects and are especially appreciative of the progress their children make in their ability to communicate more effectively. They believe their children are very well cared for. Pupils are very happy in school and enjoy the very good range of activities provided for them, especially in the residential setting.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- further develop assessment arrangements, to better inform planning and demonstrate the progress that pupils are making over time;
- extend opportunities for subject leaders to monitor, evaluate and influence the quality of teaching and learning;
- develop and nurture productive links with local schools to enable Meath pupils to experience more inclusive learning opportunities.

All three development areas are already recognised by the school and incorporated in the very good school improvement plan.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in subjects and courses**

Achievement is **good overall**, irrespective of age, special educational need, ethnicity or gender.

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

- All pupils make rapid progress, often from a very low starting point.
- Progress is sustained throughout the school with very good multiprofessional support.
- Achievements are particularly impressive in the development of speech, language and communication skills and in personal and social development.
- Achievements in music and physical education are very high.
- Pupils' achievements prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

#### **Commentary**

1. The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection, which has resulted in pupils' good overall performance. The most impressive gains have been in relation to their social and communication skills, music and physical education, but there are instances of improvements across most other subjects as well. There are no variations in the achievements of pupils with more complex needs and no differences in the progress of boys and girls. On the contrary, the school's commitment to plan for and include everyone ensures an evenness of progress for all groups.
2. Most pupils arrive during Years 1 and 2 with very basic social skills, usually related to their very significant communication difficulties. These pupils are provided with a very effective start to their education and benefit from imaginative approaches to meeting their needs, particularly in relation to personal and social development and literacy and numeracy skills. Their curriculum is being rapidly adapted to combine early learning goals appropriate to their stage of development with National Curriculum subjects, so that each pupil is presented with activities that match their age and ability. As a result, they achieve well in most activities and are well placed to benefit from more challenging work as they move up to older classes.
3. Pupils continue to make good overall progress throughout Years 3 to 6, helped by a combination of very well focused targets in individual education plans, considerable support and encouragement from the whole staff team of teachers, therapists, classroom support and care staff, and well adapted National Strategies to improve literacy and numeracy. Key to their overall achievements is the prioritisation of dealing very successfully with a universal and overarching difficulty with speech, language and communication. Pupils make very significant progress in overcoming these difficulties, because of highly structured therapy and teachers' very careful planning to ensure that all activities and materials are accessible and language appropriate.
4. By the same token, the related challenges that all fine and gross motor activities present to many of the pupils are very effectively managed and remediated by similarly combined education and therapy. The confidence that pupils experience from their improved ability to, for example, handle a pencil in a controlled way or engage successfully in games, because they have been enabled to integrate the way they function in space, frequently has a significant related benefit in their wider capability to learn. This is, perhaps, one of the reasons why pupils' achievements in physical education are very high, but also explains their good progress in all other subjects of the curriculum.
5. Equally important is the fact that pupils' new found self esteem, which comes with this success, results in them becoming much more confident and self reliant individuals. This ensures that



they are increasingly able to function independently, more likely to benefit from the many extra curricular activities they can experience in the wider community and are well equipped for the transfer to their next school.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes to their learning, and their behaviour, are consistently **very good**. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. Attendance is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils are always polite, well behaved and considerate.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very supportive and positive.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' growing maturity, self worth and confidence.
- Pupils are encouraged to be self reliant wherever possible.
- Pupils enjoy their learning.
- Older pupils could be given more opportunities to work in small groups or pairs.
- Pupils' personal development is very good because the school nurtures them all as individuals.
- Older pupils' independence is not always effectively encouraged.

### **Commentary**

6. As a result of the very good relationships between pupils and adults, the atmosphere in school is warm and welcoming. Pupils are very happy about coming to school and work with enthusiasm to the best of their ability, encouraged by the staff with humour and patience. Pupils say that teachers make learning fun and so they are eager to learn and try as hard as they can in everything that they do. They co-operate as well as they can in lessons, discuss their work, talk happily to adults and participate fully in activities because they feel safe and secure. Work is presented in an interesting and age-appropriate way and staff take a genuine pleasure in their pupils' progress, however small the steps.
7. The very strong ethos of the school, which values every pupil, has a very significant impact on their personal development and achievement. Staff are powerful role models, and, through their example, pupils learn to respect each other other's differences and celebrate their own and others' cultures. There are no problems of bullying or racial harassment; on the contrary, pupils are very tolerant of each other, showing understanding when their classmates need extra support.
8. Individual target setting, clearly established ground rules, effective reward systems and teachers' high expectations all promote pupils' motivation, good social skills and their ability to develop increasing responsibility for their behaviour. Pupils who have more challenging behaviour are very well managed and are helped to improve through sensitive and caring guidance. There were no exclusions during the past year.
9. Spiritual awareness is good, and is developed in many subtle ways, through music and quiet reflection as well as in shared celebrations. Areas of the curriculum, particularly religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship, support pupils' developing moral sense very well. Staff encourage pupils successfully to empathise with the misfortunes of others and to play their part, for example by raising money for good causes. Cultural awareness is highlighted well through the curriculum and enrichment activities; for example awareness and understanding of different cultural traditions is promoted through geography and history topics, and the RE syllabus ensures that pupils develop awareness and respect for all the world's major religious beliefs. Pupils' social development is also developed very well through attending after-school and lunch-time clubs and by inclusive links with a mainstream school.

10. Older pupils' are not provided with enough opportunities to work collaboratively with their peers, without direct intervention and support from adults, in order to help them to be capable of functioning more independently.

