

INSPECTION REPORT

ROWAN GATE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Wellingborough

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 131079

Headteacher: Mrs Faith Sutton

Lead inspector: Mr Alan Lemon

Dates of inspection: 4th – 7th May 2004

Inspection number: 258987

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	78
School address:	Finedon Road Wellingborough Northamptonshire
Postcode:	NN8 4NS
Telephone number:	01933 304970
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Gillian Walton
Date of previous inspection:	1 June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Rowan Gate Primary School is a special school for boys and girls between the age of three and eleven. There are 77 pupils on roll and twice as many boys as girls. Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds, some less privileged than others. Few pupils arrive or leave school other than at the usual time. Most are from homes where English is the main language spoken but English is not the first language of two pupils. Pupils are by majority white British, and six are minority ethnic pupils.

Pupils all have a Statements of Special Educational Need and the school caters for a wide variety of needs. The largest group are those with moderate learning difficulties although the number currently being admitted is set to decline sharply as these pupils are found places in mainstream schools. The two next most significant groups are pupils with severe learning difficulties and those with autism. Autistic pupils may also have moderate or severe learning difficulties. There are small numbers of pupils whose principal needs are either profound and multiple learning difficulties, speech and communication difficulties or sensory impairments.

As the number of pupils on roll is falling, the school is seeking to federate with a similar special school catering for secondary age pupils in the local authority. There has been a long tradition of co-operation with mainstream schools and nurseries on providing opportunities for pupils to integrate or return to mainstream schools. More recently, a Nurture Group was established in the school to provide support to a small number of pupils from the adjoining mainstream primary school whose social and behavioural difficulties prevent them and others from learning. The school achieved a Healthy Schools Award in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20165	Alan Lemon	Lead inspector	Science Information and communication technology Art and design
9710	Rosie Burgess	Lay inspector	
19386	Trevor Watts	Team inspector	Foundation Stage English Design and technology Music
7465	Richard Brent	Team inspector	Personal, social and health education Geography History Special educational needs
2338	Lynn Lewis	Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education Religious education English as an additional language

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Rowan Gate is an effective school with many very good features. Strong leadership has brought much good improvement, which has raised the standards pupils achieve. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils' special educational needs are being well met and they achieve consistently well. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The governors provide very good support and have taken effective steps with the headteacher and staff to ensure that the school will have a viable and secure future despite the decline in pupil numbers.
- Very good leadership throughout the school ensures all the provision made for pupils is developing consistently and effectively, particularly key areas of learning such as communication, personal development and information and communication technology (ICT).
- There is very good provision for teaching communication skills, which leads to children at the Foundation Stage and pupils throughout the school achieving very well in language and communication.
- There is very good achievement at the Foundation Stage and throughout the rest of the school in personal and social development, leading to very good attitudes, behaviour and attendance.
- Teachers and their assistants have developed very good approaches with autistic pupils, which results in pupils managing their autism and learning very effectively.
- The systematic monitoring and evaluation of all the school's work is very good, especially the rigorous analysis of pupils' performance.
- While pupils' achievement in writing is satisfactory, the provision for them to write more and to raise the standards of their writing is not as good as for the other aspects of literacy.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

The school's improvement since it was last inspected in 1998 is good. The progress on dealing with all the key issues identified then has been good, and the success the school has experienced in doing so underpins the many strengths that currently exist in its educational provision and pupils' achievement. The quality of teaching and learning in all subjects has improved and pupils achieve more as a result. They have better attitudes to learning, their attendance has improved and high standards have been maintained in pupils' personal and social development. Improvement is to be found in nearly every aspect of the school's work as a consequence of the increased effectiveness of leadership and management throughout the school.

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	Good	Good
Year 6	Good	Good

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

Achievement is good throughout the school. Achievement is good in Years 1 and 6 despite the fact that standards are always below average as a result of pupils' learning difficulties. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well and very well in their language, literacy and communication skills and in personal, social and emotion development. However, due to their special educational needs they will not attain the goals expected to be reached by the end of Reception. Communication by various means is taught very effectively to pupils in Years 1 to 6 who achieve very well speaking and listening or using signs, symbols or communication aids. Pupils achieve well in reading but because the opportunities for writing are fewer, achievement is just satisfactory. There is good achievement in

mathematics, science and ICT. As a result of very good teaching in religious education, pupils achieve very well.

Pupils' personal qualities are very good and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils respond very well to the high expectations made of them, and their attendance is very good. Their relationships with, and behaviour towards, staff and each other are very good. As a result, their attitudes to school and learning are very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is very well planned both in relation to what pupils are capable of and in consideration of their learning difficulties. The good assessments of pupils' progress are used very well in deciding the focus of lessons. Pupils' communication skills are a constant focus of teaching and pupils learn to communicate very well. Teachers and their assistants often choose activities, and use the very good resources available, to make lessons lively and interesting for pupils; as a result, pupils tackle challenges well and enjoy learning. The curriculum is planned well and, because of very good leadership, is being continuously developed. Learning opportunities are greatly enriched by a busy programme of educational visits. All pupils are given very good support and are cared for very well; they are included effectively in the life of the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher sets high expectations and gives a clear direction to the school's development. All staff are very well motivated and provide very effective leadership in areas where they have responsibilities. Monitoring and evaluation are rigorous and play a key part in the school's decisions on its development priorities. The governing body plays a very effective role in supporting and directing the school and, fastidious in managing all of their responsibilities, they meet all their statutory obligations.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very satisfied with the school. Pupils enjoy being at this school and find their work challenging and interesting. They believe they are looked after well and that they are listened to and trusted.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

To improve even more the school should:

- Address the issues that take away from good learning such as when teaching approaches are ineffective in sustaining pupils' interest and attention or where expertise in using ICT is not sufficient.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Standards are below and often well below those expected of pupils of the same age because of pupils' special educational needs. Overall, however, achievement is good. Children at the Foundation Stage generally achieve well and very well in some areas of learning. All pupils achieve well in English, mathematics and science. Achievement is very good in religious education.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is much good achievement by all pupils across the curriculum as a result of the strong support they are given by teachers and their assistants.
- The school's rigorous analysis of every pupil's performance and its use to plan for every pupil and to develop educational provision support improving achievement.
- The close attention paid to pupils communicating effectively is resulting in very good achievement in this aspect of learning, particularly for pupils with autism.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics and science is supported effectively by well-planned practical work.
- Leadership and new resources have brought an improvement in pupils' achievement in ICT.

