

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE PINES SCHOOL**

Castle Bromwich, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103622

Headteacher: Steven G Tuft

Lead inspector: Dr Mick Megee

Dates of inspection: 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> April 2004

Inspection number: 259016

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:	89
School address:	Dreghorn Road Castle Bromwich Birmingham
Postcode:	B36 8LL
Telephone number:	0121 464 6136
Fax number:	0121 464 3149
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. Malcolm Bull
Date of previous inspection:	17 / 3 / 1997

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

The Pines School is a day school for boys and girls aged 3 to 11 located in Castle Bromwich, which is part of the City of Birmingham. Currently, 89 pupils attend the school, of whom 74 are boys. Most of the pupils have autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), but 18 pupils have communication and learning difficulties. Since the school was last inspected, the proportion of pupils who have ASD has risen from one third to over three-quarters. All pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs and when they come into the school, their attainment is well below average. Pupils come from a wide catchment area around and from within the City of Birmingham and although individual pupils' socio-economic circumstances vary, in general they are about average. Two-thirds of the pupils are from white (British) backgrounds, and the remaining pupils are from many different heritages, but predominantly Pakistani or black (Caribbean). There are 13 pupils who come from families who speak English as an additional language.

The school has developed partnerships with many mainstream and special schools either adjacent to the school or in other areas of the City. Through these partnerships, the school provides specialist support to mainstream staff and pupils, and pupils from The Pines are able to attend mainstream schools each week for half or whole days. The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Investor in People award.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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31754	Charlotte Roberson	Lay inspector	
32232	Sue Garland Grimes	Team inspector	Science, design and technology, Geography, English as an additional language
28106	Michele Majid	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, history, special educational needs
A29452	Chris Emerson	Team inspector	English, foundation stage, art, personal, social, health education and citizenship

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The Pines School is an **effective** school with a very strong caring ethos. All pupils, whatever their educational needs or background, achieve well in most subjects because of the good teaching and teamwork which ensures that pupils are involved fully in their lessons. The leadership and management of the school are good, and the governance is also good. The school provides good value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher lead the school with great enthusiasm and dedication so that the school develops well.
- The school very effectively supports pupils' personal development, which helps them to do well, to take pride in their school and prepares them for the next stage of education.
- The accommodation has been greatly improved but the cramped classrooms are continuing to be a barrier to raising achievement even further.
- Not enough time is allocated for lessons in information and communication technology (ICT) and not all teachers make full use of computers and other forms of technology when teaching other subjects.
- The school's partnership with parents is first class and this further supports the good progress which pupils make.
- The curriculum for the Foundation Stage gives children a good start at the school, and teachers are especially skilful in developing their social and communication skills.

The school has improved well since the last inspection, when the proportion of pupils with autism was much lower than it is today. The most significant improvements have been in the planning of the curriculum, the assessment systems, training for subject leaders and specialist training for autism. The school has worked hard to improve the accommodation, but there are continuing difficulties with the cramped classrooms. At the last inspection, achievement in ICT was just satisfactory with weaknesses identified throughout. Although teaching and learning in lessons are now good, there are still a few outstanding problems with ICT. Apart from this, the school has fully resolved all the issues arising from the previous inspection.

### 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. Children in the Foundation Stage make very good progress in developing their personal, social and communication skills. The achievement of all other pupils of all ages, including those with additional special needs, is good. There is no difference in the achievement of boys and girls, or pupils who speak English as an additional language. Achievement is good in English, mathematics and science, and it is satisfactory in ICT and religious education. Pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**. Their attitudes to school and their behaviour are very good. Attendance is good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good** for all children and pupils including those in the Foundation Stage. This is because there are very good relationships in the classroom, staff know the pupils' needs well and teachers are skilled and enthusiastic about their subjects. Teachers have good strategies for assessing how well pupils are doing, and parents receive full information on their children's progress.

The curriculum for all children and pupils is well planned and effective. The only weakness is in ICT where insufficient time is allocated. Teachers are not yet making full use of ICT to support and enliven their subjects. The school provides an especially wide and motivating range of extra-curricular activities. The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are very good. The headteacher and his deputy see that staff maintain excellent links with parents, and the school has developed very good relationships with other schools. These partnerships, together with good community links, further support pupils' good progress.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher provide very good leadership, and have implemented very effective developments in priority areas. These include developing the outreach provision, improving the accommodation, and appointing and developing an effective and committed staff team. Governance is good. The headteacher and senior staff receive timely and effective support from the governors, who carry out their role well as critical friends of the school. The subject leaders work well under the headteacher's direction to maintain and develop the subjects.

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

The school has not yet implemented its plans to provide a school council, so that pupils can express their opinions as a group. Nevertheless, pupils speak very well of the school. In particular, they like the staff, feel that lessons are interesting and enjoy the food at lunchtimes. Parents express high levels of appreciation and support for the school, and they feel that the school provides and cares very well for their children. All parents feel that the school continually goes the extra mile to ensure that parents are fully informed about their children's education, care and welfare.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Continue to work with the LEA to improve the accommodation
- Ensure that ICT is used more frequently to support pupils' learning in other subjects and that there is sufficient timetabled time for pupils to learn basic computing skills.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in subjects**

Achievement overall is **good**. There are no differences in achievement for boys and girls, pupils with English as an additional language (EAL), or those with different levels of ability.

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

- The good teaching in English, mathematics, and science has a direct and positive impact on pupils' learning.
- Pupils in the Foundation Stage achieve very well in developing their communication and social skills.
- Pupils make very good progress against their individual personal and social targets.
- Accommodation has a negative effect on the progress pupils make.