## Attendance

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.5	School data	0
National data	N/A	National data	N/A

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

11. Attendance levels are satisfactory and punctuality is good. Parents are supportive of the school in that the majority send their children in as much as possible. Last year's whole school figures dipped a little to just above 91 per cent because of illness, and because a number of pupils had to take some days off for medical and transfer assessments. In addition one pupil on roll did not attend very often. However, since September, figures have improved and are now more in line with similar schools. Staff record who is absent and why according to statutory regulations. Pupils arrive punctually in time for a prompt start to the day.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is **good overall**.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** in all parts of the school.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers work in extremely effective partnership with their classroom support assistants and the large multidisciplinary team of therapists and care staff.
- Teachers balance academic learning and pupils' personal development very well.
- Assessment is effective in informing very effective planning.
- Teachers make learning relevant and fun.
- The comprehensive assessment information gathered is not always used to best effect in measuring pupils' progress or planning for the next stage of their learning.

### Commentary

12. Significant improvements in teaching since the previous inspection have had a related effect on pupils' learning, so that they are now making good academic progress. Senior staff have supported their colleagues through careful monitoring of their work, encouraging feedback and well constructed professional development opportunities. One of the main strengths of teaching is the way teachers consciously work to improve the personal development of pupils, as well as helping them to learn successfully about subjects of the curriculum. This is achieved through teachers recognising that there are teaching and learning opportunities throughout the day and taking advantage of these. They are helped enormously in this endeavour by the school's multidisciplinary team, with whom they collaborate highly effectively. Every class has a speech and language therapist assigned to it and at least one learning support assistant working alongside the teacher. Pupils receive individual therapy and also work in changing group

combinations with their peers. Many of these group activities, such as the social use of language programme (SULP) are run very effectively by therapists.

13. Support assistants also lead learning groups and teach pupils one-to-one, often utilising their own particular skills, for example in sport, to enhance pupils' learning. Those pupils who benefit from residential education also have similar opportunities to work on many aspects of the curriculum through the well focused support of very able care staff. In this way, pupils learn to be adaptable and relate to many different adults. They also learn the important skills of turn taking, listening carefully, being courteous and acknowledging the efforts of others.
14. Teachers are thorough and very conscientious in the way they plan lessons and employ a great variety of stimulating methods to make learning exciting and enjoyable. They are creative in their choice of materials and approaches and use both the grounds of the school and the wider community well to enhance pupils' learning. Pupils receive very helpful feedback on their work through immediate constructive dialogue and marking. Their work is also carefully dated and annotated to give them clear guidance on what they are getting right and where they could improve. This reinforces what has been discussed and also provides a valuable record when it comes to evaluating progress.
15. Good assessment underpins much of this effective, integrated teaching. Teachers keep detailed and informative records of what pupils have learned, the difficulties they experience and the support that they require. They mostly use these records well, together with their high quality knowledge gained from close observation and informed input from their support assistants, to adapt tasks and lessons to meet the needs of individual pupils. Practice does, however, vary and is not as efficient for some of the foundation subjects as it is, for example, in English. All the therapists, including the occupational therapists and physiotherapists, use very sophisticated assessment techniques to inform their own practice. This approach also enables them to provide highly valuable advice and guidance to teachers in how they might adapt their own teaching to take account of pupils' needs.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 37 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (5%)	16 (43%)	14 (38%)	5 (14%)	0	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.*

**The curriculum**

The curriculum is **good** and it includes **very good** opportunities for enrichment. Staffing, accommodation and resources are **good**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum takes very good account of the particular learning needs of all the pupils.
- Pupils in the residential facility follow a very well structured 24 hour curriculum.
- There are thoughtful and effective links between the different subjects of the curriculum.
- Excellent staffing provision combines with good learning resources and accommodation to support pupils learning well.

**Commentary**

16. Much productive work has been done to improve the curriculum since the previous inspection; with the result that it is now provides all pupils with high quality access to their statutory entitlement to the National Curriculum and religious education. Its structure is very relevant to

the particular needs of pupils, most especially in relation to their communication and personal development needs, but it does, nonetheless, provide good experience of all subjects. This has been achieved by very thoughtful adaptation of National Curriculum guidelines and National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. This modification is most evident in the realistic and appropriate objectives stated in the planning for each subject. There is some variation in the extent to which these plans cover the full range of each subject's requirements and are embedded in classroom practice, for example in mathematics, but thorough monitoring of the provision in each subject should ensure that these differences will be identified and dealt with over time. There are also ongoing plans to introduce the Foundation Stage curriculum into planning for pupils at the earliest stages of learning. The format for planning termly topics and deciding the detailed structure of each subject lesson to take account of its focus is impressive. It ensures that key skills in English, mathematics and ICT are firmly embedded in all planning and establishes relationships across and between subjects.

17. Pupils' learning is very successfully enriched by a wide range of visits linked to topics and by inviting artists and performers into the school. There is very good use of the local community to support the curriculum. Pupils take part in a good range of special events, both in and out of school, and the oldest pupils go on an annual residential experience. The school aims to provide all pupils who stay in the residential setting with very well thought out opportunities, which support their learning across the whole of their time in school. Their curriculum thoughtfully incorporates a wide range of social experiences within the school and in the wider community to help pupils to develop their self confidence and interaction skills. This it achieves very successfully and pupils benefit from the many planned activities they take part in. In addition the school has started to promote after-school clubs, for example in football, which are enjoyed by pupils who do not stay in the residential setting. In many instances, these extended day/overnight programmes for day pupils are funded by local education authorities and social services, to enable pupils to develop friendships, gain in independence skills and join in local community groups, with Meath staff supporting them, as part of the inclusion agenda.
18. There is an extremely high level and quality of staffing and this has a very positive impact on pupils' learning. Many additional opportunities, such as play therapy, provided by one of the speech and language therapists and sensory integration therapy provided by the team of occupational therapists, emanate from this eclectic mix of professionals. It is what makes the school unique and highly sought after by many parents. Learning resources are now good and still improving, particularly for ICT where there are clear plans to further upgrade the computer equipment. Whilst I CAN have well stated ambitions to further improve the accommodation, it is nevertheless comprehensive in its provision of facilities, for example, its gym, swimming pool and other specialist rooms and is generally attractive and well maintained.