Commentary

1. There is considerable consistency in pupils achieving well across the curriculum, whatever their special educational needs or background. This is a result of generally effective teaching and good learning. The large majority of lessons are characterised by lively, interesting and challenging work, which is very well planned to include all pupils in an appropriate level of learning. A clever balance is very often reached between the pursuit of learning objectives for the subject and targets concerned with pupils' special educational needs. Teachers and their assistants use their substantial knowledge of pupils' needs and the strong relationships with them to elicit very positive attitudes. As a result, all pupils approach their lessons showing interest and a willingness to invest much effort in achieving their objectives. While the overall quality of teaching and learning is the same as it was reported by the last inspection, there is a good improvement in how well pupils achieve because the school has made significant headway on developing its curriculum and assessment. There are now no areas of unsatisfactory achievement and where this was the case at the time of the last inspection it was explained by weaknesses in the planning of what was taught to pupils.
2. The school's assessment of pupils' progress gives it a sharper view of their achievement. Statistics are collected on pupils' performance at regular intervals and this data is analysed rigorously to mathematically determine the value added to every pupil's achievement. Information has been built up over the past four years which puts the school in a strong position to diagnose under-performance and explain the areas where pupils perform better than expected. The data usefully reveals areas of the curriculum that need development – currently, for example, improving the opportunities for pupils' writing – and this has become a priority for the school. Pupils' achievement in writing is satisfactory but is not as good as it is in speaking and listening or in reading. The school has also set out to raise standards in pupils' self-initiated communication as the next logical step in improving their already very good achievement in speaking and listening. This analysis of pupils' performance, coupled with initiatives to strengthen educational provision, leaves the school well placed to raise standards. However, because the profile of pupils' attainment on entry has been changing significantly in the past few years, indications from data of a trend of rising attainment over time are unreliable.

3. In English, in response to the prevalent need for many pupils to acquire an appropriate means of communication because of their difficulties with language, considerable stress has been placed on developing suitable provision. Communicating plays an important part in English lessons and is promoted effectively in the lessons of other subjects. As a result, achievement is very good. Pupils, if they are not able to develop spoken language, use signs, symbols and communication aids very effectively. Many pupils have achieved much skill in exchanging symbols for their choice of drink and snack at break times. They go on, by combining written words and symbols, to express themselves in simple sentences.
4. The priority is the same for children at the Foundation Stage who, because provision is very good, achieve very well in communication, language and literacy. The provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is also very good and their achievement in independence, interacting and working with others is very good.
5. In communication, personal, social and emotional development, pupils with autism achieve very well as a result of the very good provision made for them throughout the school. Teachers and classroom assistants are expert in interacting with autistic pupils and manage their behaviour consistently and very effectively. These pupils have a good understanding of routines and have developed good work habits, which all leads to effective learning. To this end they use signs and symbols extremely effectively. In terms of starting and finishing work, co-operating in groups and coping with the unfamiliar, autistic pupils are achieving very well. All pupils achieve well in personal, social and health education as a result of well-planned and taught lessons. Their work is relevant and sharply focused on independence and self-assurance, which amounts to a good preparation for when pupils eventually change schools. Pupils achieve very well in religious education as a result of the very good planning in lessons that leads to pupils gaining an understanding of religious issues and world faiths.
6. Good achievement in mathematics is brought about largely by well-planned activities, particularly through good adaptations of the numeracy strategy in order to meet pupils' needs. An emphasis on practical challenges in mathematics and science stimulates greater interest among pupils and leads to them achieving well. In science, the best organised experiments leave it very much to pupils' own initiative and these experiments make demands of them to think systematically and to carefully apply scientific methods in order to reach results.
7. Achievement in ICT is good. It has improved from the time it was last inspected as a result of its development being strongly led and a considerable investment in new resources. A programme of well-targeted training has improved the staffs' skills and confidence in using new technology and ICT is used well across the curriculum. Pupils are very familiar with the touch-sensitive features of interactive whiteboards and use these effectively in a range of whole-class and small group learning opportunities, for example playing counting games in mathematics lessons.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attitudes and behaviour, including the incidence of exclusions, are very good. Pupils' personal development is good, with very good social development. Attendance is very good and punctuality is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good behaviour management by staff means that lessons are not disrupted by pupils with challenging behaviour.
- Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their social skills.
- Periods for personal development are very well used to encourage very good social interaction between pupils, resulting in very good relationships between groups of pupils and between pupils and staff.

- Many pupils are willing to take responsibility for their own learning and as part of the school community.
- Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Commentary

8. Pupils are happy at school and enjoy their lessons. Clear and consistent procedures help pupils to establish good work and class routines. When pupils misbehave, staff deal with the situation quickly and gently and pupils respond immediately, showing a good understanding of right and wrong and of the need for rules. Individual instances of inappropriate play which affects others are infrequent and the school is free from bullying and other forms of harassment. A positive atmosphere of racial harmony prevails. Overall, this is an improvement on the good standards found at the time of the last inspection.
9. Pupils enjoy the company of each other. The good role models provided by staff promote very good relationships; pupils are caring and considerate towards each other. A good family atmosphere prevails during snack times, when pupils sit around the tables for a drink. At lunchtimes, they act responsibly and those who can help with the serving of food and drink and clearing tables afterwards, often offering to do so. At other times they carry out their allotted duties well, such as taking registers to the office.
10. Pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning. Well-chosen resources engage and stimulate the interest of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, who respond well to a range of sounds and textures, linked to animals and letters of the alphabet. Older pupils listen attentively, and participate very well in a vigorous discussion about the order of words in a dictionary, for example, placing 'plant' before 'pod'. Most pupils remain fully involved in their lessons as result of good teaching and support. Autistic pupils make good spontaneous use of the Picture Exchange Communication System using symbols to communicate their needs and ideas. These pupils respond well when given opportunities to make choices, for example which toy to play with or which activity to engage in during a physical education lesson.
11. Staff create many opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness of wider things in life, for example of beauty, music and art. Pupils' good development is much helped in school by celebrations of birthdays and festivals, saying a prayer at lunchtime, the enthusiastic choir, and joyful assemblies that have good moments for reflection, as well as for singing.
12. Pupils develop a good sense of culture, such as some of the differences and similarities both locally and far away, whether now or in the past. Their cultural awareness is raised in many lessons, especially in religious education, but also in history, geography, art and music. Staff take pupils on visits to places of interest for their own local culture and history and to places of worship for Christianity and other faiths.
13. Good moral awareness is built up by staff taking many opportunities to demonstrate right from wrong. Pupils know what the rules are in class, and they learn to follow them well. Discussions in class, the examples that staff set, and the whole school ethos ensure that pupils learn how they should behave.
14. Pupils enjoy a very good sense of belonging to the school community. Their social development is very well nurtured by occasions such as the assemblies and the choir, in which they sing with enthusiasm together, applaud each other's successes, and demonstrate what they have learned to the rest of the school. Pupils have many opportunities to relate to each other every day, to work alongside each other, to have lunch together, and to play together. They become very friendly and eager young members of society.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	6.7%

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1%

15. Attendance is very good and well above that seen in similar schools. However, punctuality is only satisfactory. Due to difficulties in transporting pupils to school on time they may arrive at any time during the first session of the day. Well-planned individual activities, for example in number work, reinforce learning for those who arrive promptly, but because their transport arrives late a number of pupils miss these opportunities. There have been no exclusions in the last school year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. The breadth of learning opportunities for all pupils is good and these are very well enriched with a substantial programme of educational visits in a number of subjects. Overall, in the areas of learning at the Foundation Stage and in the subjects of the curriculum, teaching and learning are good. All pupils are very well cared for and are given very good support and guidance on personal and educational matters.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, throughout the school. The assessment of pupils' progress is done well and the information gained from assessments is used very effectively by teachers to plan their lessons.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very effective planning and the use of good assessment in teaching support effective learning.
- The lively and interesting approaches used in most lessons and the very good relationships between adults and pupils lead to them learning well.
- Very good attention to pupils' learning to communicate effectively ensures they all achieve very well in this key area of learning.
- Pupils with autism achieve very well in major aspects of their development as a result of the very good expertise of their teachers and classroom assistants.
- The quality of learning is occasionally reduced by an ill-considered approach to teaching or by a lack of expertise.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 52 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	16 (31%)	28 (54%)	8 (15%)	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 where 30 or more lessons are seen.