#### **Commentary**

1. A very good climate for learning is maintained within the school, and pupils and children generally achieve well. This is partly because the headteacher and the deputy headteacher provide very good support to the staff and pupils, by their monitoring, encouragement and willingness to roll their sleeves up and take action when necessary. Skilful teaching and effective assessment mean that pupils achieve well in English, mathematics, science and physical education. Achievement in information and communication technology and in religious education is satisfactory.
2. Teachers in the Foundation Stage ensure that children get off to a good start when they enter the school. Staff have good specialist knowledge about autism, and about developing communication and social skills and so children of this age achieve well in all the areas of learning and very well in communication, language and literacy, and in personal, social and emotional development.
3. Pupils continue to make good gains in learning as they move up through the school. Achievement is good both by the end of Year 2 and by the end of Year 6. All pupils achieve very well against their individual social skills targets, and achieve their targets within the expected time-scale. All staff know what the pupils' targets are, and individual objectives are routinely incorporated into lesson plans and into lunch times. The school places a high emphasis on developing pupils' self-confidence and independence. This is immediately apparent to visitors to the school who are politely asked their name and what they are doing at the school. This good support, together with lessons in personal, social and health education, ensures that pupils make very good progress in their personal development. Good teaching ensures that there is good achievement for pupils who have communication and learning difficulties or who have English as an additional language (EAL). Pupils with EAL receive good support from specialist bi-lingual staff who ensure that pupils are fully included and have full access to the National Curriculum. These staff have a wide range of languages on which they can draw to help pupils interpret school life in the language they are used to at home.
4. The majority of pupils at the school have ASD. Achievement for these pupils is good. This is because the school ensures that all staff become skilful specialists in this area. Pupils are constantly encouraged to communicate their individual choices. They learn to work with others and to take turns when taking part in educational games. Staff actively encourage pupils to support and care for each other and this helps them to develop very good personal skills. In physical education lessons, for example, teachers emphasise the need for trusting other people, and religious education lessons concentrate on the value of sharing.

5. In Years 1 to 6, pupils achieve well in reading and writing, and very well in communication, speaking and listening because the teachers are very skilful, and lessons are enjoyable. In mathematics, teachers' planning and attention to individual needs are good and so all make good progress. In science, pupils achieve well because the teaching is motivating and demanding. In information and communication technology there are good relationships between pupils and teachers, but because there are shortcomings in resources and timetabling, pupils' achievement is only satisfactory. In religious education, teachers plan well but do not always put the plans to good effect, and achievement is satisfactory. In personal and social education, all pupils achieve very well.
6. The size of most classrooms represents a barrier to raising achievement more rapidly. Teaching groups are often doubled up in one area, which means that teachers have to work really hard to minimise the distractions and keep pupils interested.

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

Pupils' attitudes, values and behaviour are **very good**. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**. Attendance is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and they have very good attitudes to their learning.
- The very good behaviour of pupils enables them to be engaged in their learning and make good progress.
- The school provides very good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There is a strong ethos of kind relationships and sensitive support, where staff know their pupils very well, which results in high achievement.
- There are no formal arrangements that enable pupils to express their views and influence decisions about the school as a group.

### **Commentary**

7. Pupils enjoy their time at school and they work hard to achieve as much as they can. They are eager to begin their lessons. For example, in an information and communication technology lesson, inspectors saw pupils in Year 4 raring to get going on the computer and check their e-mails. Pupils respond often maturely to the activities provided. In a physical education lesson for Year 1 pupils, for example, they listened quietly and carefully to the musical introduction which set them up well before their gymnastics training.
8. Pupils consistently demonstrate very good behaviour as they listen attentively, sit quietly, apply sustained levels of effort and concentration in working on a task and try very hard with their work. All the staff successfully use a wide range of strategies which effectively promote this good behaviour. These include rewards, individual behaviour plans, celebration assemblies, and good work certificates. These result in a very good climate for learning right across the school. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils with additional special needs are consistently very good as well. Staff deal very efficiently with any problems that may arise and the rest of the class is able to carry on learning.
9. The school provides many enjoyable opportunities which allow pupils to mature and develop as individuals. Some wonderful examples of how well staff promote their pupils' spiritual development were seen during the inspection. During an assembly with a local primary school, pupils were captivated by the performance of their mainstream friends when they sang a pop song. They confidently performed their rap "What no school, that's not cool" and were deservedly proud of their achievement. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect quietly on their lives during prayers in assembly and lunchtime and listening to different composers at the start

and close of assembly. A close link has developed with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the pupils have performed at the Symphony Hall. Other opportunities for spiritual development have been provided from visiting artists and musicians from Live Music Now, Duo Manoso, and theatre groups as well as visits to a Buddhist and Sikh temple.

10. Pupils have many experiences to learn important social skills. Pupils in Year 2 celebrated generously the success of one of their friends as he achieved one of his targets, and they cheered and clapped his rocket taking off. At lunchtime there are good reminders by staff of model conduct – waiting, eating tidily, sharing food and talking quietly and cheerfully to each other. There are many opportunities throughout the curriculum and school life to learn about their own and other cultures. For example, collective worship provides experiences of Eid, Ramadan and Hanukah, and in geography pupils learn about life in other countries and areas such as the USA, Germany, India, France, the Caribbean and Africa.
11. Very sensitive and respectful relationships between staff and pupils are very evident and a joy to observe. In a Year 2 design and technology lesson when a pupil was becoming distressed, teachers and support staff provided support with great compassion and sensitivity. This calmed the pupil down and meant that he could be brought back into the lesson. The staff know and understand their pupils very well so that the atmosphere in lessons is relaxed but purposeful and pupils take part as fully as possible in their learning. Pupils attend well, and the school has made good links with outside services, especially respite services, to encourage pupils to attend regularly. The education welfare officer works closely with the school if any problems over attendance arise. There were no exclusions in the last school year.
12. Although many pupils are involved in making decisions, and evaluating both their own work and the work and life of the school, the school does not yet provide the opportunity for pupils as a group to express their views in the school, through a school council for example. This is planned for in the next two terms.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.1	School data	1.4
National data	6.6	National data	0.9

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

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good**. The curriculum is well planned and **effective**, and pupils’ care, guidance and support are **very good**. The school maintains an **excellent** partnership with parents, and it works **very effectively** with other schools. The school has a **good** relationship with the community.