### Care, guidance and support

The school ensures that pupils' overall care, health, safety and welfare are given **very good** attention and individual pupils receive **excellent** advice and guidance. Staff are exploring and developing more ways to further engage pupils in decisions about their education, but current arrangements to involve them in individual target setting are nonetheless **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The skilled and collaborative multidisciplinary team of staff give all pupils excellent individual support.
- Child protection arrangements are very secure.
- Target setting is very well developed and is having a very positive impact on pupils' personal development.
- Pupil induction arrangements are very good and successfully help pupils to settle into school routines and into the residential setting.

## Commentary

19. The school provides a very happy environment that is conducive to learning. Adults relate very well to each other and work exceptionally closely together, sharing information on a very regular basis. All staff keep very good records about pupils' achievements and progress, and all the activities that take place throughout the full 24 hours. Their work is always aimed at encouraging all pupils to fulfil their potential. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher, all adults are fully committed to striving for very high standards in the way they support individual pupils.
20. The child protection policy is fully understood and implemented by everyone working in the school. Training in this aspect is very effective, and many very sensible policies and procedures, which promote care and support, are followed consistently. Regular training in, for example, first aid, behaviour management and signing is also a strong feature. Record keeping is very detailed and well organised. Governors are taking an increasingly purposeful role in monitoring and promoting health and safety in the school through, for example, monitoring risk assessments, which are also developing well. Parents appreciate the high standards of care their children receive. There was unanimous support from all of the 94 per cent of parents who responded through the questionnaire that the school treats pupils fairly.
21. Individual education and care plans all have a range of relevant targets to address, with particular emphasis on pupils' language and communication and their personal development. Parents are regularly involved in setting and reviewing targets, and all care staff in the residential setting are kept very well informed about the detail within each target. The work they do with pupils in the evening continually focuses on the same aspects which are being targeted during the normal school day. Similarly, expectations for behaviour are consistently consolidated over the 24 hours by all staff. Small achievements are always recognised and rewarded, and over time huge steps are made in pupils' personal and social development. For those that have severe communication difficulties, staff always seek to find out their views and feelings and represent them accurately when reviewing targets. Plans are well in hand to develop a school council, which should encourage even more inclusion of pupils' opinions when making changes in the school.
22. A pupil's family is very well prepared for the day when the young person starts school. Very good induction arrangements ensure that pupils settle into school routines with the minimum of disruption. The family support worker plays an important role in supporting parents at this time. She is especially crucial in establishing good relationships with parents of pupils in the residential setting and liaises very effectively with teachers and therapists. The most recent National Care Standards Commission inspection report indicates that there has been a good response to recommendations made last year and that current standards are good. It recognises, too, the very valuable work of the family support worker.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are **very good** links with parents. Links within the community are **good** and there are **satisfactory**, but improving links with other schools.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The support and commitment shown by the Friends of Meath is excellent.
- The headteacher and staff communicate closely with parents and keep them very well informed.
- Links within the community are generally well established.
- There are not enough links with local schools to enable Meath pupils to experience more inclusive learning opportunities.

## Commentary

23. Over the years, much support has been provided by a group of well organised and hard working parents and friends of the school to raise considerable sums of money, which benefit pupils greatly. Many within the school community praise their efforts and successes. Their newsletter is excellent, because it demonstrates so clearly what the Friends do over the year and exactly how their money is spent. They are innovative and very active in the many ways in which they carry out their work. Parents who want to get involved in this way are always encouraged and welcomed.
24. The school has taken account of criticism at the time of the previous inspection and written a full and detailed school prospectus, which now meets the needs of parents effectively. The headteacher is very clear in her belief that the partnership the school nurtures with all parents is crucial in promoting the achievement of pupils. She has recently canvassed the views of parents. The school communicates closely with parents, not only within home school diaries and through regular class newsletters and written correspondence from all therapists and care staff, but also by telephone. Videos and DVDs are shared with families to increase their understanding of, for example, how the school uses signing to aid communication. A computer with a webcam in the residential setting has very recently been set up to enable those staying overnight to link even more closely with their families. More formal arrangements are in place, for example through the annual review process, to seek and act on parents' views with regard to planning the next steps for each child.
25. Positive links with the community are of benefit to both the school and local residents. Outside groups use the school swimming pool. The school in turn makes use of the local area for visits and residential pupils join a range of community activity groups after school. They are fully involved in two youth clubs, the Brownies and Beavers and also join in a choir and local horse-riding group. The school's annual bonfire and fireworks display attracts hundreds of members of the local community onto the premises and, often through the Friends of Meath, further involvement of the community is sought and gained. Donations are received from within the community and recently a sports club has given the school a mini bus. The headteacher is keen to raise the profile of the school even further within its community and has plans to achieve this.
26. This is not a local education authority maintained school and, as such, has found it difficult to work closely with local schools. However, two pupils currently successfully join a nearby mainstream school for science, which they enjoy. Reciprocal visits are arranged to watch Christmas shows with primary schools nearby. Pupils from Meath join with others from local schools in some curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The headteacher is committed to establishing and nurturing more productive links with local schools.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Governance of the school is **good**. The headteacher's leadership is **very good**. Leadership by other key staff is **good**. Management is **very good overall**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good long term plans present a vision for the school's future that is shared by staff, governors, parents and the school's trustees.
- Through very good leadership, the new headteacher motivates staff very successfully to accomplish the school's goals.
- A very detailed approach to self evaluation, involving staff, parents and governors, ensures that appropriate areas of the school's work are chosen for improvement.
- Very clearly delegated responsibilities and very good communication enable senior managers to ensure that day-to-day management is very effective.
- Curriculum subject leaders do not yet fully monitor the quality of teaching and learning.