16. The good overall quality of teaching and learning has been maintained since the last inspection. However, as teaching and learning in a good number of subjects are now better than reported in the last inspection, improvement in teaching and learning is good.

17. Overall, the quality of teachers' planning for lessons is very good. This is because what they intend teaching in every lesson is clearly defined by well-developed schemes of what pupils are taught in each subject. The thorough assessments of what pupils are learning over time are used very effectively by teachers. This ensures the objectives they set for each lesson builds on what pupils have already learnt and are matched to every pupil's needs. As a result, the learning objectives for each lesson are clear and they are kept at the forefront of the activities pupils are asked to do. To achieve this, as a matter of good practice, teachers often set out their objectives written large on the board. When appropriate, they share these with pupils at the beginning of lessons and, at the finish, they return to them to weigh up with pupils how well each objective has been achieved. For many pupils this gives them a good understanding of their progress and what they can do to achieve more.
18. The assessment of pupils' progress is good and this has improved well since the last inspection. The school has worked extremely hard and successfully to develop its means of assessing pupils. It has dealt successfully with the considerable challenge of designing a procedure that all teachers can use with consistency and that accommodates the very wide range of attainment of its pupils. This has resulted in the school's 'ladders of progression', which in considerable detail describes the small steps of progress pupils of all ages and special educational needs are expected to make. The 'ladders' encompass the earliest indicators of progress right up to the types of progress being made by pupils attaining at a level appropriate for their age. As a result, at the outset each pupil is matched to the correct place on the 'ladder' from where his or her progress can be recorded and evaluated. There are 'ladders of progression' for every subject and each area of learning, such as personal development.
19. The many good and very good lessons seen were lively, entertaining events that fully captured pupils' interest. The successful development of a strategy for teaching numeracy in mathematics and in the lessons of other subjects, for example, has given rise to a variety of stimulating and interesting work. Careful thought is given to the resources for lessons and these are used very well to support learning. In particular, the arrival of interactive whiteboards is beginning to provide exciting ways of introducing and participating in activities. Teaching in science has improved because of the determined effort to teach using a practical an approach to activities. This has made learning much more accessible for all pupils. Their learning is also enriched by the many opportunities for pupils to go out and see things of scientific interest first-hand. Going out to experience places and events in this way is a prominent feature, contributing to pupils' learning well in several subjects. In science, there are a growing number of well-planned and imaginative investigations being devised for pupils to carry out by themselves. In doing so, pupils learn to predict, test and analyse results.
20. Contributing to this success is the fact that teachers and their assistants know pupils very well. They have formed very good relationships with them and understand their particular special educational needs. In nearly all cases, knowledge of pupils is used very well to decide the best strategies for motivating them and this elicits positive responses to the high expectations set in lesson activities. Invariably, as a result of what is established with adults, pupils arrive to begin work in a very positive frame of mind. Teachers and their assistants possess good expertise relating to the wide range of pupils' special educational needs. In supplementing this, good use is made of specialist expertise available to the school for pupils' additional needs such as sensory impairments.
21. The school places a considerable priority on teaching pupils to communicate by whatever means is accessible to them, knowing this is a key to further learning. Teachers and their assistants have developed very good levels of skill in order that pupils learn to communicate effectively. At the Foundation Stage, children's communication skills are a constant focus of attention whatever area of learning is the focus. In English, teachers pay particular attention to how well pupils are concentrating on communicating effectively and thus maintain high expectations that good skills are learnt. Speaking and listening and communicating through signs, symbols and other means are promoted very well throughout the school in every subject. Pupils who are the most able to communicate are encouraged to interact with the least able in

order to urge them on. Many pupils have learnt the very effective use of symbols to make choices and to combine symbols and words as sentences that they read and understand.

22. The expertise in teaching pupils with autism is very good. This had been built up through training in specialist approaches and the successful adaptation of well-trying techniques to the needs of the autistic pupils. Teachers and their assistants have refined ways of working with these pupils and achieve exceptional consistency in the expectations they have of each pupil and in the management of their behaviour. As a result, autistic pupils have learnt and follow the routines of work and break times. This has led to them learning to work as a group and to leave the familiar surrounds of their classroom space and work outside. Both these achievements make a significant contribution to their capacity to learn. In science, for example, some pupils are making links between seeds being put into soil and plants growing.
23. In the few lessons where teaching was satisfactory, it was no better because in some the approach to the topic was not geared well to include all pupils. As the capabilities of most groups vary widely, in these instances questioning helped higher attaining pupils only and others gradually lost track of the discussion and their concentration waned. Also, teacher-led discussions in a few lessons, because they were not well planned, went on too long, were repetitive and failed to sustain a good level of interest and attention in pupils. At times, teachers and assistants showed a lack of confidence and expertise in using computers and the interactive whiteboard. In one instance, it was the choice of a program that was too difficult for pupils to operate; in another, the very cramped space containing two computers resulted in some of the pupils sharing them not getting sufficient access and not completing the work planned. In other lessons the lack of technical know-how in operating equipment meant the intended learning objectives were not achieved.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good. Pupils also learn and achieve well because of both the very good range of activities that they have access to during and after school and the very good accommodation and resources.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum plans provide good guidance for teachers, who use them well to prepare lessons.
- There is a very good curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage that helps them make sense of their learning.
- Pupils achieve well because of the good provision for activities to support the creative, aesthetic, practical and physical aspects of the curriculum.
- There is good provision for those pupils with hearing and visual impairment and additional needs.
- Overall accommodation and resources are very good and contribute to pupils' achievement.

Commentary

24. The headteacher and governors recognise the importance of providing pupils with a range of experiences and opportunities to support their learning and motivate them to achieve well. Consequently, the curriculum covers the requirements of the National Curriculum, including the provision for religious education and collective worship. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection as the school has evaluated its curriculum and taken steps to improve it. Children at the Foundation Stage enjoy a very good curriculum, which is appropriate and relevant and supports their learning well. The curriculum is also enriched in ways that successfully consolidate the good learning taking place in the classroom.
25. Pupils' understanding in specific subjects is helped by a wide range of visits and visitors, for example theatre, history and music groups. Teachers and support staff plan a very wide range

of clubs both at lunchtime and after school and there are very good opportunities for pupils to take part in both residential and day trips to places such as France, Grafham Water and Caistor. Parents and family often join them, and the school has strong partnerships with parents and the community within its curricular provision. These experiences stimulate, encourage and challenge the pupils to look outwards from the school and discover more about themselves and the world around them. Pupils of all ages benefit from the extensive and exciting range of sporting and other activities and they are regularly involved in very good quality creative experiences, including interesting physical education lessons at a local prison. Good examples were seen where pupils showed that they understood the need for rules and that winning is not the only consideration. This very wide range of opportunities makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievement and to their personal development.