**Teaching and learning**

Teaching, learning and assessment are **good**. Teachers are sometimes hampered in their choice of teaching strategies by the restricted accommodation.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers know and understand thoroughly the individual needs of their pupils, and this greatly helps all pupils to learn well.
- Staff develop and maintain very good relationships in the classroom which ensure that pupils make good progress.

- Teaching and learning are very good in the Foundation Stage, in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. This is because teachers have very good knowledge of the needs of pupils of this age who have ASD.
- Teaching and learning are good in most subjects and they are very good in personal and social education because teachers know their pupils and their needs very well, and they are enthusiastic and well organised when teaching their subjects.
- Parents receive excellent feedback on how well their children are doing.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together to support pupils' learning

## **Commentary**

13. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall throughout the school. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and their planning is good. Lesson plans clearly state what is expected of the pupils, and what they will be able to do at the end of the lesson. The plans also contain information about each pupils' individual targets, so that staff can make sure that progress is achieved in these as well. At present lesson plans do not contain sufficient information about how the teachers can make best use of computers and new technology in each subject.
14. Teachers offer an inventive and stimulating range of experiences, which match up well to the pupils' individual needs and interests. This in turn allows pupils to achieve well. However, the classroom accommodation does represent a problem. There are frequently two different lessons going on within a relatively small space, and staff have to work very hard in order to avoid pupils becoming distracted. In one lesson, a pupil's attention was diverted by a pupil from the other group turning on the computer. The assistant quickly solved the problem by the judicious use of a medical screen. This cramps the style of teachers who wish to be more expansive, and may have to contain pupils from expressing their spontaneous excitement.
15. There is really good teamwork within lessons, involving a team of assistants and sometimes a support teacher. This helps keep the pupils absorbed in what is going on. Teaching assistants are well trained and experienced, and thoroughly briefed on how to manage the pupils. They are proactive and use their own initiative to keep all pupils fully involved throughout the lessons. Pupils of all ages enjoy very warm, friendly and fruitful relationships with staff. Teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils very well and take every opportunity to develop their self-esteem and independence. The speech and language therapist is in the school for two days a week and there is also a full time assistant. The team works well in collaboration with classroom staff and aims to meet specific communication targets based on individual needs.
16. Staff make very good use of specialist teaching methods like the Teaching and Education of Autistic and Communication Handicapped (TEACCH) approach and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). These approaches are central to the school's success and permeate throughout the whole school. Staff make continually good use of symbols in lessons to enable pupils to communicate their needs, clarify their understanding and deepen their knowledge. For example, Year 3 pupils in a physical education lesson on outdoor and adventure, stepped on and off the bench, in response to verbal and symbol instructions. Inspectors saw symbols being used very successfully, projected onto the wall, in assembly to accompany a song about being punctual. All staff take advantage of wearing innovative key fobs, which hold a set of cards with a range of basic symbols, which are immediately available to communicate with a pupil.
17. Teaching is effective in the Foundation Stage, and particularly effective in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. This is because the teachers of those children have come to know the pupils very well before they enter the school, and because their specialist training in young children and autism enables them to establish a very good relationship quickly. English, mathematics, science and ICT are taught well and pupils learn well throughout the school. Teaching and learning in religious education is

satisfactory. The teaching and learning of pupils with additional special educational needs is good and behaviour is well managed.

18. A well qualified bi-lingual teacher and support assistant support the 13 EAL pupils across the whole school and across all the subjects. They do a good job of assessing each pupil's needs and then target the support precisely to develop speaking, listening and writing. All staff pay careful attention to the different cultural backgrounds of pupils within the school and use them to the full when ever they can. Visitors to the school as well as pupils can see the really good displays up all around the corridors which value these backgrounds. This makes a valuable contribution to pupils' learning and achievement.
19. The headteacher's influence is found in every classroom. He creates an excitement and enthusiasm among all the teaching staff, and this is evident in the way in which teachers talk about their work and plans. Together with the deputy headteacher, he has brought in a performance management system which works very well. There are very good staff development and induction arrangements which ensure that all staff gain expertise and skill in working with pupils with ASD and that their expectations are very high. This is particularly important as there are some recruitment difficulties for special schools within the LEA, which means that some teachers when they take up their appointment may not have specialist knowledge of autism. However, the inspection team noticed how all staff have become quickly adept and unexpected or challenging behaviour is skilfully managed. In turn this means that classrooms are quiet and pupils learn studiously and without interruption.
20. The school uses a good range of assessment strategies, and assessment in mathematics is particularly good. The school has begun to make use of the 'B squared' system – a nationally approved assessment system - throughout the school for literacy and numeracy, and is sensibly considering whether to use this system more widely, for other subjects, in order to further streamline the assessment arrangements. Staff have a good understanding of the use of 'Performance' ('P') levels – a special system of assessing pupils who have not yet reached Level 1 of the National Curriculum – and use them well for setting targets. They meet regularly to ensure that teachers are making judgements to a similar standard. The school does well in recording the achievements of children within the early learning goals, and translating them into 'P' scales ready for Year 1. This means that teachers have a very good idea of each child's needs and capability when they start on the National Curriculum. Parents have welcomed the fact that the headteacher has improved the information which they receive about their children's achievements, and this information is now of the highest quality.
21. Teachers do a good job in letting each pupil know how well they are doing. They do this in whatever way is suitable for that particular child. Most pupils respond well to marking and verbal feedback, while others are given signs and symbols. Achievements are celebrated each week at a 'good work' assembly, so that all the pupils can see what standard of work they should strive for. Progress since the last inspection has been good. In the last report there were significant weaknesses in the assessment and reporting arrangements and these have been fully resolved.