- Performance management procedures for teachers are not fully effective and not all have targets for their professional development.
- The governing body provides good, meaningful support to the school.
- Management of the school's money within its established budget is very good. However, the school continues to cost significantly more to operate each year than the income brought in through fees and grants.

## Commentary

27. In the first two terms of her appointment, the new head teacher has established a very good, detailed plan for the school's improvement over a three year period. The strength and potentially very high effectiveness of this plan is related to the headteacher's insistence upon building it from ideas, suggestions and advice of staff, governors, parents and the ICAN trustees. It is supported by very good information, including pupil achievement data, produced by the school's very good self review processes.
28. There is also a very good strategic foundation to the school's plans for development. The headteacher, in agreement with the I CAN executive and trustees and the governing body, has a very clear vision of the area of special educational need the school will serve in the future and also of how the school will make a wider contribution to the work of other schools and local authorities, in line with current government perspectives about special education. The headteacher clearly sees that achievement of the plans for improvement relies upon the contribution of key staff. The clarity of responsibilities designated to these staff within the plan is very good. All staff are highly motivated to succeed by the person-centred, face to face style of the headteacher, who relies upon very clear channels of communication to maintain a continuous dialogue about the progress of developments. These take the form of regular meetings between individuals or amongst groups, but in particular through weekly meetings between the headteacher and senior staff. Although it is early days, staff have embraced the new vision and have a good commitment to and sense of ownership of the improvement plan.
29. Ongoing day-to-day management of the school makes very effective use of a similar pattern of delegated responsibilities and clear communication channels. The school presents as an orderly, purposeful, well organised and very human organisation, in which everyone knows what is expected of themselves and others.
30. As part of this very good management structure, senior managers observe lessons and report to the headteacher and governing body about the quality of teaching. The issues they raise with individual teachers give rise to participation in a very good range of staff development opportunities that improve the expertise of individuals, support the further development of the school and ultimately help to raise the achievements of pupils. The success of this process is indicated by the good overall and sometimes very good teaching seen during this inspection, as compared with the generally satisfactory teaching reported at the time of the previous inspection.
31. The development of curriculum subjects benefits from good overall leadership, especially in the formulation of clear policies and planning. Until recently, however, curriculum subject leaders have not been able to work alongside colleagues in their classrooms, to specifically promote improvement of teaching and learning in their subjects. Time for this to take place has recently been created, by reorganising the timetable; but it is, as yet, too early for the effect on the quality of teaching to be seen.
32. Since her appointment, the headteacher has reviewed the school's procedures for identifying both the strengths and areas for further development of each member of staff. Teachers' performance management is satisfactory, having been temporarily suspended last year, during a period of interim management arrangements. There is a good appraisal system in place for all staff. The headteacher is currently strengthening the link between staff performance targets and achievement of the school's programme of development.

33. The governing body has recently been restructured and is now much more effective than it was at the time of the last inspection. Although it does not have the same statutory responsibilities, it models most of its procedures on those operating in the maintained sector. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, partially as a result of the high quality information they receive from the headteacher. This information, which includes data about the pupils' achievements, comes from the school's good self evaluation procedures. In addition to this, governors take good steps to find out things for themselves. They visit the school, talk to staff and pupils, examine samples of pupils' work, and then keep each other informed by reporting back at governing body meetings. Their work is efficiently delegated to a good range of sub-committees.
34. The I CAN organisation provides a structured operating framework for the school, based upon its own educational philosophy and long term business plan. Governance of the school, working in conjunction with the I CAN executive and trustees, is good and has the potential to improve further as new governors become familiar with their roles. Plans for the school's development are fully supported by governors and trustees alike. Financial and human resource services are provided efficiently by I CAN. Local management of finances by the headteacher and governors, within the budget agreed with I CAN, is very good. However, the school continues to cost more to operate each year than the fees and other income brought in. Although the school's costs are comparatively high in relation to local education authority provision, they represent good value for money when taking into account the good achievements of the pupils, especially when considering the complexity and severity of their special educational needs and their low attainments on entry.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,743,887
Total expenditure	1,774,879
Expenditure per pupil	25,355

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-86,918*
Balance from current year	-30,992*

\* Deficit balances are absorbed at year end by I CAN.



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

*Throughout the following commentary, overall judgements about provision relate to the effectiveness of teaching and learning, curriculum leadership and any other significant aspects.*

### **ENGLISH**

*Eight lessons were seen in English.*

Provision in English is **very good**.

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

- The partnership between teachers and speech and language therapists is highly effective.
- Teaching and learning are of a consistently very high quality.
- Detailed daily record keeping leads to very good planning and target setting.
- Pupils' learning is underpinned by creative approaches to teaching particular skills.
- Older pupils do not experience a sufficiently wide range of literature.