26. National subject guidance is reflected well in subject plans and represents a good improvement since the last inspection. Teachers organise appropriate learning opportunities by adapting curriculum materials to reflect both the needs and the abilities of the pupils in their class. In this way, all are included very well in lessons and progress is good because activities are relevant. The overall curriculum is planned well to ensure smooth transitions at the end of Reception and Year 2. Pupils also achieve well in other subjects as a result of good attention being paid to the development of their skills in communication, literacy, numeracy and ICT.
27. Accommodation and resources are very good and benefit both pupils' achievement and the opportunities they are given. The school has a good number of teachers and support staff with a corresponding breadth of expertise and qualities which are helping to move the school forward. There are many attractive and informative displays which celebrate the pupils' achievements and show that the school is a very positive learning environment.

Care, guidance and support

The procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very good. The support, advice and guidance for pupils, based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development, are very good. The extent to which the school seeks to involve pupils in its work and development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils have a good and trusting relationship with adults in the school.
- Induction arrangements for children joining the nursery are excellent and very good for other pupils.
- Staff have a very good understanding of individual pupils' needs and plan well to meet them.
- Pupils work in a very safe and secure environment.
- Pupils' progress is monitored very well.

Commentary

28. The high standards found at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. The school has a happy, family atmosphere in which all pupils, whatever their individual need, can establish a trusting relationship with at least one adult. Child protection arrangements are good, although there are no formal systems in place to ensure that all staff are regularly reminded of their responsibilities in this area. Good attention is paid to all aspects of health and safety and pupils work and play in a safe and secure environment. Full risk assessments are made before any visit outside school is undertaken.
29. The families of pupils joining the school have ample opportunities to visit the school, to meet the staff and to discuss the individual needs of their child. Many of those joining the nursery have had opportunities to participate in a weekly pre-school group. In addition, staff visit families at home so that a good knowledge of the child's home circumstances is gained. Pre-school children clearly enjoy the opportunity of coming into school, and look forward to meeting other

children and using the school's facilities. Their parents, too, appreciate the opportunity to meet other parents and to become familiar with the school and its staff.

30. Pupils' individual needs are catered for well, in line with their Statements and with their education plans. Teachers and support staff provide a high level of care, so that educational as well as personal and medical needs are met. Specialist support is provided by outside agencies as necessary. The school promotes children's health well and has gained a bronze award for healthy schools. Identified pupils have been encouraged to increase their fitness levels through a well-planned programme of Fitness for Fun.
31. Teachers and support staff keep careful records of pupils' progress. Educational progress is measured against 'ladders of progression' and National Curriculum levels as appropriate. Personal development is monitored and many individual successes are measured in terms of social, behavioural or personal milestones. All pupils have an Annual Review of their progress against targets set in their individual educational plan. Pupils are fully involved in setting their own targets and have opportunities to express their views about how they are doing. There is no school council to enable pupils to be more involved more actively in school developments.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is very good and has improved well. The quality of links with the local community and with other schools and colleges is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are provided with very good information about the school and their children's progress.
- Parents are very supportive of the school, especially through the Friends' Association.
- The local community is used well to enrich learning and there is very strong support from the community.
- Links with local schools are very strong and those with secondary schools help pupils transfer smoothly into the next phase of education.

Commentary

32. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are well written, informative and meet statutory requirements. Information about the school and events is displayed around the school and parents and carers are welcome to meet staff at the start and end of the school day. Parents are provided with clear reports of their children's progress in each subject, and in their personal development. Statements are reviewed with parents annually and targets are set to achieve within their individual education plan. The majority of parents attend consultation evenings with staff and those who do not, or cannot, are contacted by their child's teachers. Teachers communicate regularly with parents through the home-school contact books. Workshops have been held for parents on science and Makaton signing and parents are welcomed at sports day. A group of parents were interviewed about their views of the school as part of the development of Primary Effective Early Learning (PEEL).
33. Parents support the work of the school through an active Friends' Association, which holds fundraising and social events for families. Parents' funds enabled a complete refurbishment of the sensory room to be undertaken, have contributed to the running of the school minibus and provided presents for each child at the Christmas party. Most parents who completed a questionnaire or attended the pre-inspection meeting expressed satisfaction with all aspects of the school. A few had some concern about behaviour and bullying, but the inspection team found that instances of inappropriate behaviour are handled sensitively and well, and that parents' concerns about bullying were unfounded. Most parents respond to teachers' comments in the home-school contact books and enter comments in pupils' reading records

when appropriate. Concerts, assemblies and parents' evenings are well attended. A number of parents give direct help with swimming, and accompany out-of-school trips.

34. Pupils are given a lot of opportunities to experience activities and places of interests outside school. These include visits to museums, art galleries, gardens, farms and the zoo. The local community is used well for visits to churches and the Hindu temple and for geography field trips. Substantial sponsorship was raised from members of the local community to enable a group of pupils and their families to visit Euro Disney last year. A group of pupils regularly visit the local prison for physical education. The local police and fire services help the school to teach aspects of personal safety and drugs awareness.
35. Very good links have been established with a number of infant and junior schools. A small group of infant pupils with emotional and behavioural problems are taught and supported in the school's Nurture Group by a specialist teacher, which is effectively helping them to overcome barriers to learning. Pupils from the adjacent infant school join Rowan Gate pupils for their lunch in the school hall and this is developing well as a regular social occasion for all pupils. Links with secondary schools ensure that pupils' transfer from Year 6 to the next stage of education is smooth, with opportunities to visit their preferred school. Physical education lessons are held jointly with one of the schools and the school provides placements for secondary pupils and college students for their community service and work experience.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The governance, the leadership and the management of the school are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is very effective at all levels in the school.
- Monitoring and evaluation are central to the school's operation and are done thoroughly.
- Governors make very good use of their range of expertise and experience to support and guide the school.

Commentary

36. Leadership and management have improved and are even more effective than at the time of the last inspection. All of the work of the school is shaped by the headteacher's high expectations for achieving high standards, particularly in meeting the wide range of pupils' special educational needs. This creates a very strong resolve in the leadership provided by many staff discharging their responsibilities, who operate with a very clear vision and direction. As a result, high standards are achieved in the provision for children at the Foundation Stage and for pupils with autism. Also, the provision to teach pupils to communicate and to promote their personal development is treated as very important areas of learning. The leadership of these is strong and, as a consequence, in them pupils achieve very well.
37. The leadership given to the areas of learning and subjects of the curriculum is very good, overall. This has produced good improvements in provision across the curriculum, especially in teaching and learning. The teachers involved act with a very clear direction and are a positive influence on colleagues. Although a temporary teacher is in charge of the Foundation Stage, leadership is unaffected, which is a measure of how assured the operation of the school is.
38. The school plans systematically for development and applies rigour to monitoring its provision with consistent effectiveness at all levels of management. However, monitoring and evaluation are set to become even sharper with the adoption and implementation of an effective self-evaluation scheme. As co-ordinators are actively involved in looking at the quality of their colleagues' planning for their subjects and observing them teaching, lesson organisation and learning are improved. The principles of best value are well applied to investment in

developments, particularly in how they improve pupils' achievements. The benefits to pupils, for example, of the significant amount of expenditure on ICT resources are being carefully assessed by the headteacher systematically observing their use in lessons. The benefits to staff of the training accompanying this new equipment will be a subsequent focus.