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

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	7 (19%)	27 (73%)	3 (8%)	0 (0%)	0 (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.*

**The curriculum**

The curriculum is **good**. Opportunities for enrichment are **very good**. Resources are **good** but accommodation is only **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum covers a good range of subjects and courses and is well organised and monitored.
- The curriculum is adapted well to promote the learning of pupils with ASD.
- A very wide range of interesting and motivating activities add to the work covered in lessons.
- Although the school has made considerable efforts to improve the accommodation, the size and number of classrooms restricts what teachers are able to offer.
- Teachers are well qualified and teachers and support staff have good knowledge and understanding of the special educational needs of pupils with ASD.

## **Commentary**

22. A suitable amount of time is allocated for teaching and this enables the school to provide a wide-ranging and effective curriculum for all pupils. The issue raised in the previous inspection with regard to the amount of time for teaching science has been addressed and the time is now sufficient. Although ICT is now timetabled as discrete lessons, the time allocated is still just short of what is recommended nationally. The emphasis on developing communication and personal and social skills is very appropriate for pupils with ASD and means that pupils achieve very well in these areas. The curriculum is well led and monitored by the curriculum steering group which is under the leadership of the headteacher. There is a regular weekly curriculum meeting for teachers, in which teachers can put forward their own ideas for improvement and listen to those of others. This means that teachers are constantly thinking about ways in which to improve the activities provided, and are updated on the latest developments. Subject leaders monitor the curriculum in their subject area and report to the governors annually. This gives governors a good understanding of teachers' thinking and what needs to be done. The requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are met.
23. Teachers plan an extensive range of activities to interest and motivate pupils. They visit art galleries, museums, country parks and historic houses, animal sanctuaries and the theatre. These visits enrich pupils' knowledge of history, science, music and the arts very well. The annual residential visit undertaken by pupils in Year 6 enables them to meet and interact with older children prior to secondary transfer. During the residential visits they participate in a variety of adventurous physical activities such as rock climbing and canoeing. This has a very good impact on developing self-confidence and self-esteem. Pupils also benefit from links with Aston Villa Football Club which promotes their football and team skills. Links with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and other music professionals enable pupils to compose and perform with professional musicians. Artists in residence visit the school to deliver workshops on topics such as Rangoli patterning. The school does not provide an extensive range of lunchtime activities. However, it has already recognised this as a weakness and has plans to remedy this in the next term or two.
24. The school has made substantial improvements to the outdoor environment and play facilities since the previous inspection some of which are still in progress. The school has recently obtained money through successful bids to improve the outside area to the rear of the school, and is awaiting the final go-ahead. Improvements have also been made to the office accommodation and a few classrooms. A well-equipped sensory studio has been developed. However, most classrooms are cramped. Because of the wide range of ability in the school, most year groups are divided into two groups for many lessons so that the curriculum can be delivered effectively. However, because of the shortage of space the two groups are generally taught in the same classroom. This arrangement is not ideal as teachers have to suppress noisier activities such as singing number rhymes and it makes it harder for pupils to give their full attention to the teacher. Resources are good in most subject areas. Equipment for ICT has improved since the last inspection, and the school has the use of the computer suite in the primary school next door. However, there are still not enough computers immediately available to pupils.

25. Good appointments coupled with well-focussed training have meant that there are a good number of teachers and support staff and they are well qualified. In particular, the school greatly benefits from very close links with nationally recognised experts in ASD at Birmingham University. A significant number of teachers have obtained additional qualifications in ASD from the university and the school hosts students studying for qualifications in ASD. For pupils with EAL, a good range of culturally relevant visual aids and resources is used including bi-lingual library books, such as 'Peace at Last', which pupils can share with their family. Work is very well matched to the abilities of pupils with additional special educational needs and staff are aware of their individual needs. The school's curriculum stresses the skills of language and communication, which is very important especially for pupils with ASD.

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

The school provides a **very good** level of care for the pupils. The provision of guidance and support is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The induction of new children and pupils into the school is very good, and as a result they settle in quickly.
- Procedures to ensure that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment are very good.
- There are excellent communications between school and home about the care of the pupils, which ensures that the best approaches are consistently adopted.
- Pupils have very trusting relationships with the adults who care for them, which is very important for their self-confidence.
- There is no formal way that enables pupils to share their views and influence decisions.

### **Commentary**

26. The care for pupils at the school is very good and this is a good improvement since the last inspection. Child protection procedures are well known to staff. Statutory requirements for health and safety are met and the school is secure, safe and in sound repair. Children's escorts do a great job in maintaining communication between home and school.
27. Pupils are given personal support and guidance through the very good relationships with the teachers and teaching assistants. Special relationships which occur with staff other than the pupil's class teacher are encouraged and used constructively to provide extra support for the pupil. The school uses assessment information well to provide support and guidance for each pupil; where possible, pupils are made aware of their targets and success is highlighted. Regular "child studies" take place during staff meetings so that all staff are aware of individual progress and particular issues to address in order to improve the pupil's achievement. Individual education plans are specific and are used well and the requirements of pupils' statements are being met. There are high expectations of behaviour with clear guidelines and all appropriate behaviour is rewarded. All staff consistently apply these guidelines. Induction arrangements for pupils are very good with support given to parents as well as the pupils.
28. The school provides good support for EAL pupils by identifying those who need additional help, not just in the early stages of learning English but right up through the school. Staff keep a constant check on pupils' individual educational plans for pupils with additional educational needs, and make sure that they are achieving their individual targets. The support for pupils with communication difficulties is good and shows a good improvement since the last inspection. Pupils with speech and communication difficulties benefit greatly from expert advice from the speech and language therapist.
29. At this time, there is no school council to enable pupils to share their views, although this is part of the personal, social and health education development plan. However, all pupils are given

the opportunity to attend and make a contribution to their annual reviews and older pupils are fully involved in their individual education plans.