#### **Commentary**

35. Pupils' very good achievement in all aspects of English represents good improvement since the previous inspection. The high standards seen at the time in developing pupils' communication skills have been sustained, because speech and language therapists are assigned to every class. They are consequently able to give expert advice to teachers and also provide focused intervention, one-to-one with pupils. This directly addresses pupils' particular individual learning needs, underpinning their progress in speaking, listening, reading, spelling and comprehension. The therapists' carefully worked out programmes of intervention are precisely focused on the basis of meticulous daily record keeping, in support of teachers' wider curriculum aims. As well as therapists, learning support assistants assigned to each class also provide skilled help.
36. Highly creative approaches are employed by class teams to help pupils learn new skills and apply them in all their learning. These include the 'Spotlight' system used with younger pupils, whereby words which perform different functions in a sentence are highlighted using a consistent code of shapes and colours. Colour coding is also used throughout the school to help pupils remember and understand the logic of sentence structure. In addition, numerous simple games are used to help pupils practise and consolidate what they have learnt. The approach is highly individualised, ensuring that all pupils, no matter what their starting point, make very good progress across the subject. Paget Gorman signing and ICT are also used to good effect, helping pupils to understand more clearly what is being said, and to express themselves. All staff have consistently high expectations of pupils and are quick to praise good effort and celebrate success.
37. The National Literacy Strategy has been thoughtfully and effectively adapted to gain the best effect from its structure and focus. Recent new guidelines for the teaching of speaking and listening are being introduced in one class using drama and role play, and if successful will be adopted by other classes. Pupils make very good progress in reading across the school, although older, more able pupils do not have the experience of as wide a range of literature as they should. Pupils' achievements in writing are very good as the result of well structured, guided writing opportunities and high expectations of staff. Older pupils edit their work thoughtfully and use word processing imaginatively to present their work. They are clearly proud of their written achievements which are always dated and signed. There is good attention paid to punctuation and spelling.
38. Good assessment approaches and target setting enable the school to track pupils' progress in English very well over time.

39. The subject has been very well developed by a collaborative team of teachers and speech and language therapists and thorough co-ordination of this collective effort has resulted in impressive improvements to the subject.

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

40. Opportunities for enhancement of the language and literacy skills learned in English lessons are very well planned for and emphasised across the curriculum. Communication skills are a very strong feature in all other subjects' lessons and very careful thought is always given to making the specialist vocabulary of subjects clear and accessible. Signs, symbols and communication aids are always well used in this context. Pupils use and practise their reading and writing to the best of their ability in other subjects.

### **MATHEMATICS**

*Five lessons were seen in mathematics.*

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

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

- Pupils' achievements are good and have improved since the previous inspection.
- The curriculum is good and relevant to the learning needs of all pupils.
- Teaching is of high quality, because it makes the subject accessible through thorough explanation.
- Formal assessment procedures are effective.

#### **Commentary**

41. Pupils achieve well across a wide range of activities. They learn successfully about the passage of time, shapes, weights and numbers and, as they get older, start to apply their learning well to solve problems. Many pupils are able to use calculators and make measurements. Older pupils become more confident in collecting and handling data, beginning to appreciate interrelationships, and are able to present their findings in different ways, for example through graphs and charts. All pupils are encouraged to explain their thinking and the reasons for answers, and this makes a significant contribution to the development of their language skills. Teachers plan well for pupils to apply their skills in practical situations and try hard to stretch those pupils who show higher than average ability.
42. The good level of achievement is the direct result of high quality teaching. Lessons are planned from a good and still improving curriculum framework, which has been successfully adapted from the National Curriculum and is taking increasing account of the National Numeracy Strategy. Links to the termly topics are clearly identified, and planning aims to cover all aspects of the subject thoroughly across the year. The current topic of weather is, for example, concentrating on the handling of data and shapes.
43. A particularly good feature of teaching is the clear way in which ideas are presented. This enables pupils to understand what is being expected of them and engages them fully in the lesson activities. Teachers are very aware of the challenge of the language of the subject and constantly modify their approaches to meet the needs of all pupils. This clarity is achieved by good use of supporting ICT, and by the use of signing and symbols, alongside clear and simple vocabulary. The use of visual timetables, whilst being a necessary aid for pupils with autism to cope with anxiety provoking changes of activity, also helps all younger pupils to appreciate the passage of time and the patterns of the day. In all lessons, the very good focused help of support assistants and the advice and guidance of therapists on how best to make the subjects' language accessible combine to make a major contribution to pupils' achievements.

44. On a day-to-day basis, teachers know their pupils well and are thus able to set them work with an appropriate degree of challenge. The school currently uses a published scheme to structure its formal assessment of pupils and contribute to their reports and long term records. Work is ongoing to further develop assessment approaches, to better demonstrate progress over time and achievement in the full range of the subject's curriculum.
45. The subject leader has worked productively, with strong support from a senior management colleague, to develop her subject to its current quality across the school. She has a clear picture of further areas for improvement, particularly in relation to ensuring coverage of shape, space, measurement and data handling and the use of assessment to inform planning and target setting.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

46. Teachers plan for and take full account of many opportunities that occur to reinforce mathematics learning in other subjects, during registration periods and break/lunch-time activities. By the same token, care staff also explore the potential of all activities, particularly for reinforcing numeracy, for pupils in the residential setting.