39. Governors are very effective in their involvement in, and support of, the school. They have a high level of commitment to its well-being and success. This is achieved by the particularly good experience and expertise they bring to governance, which are shared most positively with the school. Exceptionally, a governor takes a leading role in analysing the school's pupil performance data and reports findings to governors and the school. The exercise is undertaken in partnership with the assistant headteacher responsible for collecting the data. Besides governors gaining a thorough insight into the school's work from this detailed assessment of pupils' progress, it brings about a meaningful interaction between governors and the school. This is made more effective by the annual reports to governors written by co-ordinators on developments in their subject areas. In financial management and planning, the governors play an equally leading role. The chair of the finance committee, with much expertise in relation to education finance, has a very detailed picture of the school's budget and projections of income and expenditure in future years. As a result, governors and the school work very closely together in deciding financial strategies and spending priorities. As far as is feasible for the school and governors, the principles of best value are applied in financial decision making and in the process of spending. As numbers of new admissions to the school are projected to fall steeply next year and the following year with a resultant reduction in income, a strategy has been worked out to ensure a balanced budget is achieved, avoiding diminution in the quality of provision or standards.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,164,710	Balance from previous year	187,544
Total expenditure	973,441	Balance carried forward to the next	191,268
Expenditure per pupil	12,400		

40. The surplus balance, which amounts to nearly 17 per cent of the total budget, contains capital financing representing over three per cent of this, which is reserved for planned building repairs. A further seven per cent is accounted for by an advanced payment for developing the Nurture Group. The remainder of surplus funds, which are within an acceptable limit, are an intended contingency in relation to support the school in the next two years.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's achievements are good or better in all the areas of learning.
- The teaching is good, and often very good.
- The provision is very well led and organised.

Commentary

(There were too few pupils to report on the Foundation Stage in full.)

41. There has been a good improvement in provision at the Foundation Stage compared with that reported in the previous inspection. When children are first admitted their skills are at a very low level in all areas of their development. However, effective teaching addresses the most important areas very well. As a result, children make very good progress in their social and personal development, in their language and communication skills, and in their physical development. In the areas of creative development, knowledge of the world, and mathematical awareness, children make good progress. All children, whether they are higher attaining or have profound and multiple learning difficulties, make at least good progress. The provision for the lowest attaining children is very good, ensuring they have very good access to all the activities on offer. A very good curriculum is provided with all areas of learning well covered. This includes religious education as part of children's knowledge of the world.
42. The good teaching stems from lessons that are very well planned. Lessons have a very good structure, with clear objectives for each activity. Aims for social and communication skills are included in all lessons, whatever the central aim of the lesson. The teacher and support staff work very well together as a team; they know the children well, and build up very positive relationships with them. Lessons are exciting, filled with encouragement to learn, and highly motivating for children.
43. The very good leadership and organisation are continuing very well with the temporary teacher during the absence of the permanent teacher. Long-term planning is very good; the accommodation is good and staff have an extremely good range of resources to enliven activities, which they use very well in many lessons. Children have very positive and varied learning experiences each day, whether they are the nursery children attending each morning or children in their Reception year who attend school for the whole day.
44. Children's introduction to the school when they are first admitted is excellent, very often through the pre-school groups that come into the school each week. Parents and children join in with activities and talk to staff. Home visits and discussions help in getting a good picture of new children. Staff and parents carry out careful observations during the first weeks, and this forms the basis of the early teaching. This assessment continues very well throughout the children's time in the unit, with following lessons being based very well on what staff have observed. When children are ready to transfer they have had very good preparation for their entry into the main school. They have been attending full time for about a year, spending the afternoons in the next class up. Staff discuss each child's needs and their progress so far, and plan lessons accordingly.
45. Children achieve very well in their **personal, social and emotional** skills and their **language and communication** skills because staff are consistent in planning all lessons well and this

encourages learning in these areas. They see these areas as vital to all other learning, and so they have very high expectations that children will learn to sit together, will share things with each other, will pay attention and will listen. They create many opportunities for children to listen; they use signing very well when necessary to make themselves more easily understood by children; and they give every encouragement for children to respond with speech or signs. Staff also use symbols, such as for the day's activities on a picture timetable, and use 'objects of reference' to give children a real item to represent an activity (such as a towel to indicate swimming). Children have many activities in which they work alongside each other, have lunch and snacks together, play together and share things. They join the main classes of the school for activities such as the choir, and assemblies, which they enjoy very much, and are helped to feel part of the whole school community. Staff use the resources very imaginatively, as in a series of lessons about the carnival of the animals, with big picture cards, soft toys that make sounds, and items that the children made themselves, such as crocodile masks, noisy shakers, and ribbon sticks.

46. Children also achieve very well in **physical development**. This is a major priority of the staff because they see it as important that children learn to pay attention, stand up and move independently towards an activity that attracts them. It is also a huge motivation for the children when they are able to do these things. They achieve much better access to many activities, such as play in the soft play room, moving in the hydrotherapy pool, and using the large trays filled with sand, beans or lentils, all of which increases what they can learn. Very often, children have extremely limited physical skills when first admitted but, with advice and help from the physiotherapist and occupational therapist, teachers plan very well for these children to do exercises. As a result, they learn to play actively indoors and outside, to hold brushes and crayons, to stand up when operating computer switches and to practise walking around the school. While the lowest attaining children do not master many of these skills, they nevertheless achieve very well by sitting up, crawling, rolling over, pushing a large ball away and stopping a ball coming towards them.
47. In **mathematical development**, children make good progress because learning happens through many other activities as well as in numeracy lessons. In the sand tray, for example, children learn about mathematical concepts such as 'full' and 'empty'. In the soft play room they learn about 'high' and 'low', and 'up' and 'down', and in playing with toys they learn about colours and shapes. In many activities, children work together; listen to instructions, share things, and practise handling small objects. Although staff often prompt children about numbers, such as "Give me *one* car", children do not understand about counting. At best, they have the idea of "one", and "lots", or "more than one", such as when they count the jam tarts they have made.
48. Children's achievements are also good in their **creative development**, and in gaining **knowledge and understanding of the world**. Teachers plan lessons imaginatively, in a good variety of activities. Children paint with their fingers and with brushes; they stick paper, foil and materials together to make masks, toys and musical instruments; they help with preparing food such as jam tarts; and they take part in a parade about the carnival of the animals. They sing and make sounds on simple instruments and, when prompted, shake or hit the instruments. Some join in the choir at lunchtime and are helped to feel a part of the whole school. In each activity they learn about the materials, gain skills in handling things, improve their understanding and learn to get along together. Often, they go out on trips to the shops, a garden, farm or park where they experience the weather, meet other people doing different jobs, and wear different clothes according to the weather and the activity. Higher attaining children learn that things used to be different, many years ago, and they begin to understand that things are always changing, including changes in themselves as they grow up. They listen to stories about Jesus, know that some books and objects are very special, and visit the local church to meet the vicar.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

The provision for English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils throughout the school achieve very well in speaking and listening and using signs and symbols to communicate.
- The teaching is good.
- The leadership is very good, with good organisation.