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

The school has very well established and **excellent** links with parents. Links with other schools are **very good** and a range of **good** links is very evident within the community.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school is exceptionally well thought of by parents who recognise and value its many strengths.
- The headteacher and deputy, together with all staff, are fully committed to working very closely with all parents in a number of purposeful ways.
- Relationships with many schools are a significant strength and this working partnership helps many pupils make progress.
- Good use is made of other professionals to support pupils.

### **Commentary**

30. Parents express very high levels of support and appreciation for many aspects of the school. Parents stated with complete conviction that this inspection team would not be disappointed in the way the school involves parents and they were right. The headteacher and all staff very warmly welcome new families. Moreover, excellent levels of information, both written and oral, are maintained throughout the time the pupil attends school. At the time of the previous inspection there were weaknesses in the quality of the school's written reports. These issues have been properly addressed and the reports now give a very clear and detailed picture of what pupils know, understand and can do. Parents are treated sensitively by staff but at the same time with openness and honesty. Staff approach problems and difficulties as they arise with patience and a firm belief that they will aim for and achieve what is best for the pupil.
31. Staff from the school visit the homes of all new families. In addition, visits that families make to the school are never rushed, questions are dealt with carefully and any anxieties overcome. A room with a two-way mirror is often used to demonstrate to parents the work undertaken by adults with their children. A representative from Parent Partnerships within the City of Birmingham is also fully involved when asked to support parents in decisions they have to face. Parents' evenings and review meetings are held very regularly and are very well attended. The school offers very good support for families whose first language is not English. Speech therapy staff also work very closely with families at home and at school. All staff are united in their concern to work as closely as possible with parents to meet the needs of pupils. The inspection team judged these links overall as excellent. Good links within the community too are evident especially through the support shown for events organised by the Friends' Association.
32. In the last few years the school has increased and developed the opportunities provided for many pupils to attend mainstream schools. These schools are either adjacent to The Pines or in other areas of the City in schools close to pupils' homes. The pupils benefit greatly and make steady and often fast progress in many areas but especially in their personal development. This is because the school is willing and able to be so flexible in establishing placements which best suit individual needs. For example, teaching assistants withdraw when appropriate but are always available if needed. Two boys were confident enough to show inspectors to their classrooms unaccompanied at the start of the day, and their friends immediately greeted them warmly with a smile. The school sees inclusion as an integral feature of the pupils' education and many outside professionals praise the links with other schools. The deputy headteacher undertakes a very thorough approach to monitoring the inclusion support to ensure that it is successful for all concerned. Staff from outside agencies praise the headteacher's vision and value the input he personally has had into how inclusion across the

City is being developed. Partnerships with colleges are also very good and many pupils benefit enormously from short placements at The Pines, which are also very competently overseen by senior staff.

33. In the last two years the school has developed 'OASIS' – Outreach Advisory Support and Inclusion Service. Local mainstream schools request support for individuals who are then assessed by the deputy headteacher. Advice and programmes are given and followed and the expertise and knowledge that is shared is clearly highly valued by staff working in many schools. Some training is delivered and often resources are shared which can best benefit all parties. Sometimes demand can outstrip what can be supplied especially at the start of the school year; but because of the commitment to succeed and the very well organised management of this service, problems are generally overcome. Many pupils who have ASD in other schools are very effectively supported and enabled to fulfil their potential. Managers are fully dedicated to see that this service is in the future at the very least maintained.
34. For pupils with additional special educational needs, the speech and language therapist provides a home visiting service to parents so they can support the speech and language programmes at home. There are links with educational psychologists, an educational social worker and specialist teachers to support with any particular difficulty, such as hearing, visual or physical problems. The school makes good use of mainstream schools for higher attaining pupils if there is a need to extend their learning or social skills. A music therapist visits the school weekly and provides a good service.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide **very effective** leadership. Leadership in the school as a whole is **good**. Management is **good**. The governance of the school is **good**. Statutory requirements are **fully met**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very strong leadership which ensures that pupils achieve to a consistently good standard.
- Key staff work effectively to ensure that pupils of all ages make good progress.
- Governors are successful 'critical friends' to the school.
- A few subject managers have too little opportunity to ensure that their subject is taught to a consistent good standard.

### **Commentary**

35. The headteacher, with the deputy headteacher, is the driving force in establishing the inclusive and caring quality of the school. Together they have created and maintained a staff team which continuously provides warm and effective support to the pupils and their families. They have gained and enjoy great respect from everyone within the school community as well as that of fellow headteachers and university staff, senior local authority officers, and people from other agencies with whom they work.
36. The headteacher delegates responsibilities well and provides confidence and encouragement to all staff. Under his leadership, the school has successfully developed teachers who over the years have become senior staff or even headteachers in other services and schools. The school is justifiably proud of this output of trained and skilled teachers, and so that it is not to the detriment of the school, the headteacher through good monitoring, induction, support and staff development systems has ensured that pupils all continue to receive teaching to a consistently good standard. Despite the very effective leadership of the headteacher, the quality of teaching is somewhat held back by possible recruitment and accommodation issues. Here again, the headteacher and his team provide very good support to staff and make the very best use of the spaces available.