### **SCIENCE**

*Four lessons were seen in science.*

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' achievements in science are good.
- Teachers help pupils to achieve well by good use of augmented communication to explain difficult concepts.
- Science lessons are made interesting as a result of the topic approach.
- The curriculum is well structured to meet the needs of all pupils, except for those pupils in Years 1 and 2, who have the most severe speech and language difficulties.
- Assessment arrangements are not fully effective.

### **Commentary**

47. The achievements of a few higher attaining pupils in Years 5 and 6 are very good, whilst those of a few lower attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2 are only satisfactory. This is because planned work is not entirely appropriate for the younger pupils who have the most severe speech and language difficulties, as it is difficult to explain the concepts to them. Overall, teachers approach the subject with enthusiasm and are determined to explain scientific concepts clearly to pupils. They do this very well by using simple language, supported by signing, symbols and pictures. They gain and hold pupils' attention in lessons by including practical activities and using interesting materials, such as melting chocolate to demonstrate changing properties of materials and balloon powered cars to demonstrate the properties of air. Younger pupils find out what clothes keep them dry by testing them with a watering can.
48. Very detailed records are kept of the pupils' language development in science lessons, as the activities are rightly used to promote improvement in this main area of learning difficulty. Records are also kept of individual achievement of the science learning objectives for each topic. However, because these are recorded by topic it is difficult to track progress over time in core scientific skills and concepts. This is balanced by the fact that the pupils' work folders show a high standard of work that has resulted from good teaching and it is clear that teachers know the pupils well.

49. Lessons are well planned and are carefully adapted from the National Curriculum to match the particular learning needs of the pupils. All aspects of science are included and pupils have opportunities to carry out scientific enquiries themselves. Lessons are made meaningful to the pupils by matching them to the school's rolling programme of topics, thus relating science to other subjects. Where appropriate, computer programmes are used to record findings and to write or draw about activities. The school is making appropriate plans to use a curriculum adapted from the Foundation Stage of learning for younger pupils, to enable them better to develop early concepts through practical play activities.
50. Very good leadership has raised the quality of the subject from satisfactory to good since the last inspection. This has been achieved through good attention to the curriculum and by collaborative planning by the staff. So far, the subject leader has not been able to bring about necessary improvements to teaching through observation of colleagues' lessons, but time has recently been arranged in the school timetable for this to begin. The subject is very well resourced.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

*Four lessons were seen in information and communication technology.*

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well because they are taught by staff who have good ICT skills.
- Good leadership has established and improved the subject since the previous inspection.
- A good scheme of work is in place but pupils do not always build up their skills systematically.
- The computers are becoming outdated and inadequate for the software used.

### **Commentary**

51. The range of pupils' abilities includes those, particularly in Years 1 and 2, who require support to gain access to a computer, through to those who competently use quite advanced computing skills such as cutting and pasting when editing documents and extracting information independently from the internet. Since the previous inspection, when the competency of staff with computers was barely satisfactory, there has been a good improvement in their skills and teaching is now good. This is mainly due to the school's commitment to staff training and development, but also to the good leadership and encouragement provided by the subject's leader. Staff help pupils to achieve new skills and understanding by providing very clear instructions and explanations and timely prompts to encourage them to work independently. Staff know the pupils very well and are able to plan lessons that match the pupils' needs. Formal assessment is satisfactory, though it is difficult to track pupils' progress through work samples and assessment records. This is because these are related more to the underlying topic than to specific ICT skills.
52. Pupils' achievements in ICT are good in all years. Virtually all pupils can access computer programmes. The majority of them can locate and open software programmes and can find and save their work in their own folders. Higher attaining pupils in Years 3 to 6 are capable of progressing independently, but have limited opportunities to do so. The computers in the dedicated suite are put to good use, mainly to complete tasks relating to other curriculum subjects. Although pupils demonstrate their ICT skills in these lessons, they are not always taught new skills in a systematic way. In most of the lessons seen, all pupils carried out the same subject-related task and those who were more adept with computers were not offered opportunities to extend their ICT capabilities. The teaching of new computer skills appears, therefore, to be incidental rather than planned. However, in one lesson, not in the computer

suite, pupils were systematically taught how to use a programmable toy, and the individual progress of each pupil was clearly visible.

53. There is now a satisfactory curriculum in place that complies with the requirements of the National Curriculum. It includes lessons on using computers to control other devices and encompasses the use of technology other than computers. Pupils make good use of other ICT equipment, such as digital cameras, camcorders, cassette recorders and a range of personal communication aids. Although resources for the subject are good, the specification of the computer hardware is now not adequate to meet the demands of the software the school wants to use. Good, well researched proposals to upgrade this provision are included in the current year of the school improvement plan.

### **Information and Communication technology across the Curriculum**

54. Information and communication technology is clearly seen by the school as an important and useful aid to learning in other subjects, particularly English. During the inspection, there was good evidence of this, though it took the form of subject-related tasks being taken by small groups to the computer suite, rather than computer use being integrated into subject lessons that take place in the pupils' classrooms. For example, pupils use drawing and word processing programmes to create pictures and writing relating to their science lesson from the previous day about classifying day and night-time animals.
55. Although this approach successfully promotes achievement in ICT and the other subject, and ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to use computers, it has limitations. It separates ICT use as a discrete rather than integrated event, and also takes up valuable computer suite time that could be used for systematically teaching ICT skills. Another important factor in this situation is balancing time for the more formal, didactic teaching approach in many lessons and providing opportunities for pupils to take turns using the one computer in each classroom.