Commentary

49. While pupils' language and literacy skills are at a low level when they are first admitted, they make good progress, overall, in English and in their general communication skills. The best progress is in developing speaking and listening skills, where pupils' achievement is very good. Staff put the greatest effort into this area. Many lessons are directly focused at improving pupils' ability to understand what is said to them, and to encourage pupils to respond. It goes well beyond this, however, as teachers also sign very well to pupils, make sure they have good attention and speak very clearly, especially to the lowest attaining pupils, those with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. Pupils' learning is also very well helped by staff's use of symbols in many different and positive ways. For some pupils who cannot speak, these include, for instance, exchanging symbols for real things such as a drink, a book, a bike, or a coat. Often, timetables are prepared in a sequence of pictures and symbols so that pupils understand them more easily. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils who have moderate learning difficulties hold sensible conversations with their friends, and with adults.
50. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, however, may still be unable to speak, but they indicate their wants and choices in other ways. Progress in reading is good: pupils with moderate learning difficulties learn to read simple passages in story books or factual books and others understand the symbols and picture sequences. Achievement in writing is satisfactory; pupils with severe learning difficulties learn to make marks on paper as a first step towards controlling marks and forming letter shapes. Higher attaining pupils write sentences about what they have been doing recently, or about their visits.
51. The teaching has improved well since the previous inspection. Teachers' planning is very good, both for individual lessons and over the course of a term or a topic. The planning is very well linked to the national guidelines for literacy; teachers adapt these guidelines very well to suit the needs of their pupils. Careful assessment of pupils' progress helps teachers to plan for each individual pupil. Support assistants are very capable: they know the pupils very well, and give very good individual support in lessons. The regular use of electronic aids for communication is also a great help for some pupils, especially those with profound and multiple learning difficulties who say "hello" or make choices by operating one or two switches. Teachers have very high expectations that pupils will pay attention, join in, concentrate on their work, and behave well. Pupils respond to this challenge well and lessons run at a brisk and lively pace that pupils enjoy.
52. The very good leadership has brought good improvements. It has seen the introduction of several particularly good systems for helping pupils to communicate, including the exchange of pictures for real items or activities, using electronic switches to 'speak' for them, having objects to represent activities or people, and adapting the national guidelines for the teaching of literacy very well. All of the expected topics of the curriculum are taught in a balanced and relevant way. Teachers' assessment of progress is good and is very well used to decide which aspects of English will be focused on in the future. Writing, for instance, is the current priority for improvement, after the recent analysis of pupils' achievements. There are very good resources

in school and teachers are happy to share their own resources with colleagues for the benefit of the pupils.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

53. Although teachers give pupils good opportunities to write in separate English and literacy lessons, pupils' opportunities to write in other subjects are limited. On the other hand, all teachers create very good opportunities for pupils to improve their skills in listening, speaking and signing in lessons across the curriculum. This is of great benefit to pupils in their ability to communicate in everyday situations. Lower attaining pupils also improve their language skills across the curriculum by the use of symbols, signing and electronic communication aids in many lessons.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good across the school.
- The scheme of work for each class is well planned to meet the full ability range.
- The contribution made by teaching assistants is very good.
- On occasion, the teacher's introduction to the lesson is so long that pupils' attention is lost.
- The subject leader has a very good understanding, and makes very good use of, assessment.

Commentary

54. Achievement is good overall and there are times in Years 1, 5 and 6 when it is very good. Where it is best, the focus of teachers' planning includes those objectives set to meet both the subject and special needs targets of the pupils. In the small number of lessons where achievement was satisfactory, the lesson approach left some pupils with little to do but sit and wait.
55. Teaching in all lessons follows the recommended approaches of the National Numeracy Strategy. These have been modified for some groups to meet the pupils' varying special needs. Lessons begin with a review of previous learning which involves counting and the recognition of numbers. Teachers plan very well and in most lessons they adopt a style which ensures that all pupils are included in the learning. It is sometimes less effective because the teacher has spent too long introducing the lesson, which results in pupils' interest not being maintained and a loss of pace in their work. Teaching is best when pupils have opportunities for active involvement. This was evident in a Year 1 lesson, where there were good opportunities for pupils to work by themselves and together. In addition, very good use was made of the interactive whiteboard to keep pupils interested. The teaching assistants' role in the lesson is always very effective. They play an important part in meeting the needs of small groups of pupils and are central to all of them being included. In all lessons, teachers insist that pupils use the correct mathematical terms. In a lesson on shape, words such as 'rectangle', 'prism', 'cylinder', 'circle' and 'triangle' were used and understood by the pupils. Assessment is based on the targets set in pupils' individual education plans and is checked against their P scales and the 'ladders of progression'. This is a particular strength in mathematics where one is able to see clearly the progression of learning over time.
56. The co-ordination of mathematics is good and this has led to the production of a good scheme for what pupils are taught over time. The co-ordinator has a very clear understanding of the school's assessment procedures, the 'ladders of progression', which are used across the curriculum. Assessment in mathematics is now very good whereas it was deemed satisfactory in the last report. Their use is promoting high expectations in mathematics lessons across the

school. Resources are very good and there is an inventory which states what is available and where in the school it can be located. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in the subject. The curriculum is now fully in place and pupils' progress is now good and sometimes very good as a result of the improvement in teaching.

Mathematics across the curriculum

57. Pupils apply their skills, knowledge and understanding of mathematics well across the curriculum. All staff include a section in their planning indicating where mathematics will be used in the teaching of other subjects. In a Year 1 physical education lesson, pupils felt their hearts to compare whether they were beating faster or slower following a vigorous warm-up session. In a science lesson for Years 5 and 6, the teacher used very good mathematics in the explanation of a life cycle.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very effective leadership and management have broadened and enriched the science curriculum as well as improving teaching and learning.
- The practical approaches used in lessons promote good learning and lead to pupils achieving well.
- The most effective work pupils do in science is based on well-planned experiments through which they together solve problems and learn to work methodically.

Commentary

58. Science is very well led and managed. The quality of learning opportunities in science has much improved since the last inspection as a result of dedication and determination in developing the subject throughout the school. Weaknesses in the curriculum pointed out in the report of the last inspection have been addressed effectively and this has led to a marked improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, which is now good.
59. Science is being developed systematically. The school now has a good scheme of what it teaches pupils about science, which is very well planned in relation to the wide range of pupils' special educational needs and abilities. The means of assessing what pupils learn is set out in the comprehensive format of the school's 'ladders of progression', measuring well the different steps of progress of the lowest and highest attaining pupils. All pupils take part in a busy programme of visits to places with scientific themes such as botanic gardens, sea life centres and farms. These visits offer pupils a rich variety of first-hand experiences and make a very good contribution toward pupils relating their classroom work to the world around them. In addition, the science co-ordinator organised a whole-school science day when each class led an activity in the hall and provided a very valuable demonstration of the exciting work already taking place and some new possibilities. Besides pupils, teachers and their assistants, local authority advisers contributed and parents came in to see their children's science work.
60. In most cases teachers have responded very positively to the policy of planning learning through practical activities that, for their pupils, emphasise the discovery of scientific facts and build understanding through using investigative and problem-solving approaches. Science is taught with confidence and in a lively, engaging way for pupils. Pupils' interest in learning is boosted by their use of an interactive whiteboard. A small group of Year 6 pupils used its touch-sensitive facilities to order several sentences into the correct sequence to explain a plant's life cycle. In many lessons, teaching also focuses on pupils' learning and applying good scientific methods. To different extents, depending upon age and level of attainment, pupils learn to

predict, test fairly, analyse results and make a record of these. Pupils with autism found it difficult to work methodically enough to plant seeds in a pot but achieved very well in working as a group and following instructions. One autistic pupil had learnt to say 'water' and recognised the word in written form and also realised the broad bean had sprouted a stem.