37. The headteacher, alongside governors and staff, has undertaken a thorough and accurate review of the school's work, and has established relevant priorities for action. These are well reflected in the school development plan (SDP), which runs on a 4-termly basis to ensure good continuity from year to year. Staff and governors refer to the document frequently as they discuss the school's drive for improvement. There are good links between this plan and the school's performance management system. The headteacher also does very well in ensuring that everyone in the school is working to the same set of priorities. He provides an accessible, cut-down version of the SDP to all staff and, at the beginning of each year, he formally leads the staff to consider what the school has achieved and what further needs to be done. The high quality of the headteacher's self-review system is shown by the close match between the school's judgements of itself, and those of this inspection team.
38. The senior management team has a good commitment to ensuring that all pupils have equality of opportunity, and ensures that all teachers take this into account when planning lessons. The headteacher is the SEN co-ordinator and SEN governor in the school and ensures that the needs of pupils with additional special educational needs are met and that there is an appropriate policy for special educational needs. Staff receive good training on the appropriate skills to enable them to support communication development and any other specific needs. This training is continually supported by the speech and language therapist and her assistant.
39. Management in the school is good. The school is well run, and all staff are clear about what is expected of them from classroom staff managing difficult behaviour to office staff running the school's administrative systems. All staff have good access to training and guidance. Processes and procedures are kept under constant scrutiny for ways of making them more efficient. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage, and of key staff in Years 1 to 6 is good. Subject leaders have good ideas and plans for the further development of their subject. They have all received recent relevant training. There is a rolling programme which gives subject leaders the opportunity to see other teachers teach their subject, but these opportunities are sometimes too infrequent, as in the case of religious education. This means that a few foundation subject leaders cannot be entirely certain about the quality of the provision from year to year. The headteacher and senior staff recognise this as a weakness and further opportunities will be provided over the next two terms.
40. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have done very well on improving the curriculum, especially with the changing profile of pupils, the great majority of whom now have ASD. They have ensured that the schemes of work are properly matched to individuals and groups of individuals. They have ensured that teachers make full use of teaching methods which have been specially developed for these pupils. They are continually on the lookout for ways of improving further the provision. All these developments have had a direct and positive impact and are raising pupils' levels of achievement. The headteacher chairs a weekly 'child study' meeting which ensures that information about each pupil is shared across the staff. The headteacher also runs an 'open forum' each week where any concerns or issues about pupils can be discussed, especially those with more difficult behaviour.
41. The governors keep a close check on the school's finances through regular, frequent scrutiny of the figures. The school ensures through competitive tendering that it obtains best value for money when purchasing resources and services, and the most recent audit shows that there are no significant weaknesses in the school's accounting systems. Governors are dedicated and very caring about the school, and have a good understanding of what the school does well and what needs to be done. They operate effectively through their committees. For example, the chair of the Pay and Appointments committee has a very clear idea about the recruitment difficulties which have arisen as a consequence of LEA strategies, and has good solutions to put forward as a remedy. All governors offer good support as well as challenge to the senior staff at the school, and carry out their role well as 'critical friends'. Link governors visit the school regularly and frequently, and meet with subject co-ordinators and informally monitor teaching in their linked class or subject. The chair of governors makes himself available to parents on

parents' evenings in a 'surgery' to listen to issues and to give advice. This is very good practice and is welcomed by parents.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1283801
Total expenditure	1066708
Expenditure per pupil	10667

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	10077
Balance carried forward to the next	198452

42. The large balance which was carried forward to the current financial year was the result of the school's great success in obtaining specific grants for improving the accommodation. The grants were for a large extension to the main building which has been completed, and improvements to the outdoor play area some of which are still in progress.

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

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

The school makes **good** provision for children in the Foundation Stage.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses across the areas of learning**

- Teachers have a good understanding of the particular special educational needs of children with ASD. This means that children make rapid progress in developing their social and communication skills.
- Children have access to a rich and varied range of learning experiences.
- Excellent links with parents help newly admitted children to settle well and support children's learning.
- The very positive and nurturing ethos ensures that children are happy and well motivated.

#### **Commentary**

43. The provision is well led and managed by the Early Years Co-ordinator. She has developed good links between the nursery and reception class so that when pupils move up, the reception staff know the pupils' needs straight away. There has been good progress since the previous inspection when children's achievements were good in personal and social development and in language and literacy and only satisfactory in other areas. All the issues raised in the last inspection have been addressed. Teaching is good in all the areas of learning and the teaching of social and communication skills is especially good. This is because the teachers have received specialist training in ASD and make use of the appropriate systems and methods wherever possible. The accommodation is satisfactory but rather cramped, although it is used as flexibly as possible. For example, the cloakroom area is used regularly as an extra teaching space. Good procedures have been introduced to record and measure children's progress.
44. There are excellent links with parents to promote children's learning and to help them to settle at school. Prior to a child's admission, a member of staff visits the home to meet the child and parents. A daily diary is sent home as well as a book showing what the child has done using symbols to help parents talk to their children about the school day. Parents are invited to termly 'stay and play' sessions which are well attended. Parents feel comfortable to telephone if they have any concerns or queries regarding their child.

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

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

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

- Children have very good opportunities to develop their personal and social skills, and this leads to very good achievement

#### **Commentary**

45. Throughout the day staff work very effectively to promote and reinforce children's social skills and understanding. Accordingly they achieve very well in personal, social and emotional development. Relationships are very positive and staff are calm and very good at managing the children's behaviour. Consequently, children feel secure, enjoy being in the provision and are ready to learn. They understand the class routines and follow them as well as they are able. They are encouraged to make choices and to learn independence skills such as putting on and doing up their own coats. Very good use is made of the local community to help children to

practise their skills. For example, during the inspection, the Reception class made a shopping list and went to the local shops to buy the ingredients to make vegetable curry.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff are very effective in developing children's communication skills; as a result children achieve very well in this area of learning.
- Children develop their skills in reading and writing because of the many opportunities they are given to develop their skills.