### **HUMANITIES**

*No lessons were seen in geography or history, so no judgements were made about these subjects.*

#### **Geography**

56. Geography is a key element of the school's topic curriculum. The high value placed upon the subject is clear from the interesting displays of pupils' work in classrooms and around the school. Visits, visitors and whole-school events, such as the 'Seasons Day', when each classroom depicted a different season, make lessons more engaging.
57. There is a good curriculum in place that starts from the pupils' immediate environment then goes on to compare and contrast other countries and people. Pupils' work demonstrates their interest in the topics and their written work and drawings illustrate how the subject helps to develop their language skills.

#### **History**

58. There is a good history curriculum that forms part of the school's topic cycle. A range of interesting topics develops the pupils' awareness outwards from their immediate family histories. Younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 focus upon family birthdays, their own childhood and school events, while those in Years 3 to 6 progress to study periods in history, such as the Tudors.
59. Lessons are followed up productively by visits, for example to Hampton Court, whole school events and visitors. Pupils' interest in their lessons is clearly indicated in their written work and drawings, some of which feature in wall displays in classrooms and around the school.

## Religious education

*Whilst only two lessons were observed, other evidence, in the form of discussion with the subject leader and scrutiny of learning resources, pupils' past work and records supported an overall judgement.*

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress across the school
- Resources are good and the subject is taught with a multisensory approach, using simple language and real objects to make it as accessible as possible.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Assessment procedures need to be more consistent.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning needs to be established.

### Commentary

60. Since the last inspection, resources have been updated, expanded and organised. A programme for learning is now in place, and the subject leader has shared with her colleagues the knowledge and skills received during training. As a result, teachers' confidence and ability in teaching the subject have been improved and pupils' achievements are consequently much better.
61. In the lessons seen, storytelling and artefacts were used well to engage pupils, who showed a good level of interest and empathy. They were able to recall previous lessons and related topics. Evidence of previous work shows that pupils of higher ability can recall major events in the life of Christ, use the Bible as a source of reference and link creation stories to theories of evolution. They have good knowledge of the religious rituals surrounding major life events.
62. Visits to places of worship in the community help pupils to understand that religions other than Christianity have their own symbols and significant beliefs. Where possible, pupils' own faith settings are visited, which raises their self esteem by respecting and valuing their personal beliefs.
63. The subject leader has carried out well focused development work, but as with other subjects, religious education needs a more consistent approach to in class monitoring and assessment to help her to guide her colleagues in a more structured way.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

*Two lessons were seen in art and design, three in music and five in physical education. No judgement was made on provision in design and technology because only one lesson was seen. However, samples and photographs of pupils' work, records of their achievements and teachers' planning provided sufficient evidence to support appropriate comment.*

### Art and Design

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, ensuring that all pupils experience a wide range of activities and techniques that develop their visual and practical skills.

- Pupils' work is celebrated in displays around the school.
- There is a well structured curriculum and pupils' achievements are appropriately evaluated

## **Commentary**

64. Standards have improved since the previous inspection and pupils throughout the school produce good work. They benefit from teaching by a specialist teacher who works in a separate art room, where pupils have access to a range of opportunities, including a computer, digital camera and flat bed scanner. Pupils' work is celebrated in displays around the school and some of these pieces are group endeavours, based on the work of famous artists. Their work is also selected and stored in individual portfolios, which show the progress they make over time. Pupils use personal sketch books to develop their ideas and older pupils are very happy to share their contents, explaining how they have explored topics and where their observational skills have improved.
65. Teaching combines the focus of the current term's topic with the aim of exploring the potential of a wide spectrum of materials and processes, including painting, collage, print making digital media, textiles and sculpture. Pupils also investigate different kinds of art and design through visits and working with visiting artists. They experience the subject at their own level and it is made accessible through different starting points which aim always to relate to their own experiences and interests. The range of choice in the curriculum means that the teacher can find something to interest and engage every pupil, and she is helped considerably in this by the knowledge and understanding of the support assistants who accompany their pupils to the lessons. Art and design is also incorporated in other subjects across the curriculum wherever appropriate. Pupils' work is properly assessed and parents are kept well informed of the progress their children are making in the subject.

## **Design and technology**

66. Pupils achieve well across the school and develop a wide range of relevant skills. This is because the subject is planned imaginatively, with a sensible view to its importance in pupils' lives. Well structured exploration of the sort of technology that pupils encounter in their day-to-day lives gives them the confidence to experiment with the experiences they are offered in lessons. A comprehensive framework of units of study, carefully linked to each term's topic, enables pupils to think about the challenges posed; for example in designing and making a picture with a moving part, perhaps to be incorporated in a greeting card. This then opens up well supported opportunities to discuss and justify various approaches to problem solving. In the execution and evaluation of their work, pupils use a range of tools and materials, including food and textiles, often utilising ICT in the design process or producing lettering or labels where needed, using word processing. The same approaches were recently used in building a model of an ideal room at home.
67. During the inspection, pupils were designing and making biscuits as a gift for Easter, making a package for their gift and evaluating their work. Pupils made good progress in generating ideas as a group, deciding what additional ingredients they might want, for example to make them sweet or savoury, following instructions and learning how to handle food safely and hygienically. They benefited from working in the purpose built food technology room, using good quality learning resources and being taught by enthusiastic staff who understand the potential of the subject. Lessons were planned well and pupils' achievements were assessed carefully, ensuring not only that skills were learned but that the many links across the curriculum were recognised and evaluated. Clearly this subject provides yet another opportunity to encourage and nurture pupils' capability in communicating ideas confidently.
68. There has been good improvement in this subject since the previous inspection. The curriculum is now much more relevantly structured to identify and consolidate links across other subjects. Teachers are more confident in planning to use the full potential of learning opportunities to

explore the unique contribution they can make to pupils' learning, and pupils benefit accordingly, as seen in their enthusiastic response to lessons.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Delivery of music is characterised by high expectations of pupils' achievement.
- There are good links to other subjects of the curriculum.
- The subject makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### **Commentary**