61. In the planning of their lessons, teachers find imaginative ways for ensuring all pupils, those with the severest learning difficulties as well as the highest attaining pupils, take part in meaningful and challenging scientific work. As a result, pupils achieve well. In Years 1 and 2, pupils started as a group with a lively action song, co-ordinating on cue pushing and pulling on the giant elastic snake. Most knew what 'push' and 'pull' meant. They achieved the objective of the lesson well by independently experimenting with pushing or pulling wheeled toys, leading to them anticipating the result of their actions. A few pupils also achieved well in overcoming their difficulties in co-ordinating their movements and maintaining balance. In Years 3 and 4, higher attaining pupils, by testing a variety of materials, discovered which of them conducted electricity. By keeping a record and analysing the success or failure of each material they eventually saw that it was only those made of metal that worked.
62. Many interesting and challenging experiments have been devised by teachers. A very good display on the topic of water showed that the higher attaining pupils in Years 4 to 6 were engaged in a wide range of learning arising from them being challenged well to think and solve problems independently. The very well planned theme on cleaning water and the storage of drinking water was linked to a visit to a reservoir where pupils used magnifying glasses to investigate a water sample. They recorded their tally of water insects and identified those they had found using a chart of freshwater invertebrates. Back at school the group explored simple filtration methods for cleansing water. They also tested and compared sand and clay reservoirs to discover which was best for holding water. Each pupil made a clear and detailed written statement of his or her findings.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ICT lessons are largely taught effectively, resulting in most pupils learning well.
- Pupils are making good progress in using ICT in a broad range of applications.
- The provision for ICT is being developed very successfully.
- The use of ICT for supporting learning in other subjects is increasingly effective and is good, overall.

Commentary

63. ICT is taught as a subject and in these instances the learning opportunities are very often well planned. Teaching in the majority of lessons is good because activities are carefully prepared. They are supported with good resources that are thoughtfully chosen in relation to pupils' special educational needs and the objectives pupils are expected to achieve. Quite recently the school invested in extending ICT resources by providing interactive whiteboards in almost all classrooms. The high visibility these give to demonstrating points and showing processes when used well by teachers is contributing much to pupils' interest and engagement in lessons. In particular, where classes or small groups of pupils are able to use the touch-sensitive facilities of the whiteboard, they gain a quick grasp of the skills being taught, for example, learning to navigate their way through screen menus and to give the right sequence of commands. As a result, their use by teachers and classroom assistants is showing early signs of benefits to pupils' learning and achievement.

64. Most teachers and classroom assistants are confident users of new technology and this is a reflection of the positive effects of the school's training initiatives and the staff's willingness to adapt to the demands of giving ICT a high profile in pupils' learning. However, the lack of expertise in setting interactive whiteboards correctly and in using computers disrupts the flow of some lessons and pupils' learning. In one classroom the two computers were so crammed into a tight space that only two of the four pupils sent to work at them could gain reasonable access. This meant two did not achieve the objective set for them.
65. Overall, pupils achieve well. Over time they increase their interest in using computers and a range of related technological devices such as digital cameras, remote control toys and electronic switches. In the well-equipped sensory room, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make good progress in the extent to which they give attention to patterns of light. One Year 2 pupil, for example, achieved more control of eye movement and followed a light effect with interest. Most go on to making choices of the light effects they prefer by selecting and pressing switches. Autistic pupils, mainly in Years 1 and 2, went to the school car park and made a tally of cars which gave them the data to create computer-generated graphs. By willingly working in unfamiliar surroundings they also achieved a positive step towards reducing the effects of their autism.
66. A group of Years 3 and 4 pupils with moderate learning difficulties worked in pairs operating two-way radio communicators. In discussing their experiences with the teacher, they made a little headway on understanding the differences in speed, confidentiality and permanence achieved in communicating by letter, telephone or using two-way radio. This gained them a broader view of communication by using different technologies and prepared them well for understanding and using e-mail in a future lesson. By Year 6, higher attaining pupils use computers independently and confidently. They type text and know how and when to use upper or lower case. They are effective in remembering instructions and follow these to search files of images, select one and transfer it to a separate text document.
67. The leadership and management of ICT are very good. This is ensuring the profile of the subject in the school's overall educational provision is being raised, which represents a good improvement since the last inspection. The school is recognised as a lead school for ICT at the Foundation Stage. A quality mark is being actively sought and this has given added impetus to the systematic monitoring of provision and the quality of teaching and learning. The school has been very successful in attracting additional funds from grants and by winning bids. As a result, there is substantial investment in new resources and, in pursuit of best value, the use of ICT resources in improving teaching and learning is being closely scrutinised by the headteacher and ICT co-ordinator. In parallel, an audit of staff skills has provided the basis of a well-planned and resourced training programme. There has been good progress in developing the curriculum, the assessment of what pupils have learnt and the extent to which ICT is used in all classrooms. Compared with what was reported at the time of the last inspection, this is a good improvement.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

68. The wide use of ICT in teaching was unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection and is now good. ICT is playing an increasingly effective role in pupils' access to learning, especially in supporting their communication. The many pupils who have not yet developed spoken language have learnt to use objects, signs and symbols to make responses and to communicate their choices. The installation of interactive whiteboards has introduced the large screen and some sophisticated teaching facilities to each classroom. While relatively new, this development has already increased the part being played by ICT in many lessons. Digital still and video cameras are used by adults and pupils to record work and these have been of particular benefit in making the link for pupils between classroom work and outside visits.

HUMANITIES

69. This area of the curriculum was sampled and in it seven lessons in total were seen. Four lessons were seen in geography, one in history and two in religious education. There is insufficient evidence to make judgements on provision in geography and history.
70. There is every indication both from pupils' work and their progress files that achievement in **geography** and **history** is good as a result of good teaching. From the work seen, it is evident that historical and geographical sites in the local area are particularly well used to help pupils learn. In geography, excellent use is made of local villages to help pupils understand how localities differ both from each other and from Wellingborough. In history, visits to Abington Museum and to Canon Ashby's house interest and inform pupils about the Ancient Egyptians and the Tudors. Visitors, visits and artefacts contribute to pupils' understanding: a 'centurion' has called and helped to dress up pupils as Roman soldiers and pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties enjoyed their old-fashioned wash day. Both subjects have good schemes for what pupils are taught and assessment procedures are clearly linked to the scheme.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good planning ensures that pupils gain a wide understanding of a range of world faiths.
- There are very good leadership and management of the subject which ensure that teaching and learning are appropriate and that assessment, the 'ladders of progression', is securely based on the local agreed syllabus.