### **Commentary**

46. The promotion of communication, language and literacy forms an important part of most lessons. Children respond to the very good teaching and encouragement to communicate whenever possible through using pictures, symbols or spoken language. Staff are very skilled at teaching children who have little or no spoken language to communicate using symbols following the Picture exchange communications system (PECs). Children have small group or individual sessions with a speech and language therapy assistant to teach them how to use the symbols. They then have daily practice during the morning snack time when they have to use their symbols to request drinks and food and to make choices. Children are highly motivated by this activity and it is very effective in promoting their desire and skill to communicate.
47. Children have many opportunities to develop pencil skills and to record their work using the computer. Children's records show that they make good progress in developing pencil control. For example, in one year a lower attaining child went from experimenting with mark making to carefully drawing round a template and joining accurately any gaps. Over the same period a higher attaining pupil progressed from experimenting with mark making and sometimes ascribing meaning to the marks to writing his own name on his work and writing known, familiar words to label pictures. During the inspection a higher attaining group of children in the reception class typed a shopping list on the computer. With support from the teacher they were able to identify letter sounds such as 'c' for carrot and type them into the computer. Children make good progress in learning to read. When they are admitted to the nursery they learn to match pictures and place their picture on a board to show that they are at school. They begin to match symbols and pictures and by the end of the Reception Year higher attaining children can read simple or familiar words.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers provide children with a range of activities that develop their skills in mathematics.
- Staff are sensitive to the needs of the children and provide activities which interest them.

### **Commentary**

48. Children have access to a rich and varied range of mathematical experiences. For example, in a very good lesson to promote mathematical development music was used very effectively to help to motivate children to learn to count to ten. The children beat out a marching rhythm on drums, and in a gap in the music they put down their instruments and began counting. Lessons are characterised by good teamwork and teaching is effective and often imaginative. Staff work well and flexibly with those children who sometimes find it difficult to respond appropriately.

Children's records indicate that they make good progress in understanding and using number. For example, an average attaining child progressed well in three months from counting three everyday objects to reliably counting six objects.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers make good use of real-life experiences and information technology to support children's learning.
- Large groups are not always managed well.

### **Commentary**

49. There is good teaching which effectively helps to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world, and children make good progress in this area of learning. They use symbols to learn what day it is and what activities they will be doing. They have access to cause and effect toys and to computers. Higher attaining pupils can use the mouse to select colours and draw a picture. Children explore the world around them through sensory experiences such as sand and water play. They enjoy cooking, smelling, observing and tasting the ingredients and planting cress seeds and watching them grow. Children benefit from using the interactive books in the library and the resources in the sensory studio. In one good lesson, the children were making a shopping list to buy the ingredients for a vegetable curry. Teachers planned well for the different needs and capabilities of the children, and taught key words like cauliflower by showing and handling the vegetable. While children usually behave very well, sometimes staff find it difficult to maintain a calm environment, especially when the children are in a large group. Many of the children do not find these situations easy, and staff have not yet developed an effective team approach.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in physical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers are good in setting standards for children, so that they know what is required

### **Commentary**

50. Children achieve well because staff provide very good role models for them. This means that they can clearly see what is required. Staff demonstrate plainly what they expect and use other pupils well as role models for emphasis. Staff teach children to prepare safely for the activities by good warm-ups and by dressing appropriately. They give clear instructions, and provide the children with plenty of opportunities to make suggestions. For example, in one lesson, the teacher asked the children to suggest ways of moving around the floor. One child said "Like this" and slid across the floor on his bottom. Teachers promote children's physical development well through using the large outdoor play equipment such as bicycles and climbing frames. The outside area has been greatly improved and expanded since the last inspection to include a play area with large, fixed, wooden animals, a playhouse, a climbing area and a sensory garden. Children have many opportunities to increase their control of small pieces of equipment, such as pencils, paintbrushes and construction toys.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff provide interesting activities which the children enjoy.
- Planning is not always as clear as it could be especially for individual pupils.
- Music lessons are used well to develop a range of children's skills.

### Commentary

51. Teaching in this area is good, and lessons emphasise working together and improving communication. Children have good opportunities for creative development and achieve well. They are encouraged to experiment with colours and textures and children in the reception class enjoyed painting and sticking coloured paper onto their space ship. In one lesson, children went outside and had great fun pretending to paint the walls with paintbrushes and water, and then made handprints and footprints on the ground with water. They are encouraged and supported to dress up and engage in imaginative play. Planning is good with clearly laid out expectations for staff and children. However, sometimes the activities provided are not clearly matched to each child's needs.
52. Music is used well to promote children's personal and social skills and their literacy and numeracy development. Children in the nursery enjoy singing songs and joining in with the actions. Children in reception play percussion instruments to accompany taped music and spontaneously start marching with their instruments.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

### ENGLISH

*Seven lessons were seen*

Provision in English is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and support staff are skilled in helping pupils learn to communicate.
- Teaching methods are adapted well for the particular needs of pupils with ASD.
- Pupils' progress is carefully monitored and recorded.
- The subject leader is a good role model for other teachers and manages the subject well.
- Cramped classrooms and shared teaching areas sometimes make it difficult for pupils to concentrate in many lessons.
- Teachers plan lessons well and make sure that teaching objectives are well linked to targets in pupils' individual education plans (IEPs).

### Commentary

53. Pupils of all abilities and ages, and those whose home language is not English, achieve well because teaching and learning are good. This represents a good improvement since the previous inspection when the achievement of pupils in Years 1 and 2 was only satisfactory. Teachers place great emphasis on developing communication skills and have a good understanding of the needs of pupils with ASD, and as a result pupils make very good progress in speaking and listening. Consequently, although many pupils have no spoken language or are reluctant to communicate when they start school, they soon begin to join in class discussions. An example of this was when pupils in Year 1 looked at the class reading book 'Doodling Daniel'. They responded to simple questions about the text and one pupil spontaneously

commented that Daniel 'is bashing down the door'. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils use the appropriate vocabulary to express their views clearly and join in lively class discussions. For example, when analysing the plot of 'Jack and the beanstalk' they listened carefully to each other and made well-constructed arguments such as 'I really think this is the answer'.