69. The subject is taught by a music therapist, in a purpose built room. She has successfully adapted her approach to cover the requirements of the National Curriculum, thus ensuring that pupils experience the benefits of a therapeutic approach to the subject, whilst successfully learning the full range of musical skills. Her expectations of what pupils can achieve are very high and they consequently rise to the occasion and achieve very well. This was well illustrated in one particularly impressive lesson, when Year 5 and 6 pupils performed a proclamation for the arrival of King Henry on recorders and horns, Tudor style. They followed notation, took turns to conduct the musicians, performed a stately Tudor dance with good attention to rhythm, sang a Tudor hunting song and acted out a hunting scene to musical accompaniment in the style of a virginal. All this was accomplished with evident joy and good humour, and throughout the teacher encouraged and led them to improve their own performance and musical skills. The lesson was linked to a recent visit that the pupils had made to Hampton Court as they were studying the Tudors in history lessons. This was typical of the many ways that the subject is linked to or enhances learning in other subjects.
70. Music makes a special contribution to pupils' learning, giving them a very effective alternative means of expressing their emotions in the context of their language impairment.
71. Since the last inspection the music specialist has compiled a support package to enable non-specialists to teach lessons, if necessary in her absence. Resources are good and plans to add a variety of electronic instruments will increase the range of composing and performing opportunities.

## **Physical education**

Provision for physical education is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are very good and consequently pupils achieve very well.
- The high quality partnership between teachers, support assistants, occupational therapists and physiotherapists makes a significant contribution to the quality and impact of pupils' learning.
- Pupils have high self esteem. They work hard, with energy, enthusiasm and confidence.

### **Commentary**

72. Physical education activities are very carefully planned to provide all pupils with a wide range of opportunities to experience both challenge and success. The school recognises that 'many pupils have considerable difficulty in managing themselves and their bodies within a variety of movement situations'. Teachers therefore seek, and are provided with, well focused advice and



support from the very able therapists who work with them. Lessons are, consequently, very well structured to respond sensitively to pupils' individual and diverse learning needs. Extremely effective intensive individual or small group work is provided by therapists to help pupils with specific difficulties. Detailed records, based on rigorous assessment, show that many pupils make significant progress in developing their co-ordination and mobility skills; and this has many other benefits across the curriculum.

73. Pupils participate in very diverse activities across the year. They have regular gymnastics, games and dance lessons in the gym, when they learn to work collaboratively with their peers and approach movement creatively. They have weekly sessions in the school's own swimming pool, where they work very successfully towards ASA recognised awards or personal records and certificates of achievement. Many achieve national standards. They take part in athletics throughout the summer in the attractive grounds, achieving very well in the school's structured awards scheme, which has been very thoughtfully adapted from a national programme. Those pupils who show interest or aptitude in particular sports, like football, are supported very well to develop them further, sometimes involving them in with local junior school children. There are occasional opportunities to participate in high quality outdoor and adventurous activities, usually through day and residential trips. Throughout all this diverse and very productive activity, classroom support staff provide empathetic help and encouragement, often applying their considerable personal skills, interests and enthusiasm. This provides a perfect illustration of the benefits of the collaborative nature of the school's approach.
74. Provision and standards in the subject have improved very significantly since the previous inspection, because it has been very well led and all staff have become skilled and confident in recognising its considerable potential to help the 'whole child' to develop. Pupils respond extremely positively to everyone's positive 'can do' approach and consequently become capable and happy learners.

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

*Three lessons were seen in personal, social and health education and citizenship.*

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Personal, social and health education has a weekly timetabled slot for each class, facilitating good coverage of the subject.
- Curriculum enrichment opportunities contribute to pupils' achievement.
- The subject leader gives good support to colleagues.
- Planning for the subject is not always as comprehensive as it could be.

### **Commentary**

75. Lessons are based on a programme for learning derived from QCA recommendations and delivered in accordance with pupils' levels of understanding. For younger pupils, lessons might take the form of relatively informal opportunities to play, with a structure agreed together beforehand. Other approaches include language and interaction development throughout the school, social use of language groups, co-operation to devise class rules and many and varied reward systems used to encourage good social behaviour and independence. Consistent and positive reinforcement ensures that pupils make good progress in the subject.
76. Pupils enjoy many opportunities for curriculum enrichment, sometimes in conjunction with a local mainstream school and these help to develop pupils' interests and provide a forum for practising social skills in a different context.

77. The subject leader provides good support for colleagues by producing a regular newsletter with suggestions of useful resources, web-sites and links to topics. This helps to raise the profile of personal, social and health education and provides sources of ideas to aid planning.
78. Personal development is fostered through the many opportunities pupils have to contribute positively to whole-school organisation and the wider world through fund-raising, performing in public, taking responsibility for regular tasks in the dining room, and through their involvement in personal target setting, especially in relation to their behaviour. School assemblies also provide a good opportunity for pupils to develop a personal moral code through listening to and thinking about well chosen stories. The next step, already planned by the school, is for pupils to have a more formal voice in the school's arrangements through membership of a School Council.
79. Teachers do not always ensure that opportunities to contribute to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and citizenship are fully identified and exploited when planning lessons for the subject.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
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	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
<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	3
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).*