Commentary

71. Pupils' achievement is very good in religious education. Teachers' planning reflects an understanding of pupils' special educational needs and the demands of the subject curriculum. The recall by higher attaining pupils of complex issues is very good; for instance, they relate that the breaking of bread and the wine are symbolic of Easter and the crucifixion. They have also gained a very good understanding of why rules and laws are required. They have a very good appreciation of the life of Jesus and what he represented. There is also evidence to show that pupils have gained from a thorough coverage of Hinduism, including the home shrine and Hindu symbols such as the lotus flower.
72. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers' planning is very good and allows staff the opportunities for checking pupils' understanding of issues raised in previous lessons. Very good use was made of digital photographs of a visit to a church which showed a range of important features such as the pulpit and the altar. Pupils understand their importance and recall how they were used in the church. In another lesson, pupils recalled hearing the Lord's Prayer on their visit to a Christian church and were fascinated by the Lord's Prayer Cube, skilfully revealed by the teaching assistant. Assessment is a strength of teaching and enables planning to target progression in a series of lessons.
73. The co-ordination of religious education is very good, leading to a good improvement since the last inspection. Schemes of what is taught have been completed and the assessment procedures draw upon the learning objectives set out in the local agreed syllabus. The co-ordinator monitors provision in religious education across the school both through scrutinising lesson plans and records as well as by observing teaching of the subject. The co-ordinator also writes an annual report on provision in religious education for the governors. The quality and quantity of the learning resources are very good. There is a detailed inventory of books covering the world's major religions and a growing list of artefacts to support the teaching and learning. These include a burka headscarf, prayer mats with compass, Eid cards and an Islamic prayer tape.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

74. In this area of the curriculum, art and design and physical education were sampled. Eight lessons in total were seen. One lesson was seen in art and design, two lessons each in design and technology and music, and three lessons in physical education. The amount of evidence for art and design and physical education is insufficient to make judgements about provision in these two subjects.
75. In **art and design**, the evidence available points clearly to a broad and challenging range of learning opportunities. In the lesson seen, pupils discovered a very good interest from visiting a sculptor's studio the previous week. They remembered and used a good vocabulary to describe the work they had seen and showed appreciation for the ideas and forms in the artist's work. Teaching and learning were very good in preparing pupils for generating their own sculptural ideas for making in clay. They were very well supported in this by the demonstration in working with clay and the examples of African carvings to look at. Displays of pupils' art shows they look at major works of art such as Van Gogh's paintings from which they make their own interpretations with paints or crayons. Higher attaining pupils mixed colours with skill and use a good variety of techniques to apply paints, which reflect the ways some artists have painted.
76. Pupils are given a wide range of opportunities in a very good **physical education** curriculum. The long-standing partnership with the local prison extends the opportunities for pupils' physical education. In the few lessons seen teachers' planning was very good and ensured that all pupils benefited from the wide range of opportunity offered. On a regular basis, groups of pupils visit the prison in Wellingborough where there are very good sports hall facilities. As part of their education programme, carefully selected inmates teach pupils gymnastic skills under the supervision of prison staff and teachers. Pupils are well supported by inmates and they apply their sound expertise to the lesson plans set out by the pupils' teacher.

Music

The provision for music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well.
- The teaching is good, and is aided by music therapy, a choir, and singing in assemblies.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

77. Pupils' good achievements by the end of Years 2 and 6 include singing together, playing a range of musical instruments and listening to music, appreciating its mood, tempo and beat. Pupils with severe learning difficulties join in sessions such as the choir at lunchtimes and songs in class. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties play instruments with a good beat and appropriate timing; they sing along with staff very well. Some of the highest attaining pupils are learning to play the piano. Lower attaining pupils have very good music therapy to help their general awareness of sounds and to encourage them to make sounds with their voice or with instruments. The singing and the playing of instruments in assemblies and in the choir are a great addition to pupils' enjoyment of music. Lessons are planned well, and staff use signing clearly and fluently to get their meaning across to pupils when necessary. They also accompany the songs with signing and actions that help many pupils to understand the words and to join in. Teachers use very good resources to conduct their lessons, often being enthusiastic, and motivating the pupils well.

78. The co-ordinator is very capable and well organised; her enthusiasm is very effective in motivating pupils and staff alike and these qualities have brought a good improvement in provision. Pupils have many opportunities to show their skills, such as at a local theatre and in events with other schools when they have taken part in very creditable performances.

Design and technology

The provision for design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well by the end of Years 2 and 6.
- The teaching is good.
- The leadership and management are good.

Commentary

79. Pupils' good achievements include developing their ideas for designing models, using different tools and materials to make items, and deciding how well they have succeeded afterwards. Pupils are taught well by teachers who plan their lessons well, and who have a good understanding of the subject. Some very good resources are used very well to help learning. Support assistants give very good guidance and help to individual pupils. This enables all pupils to be very well involved in lessons, and to make good progress. Teachers manage behaviour very well, and motivate their pupils to try hard in planning their projects, and handling tools such as scissors, glue spreaders, and cutlery in food technology. They assess children's progress well, and are good at basing their future teaching on the results of the assessment. A capable and enthusiastic co-ordinator has developed a good long-term plan of what should be taught, and has motivated all teachers to embrace this subject. This has resulted in a good improvement in the provision and in standards of achievement since the previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective planning, management and teaching ensure that pupils achieve well.
- The availability to all pupils of an impressive range of outside activities makes a positive contribution to their personal and social development.
- A range of activities such as concerts and the Healthy School Initiative supports pupils' development well.

Commentary

80. Pupils achieve well in their personal and social development because of good planning and teaching. The subject is managed well and the whole-school overview of what is being taught shows the wide range of topics that is used to extend pupils' learning and understanding as they progress through the school. Teachers are aware of the need to make work relevant to pupils and this is particularly successful when it is related to the importance of making choices, answering all of the pupils' questions and the importance of healthy eating. Planning for pupils in Years 5 and 6 is good and successfully incorporates a wide range of relevant activities that prepares pupils well for changing schools.
81. There is a high priority on the importance of a variety of experiences and activities in helping the pupils' personal development. This contributes very effectively to pupils' learning. Snack time and lunchtime are occasions where pupils are encouraged to take turns, choose, wait patiently

and socialise in an appropriate way. Additionally, pupils' personal and social development is helped by learning in settings beyond the security of school when they visit different towns, houses and places of special interest.

82. Musical performances and the Healthy School Initiative allow pupils to practise the skills required of good citizens. They respond well to these opportunities and show an understanding of what is required if they are to be effective members of the school and local community. The success achieved by the school is demonstrated, for example, by the confident way in which many of the pupils are prepared to sing in front of a large audience.
83. Pupils' progress is assessed well and the co-ordinator has a comprehensive subject improvement plan to consolidate the good progress since the last report. The weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection have been addressed.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
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
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
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	3
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
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
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 special schools such as this, **standards achieved** are judged against individual targets and not national standards.*