54. Pupils have many opportunities to read both as individuals and in whole-class shared reading sessions. They are well supported by teachers and support staff. In a very good lesson for lower attaining pupils in Year 2, the teacher made very effective use of a laptop computer. She incorporated the names and photographs of the pupils with the storyline and vocabulary from the class-reading book. The pupils were highly motivated by this approach and with support were able to read the simple sentences. Pupils take reading and library books home to support their reading in school and the school has recently purchased a good range of dual language reading books. This means that pupils can share books with their parents where the home language is not English. Pupils with EAL make good progress in learning to read. Detailed records are kept to show what pupils have read and the progress they are making. Because the ability to read text is frequently in advance of understanding of the text in pupils with ASD, teachers place a particular emphasis on ensuring that pupils understand what they have read. Pupils' records show the good gains they make in reading as they progress through the school so that by the time they reach Year 6 many pupils are independent readers.
55. Pupils make good progress in learning how to record their work using handwriting and computers. Pupils in Year 1 find it difficult to hold a pencil correctly and are beginning to form some letters correctly. By the end of Year 2 they write their names independently and higher attaining pupils write simple sentences with support. As their skills develop, pupils in Year 4 spell simple common words correctly and higher attaining pupils use capital letters and full stops. Although the majority of pupils in Year 6 do not join up their letters, they write stories with a beginning and an end using descriptive language. They have produced some high quality laminated books of writing in different genres such as science fiction, Japanese haiku poems and mystery stories.
56. There is good assessment and recording of what pupils have achieved in English. Records are regularly updated, individual literacy targets are reviewed half termly and new targets are set. Assessment is monitored by the subject leader who keeps examples of marked work for different year groups to ensure consistency in assessment. The school has also introduced 'P' level assessments so that it can track the progress of groups of pupils over time.
57. The subject leader provides other staff with clear demonstrations of how to teach the subject effectively and has ensured that the National Literacy Strategy is well established throughout the school. All teachers follow this guidance, adapting it well to meet their pupils' special educational needs. Teachers' lesson planning is detailed and contains specific learning objectives for individual pupils which are well linked to their IEPs. The subject leader ensures that good standards are maintained through monitoring teaching and planning. Lessons are challenging and contain a variety of lively and well-resourced activities to maintain pupils' interest.
58. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of teaching approaches that are effective with pupils with ASD. PECS symbol cards are used to help pupils who are beginning to communicate. Teachers use simplified language and emphasise key words. They make good use of symbol timetables to signal changes of activities to help pupils to feel secure. With older pupils such as those in Year 6, teachers use strategies to help pupils to empathise and understand how the characters in books they are studying might feel. The good links with speech and language therapists support the development of pupils' communication skills. A number of support assistants have been trained to deliver speech and language therapy programmes as part of the pupils' English curriculum.
59. Because of the wide range of ability in most lessons, year groups are taught in two smaller groups with approximately 6 pupils to a teacher and support staff. Because of restricted

accommodation, the two groups are taught in the same classroom. Although teachers do the best they can to reduce distraction by erecting fixed or mobile screens between the groups this is not ideal and sometimes makes it hard for pupils to listen and concentrate well.

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

60. Because the school emphasises the importance of developing the pupils' communication skills and staff have had access to suitable training, provision for developing speaking and listening is good in all subjects. For example, in physical education pupils understand what to do because of the good emphasis of key words such as 'travel', 'feet' and 'hands'. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities for reading and writing. An example of this was in a Year 5 science lesson when pupils wrote sentences independently to show what would happen to their windmill if they took it outside. One pupil said "It will move" and wrote it on his worksheet.

## **MATHEMATICS**

*Seven lessons were seen*

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The use of the National Numeracy Strategy is very effective and ensures that pupils make good progress.
- Teachers plan effective lessons which take into account pupils' individual needs.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have very good relationships with the pupils leading to very good attitudes and behaviour.
- The subject leader has a clear vision for improvement for the subject.
- There are no identified opportunities for the use of numeracy in other subjects.

### **Commentary**

61. Overall achievement is good and the pupils are eager to learn. By Year 2, pupils of all abilities are making good progress as a result of good teaching and effective use of the National Numeracy Strategy. Pupils enjoy the formality and structure of numeracy lessons, as they know what to expect and can relax and enjoy their learning. By the end of a Year 2 lesson, pupils add money using tens and units. Good use was made of ICT in a Year 4 lesson, where a floor turtle was used to help pupils to use the language of direction. Pupils know that one turn is  $90^\circ$  and the pupil who worked out that two turns was  $180^\circ$  was delighted with his success. Pupils are achieving very well in Year 6, where activities are interesting to the pupils and they are, therefore, fully engaged in the lessons. Higher attaining pupils are given challenging work and show good communication skills. Pupils are able to interpret a table and divide money using the decimal point. Lower attaining pupils use cubes to show that multiplication is repeated addition. Analysis of work shows that pupils, including those with additional special educational needs and those from different ethnic minority groups have made good progress throughout the school. There has been good progress made in the development of mathematics since the last inspection.
62. Teaching is good and sometimes very good and as a result achievement is good. The level of challenge is realistic and appropriate to the needs of each pupil. Teachers and teaching assistants have very good relationships with the pupils and as a result, pupils are enthusiastic about their work, behave very well and make good progress. Attitudes and behaviour were consistently very good; in a lesson seen during the inspection staff dealt efficiently and sympathetically with one particular problem with a pupil who was becoming upset and there was minimal disruption to the lesson. Assessment is very good and targets are used well. Opportunities for assessment are identified clearly in lesson planning, so that staff can easily judge progress.

63. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader has a clear vision for improvement and monitors teaching and planning throughout the school. This includes giving ongoing help and advice with termly “maths clinics”. The development plan ensures that the mathematics programme will be continually reviewed and updated as necessary. Resources are good and are very well used by teachers and teaching assistants.

### **Numeracy across the curriculum**

64. Teachers use numeracy well across the curriculum and counting is used well in PE and at registration times. However, teachers do not formally identify in their planning for other subjects where there might be an occasion to help pupils in developing their numeracy skills. This could mean that good opportunities could be missed.

### **Science**

*Four lessons were seen*

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well because lessons are well planned and pupils’ achievements are assessed well.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy the interesting activities provided.
- The subject leader works well to provide activities and resources which will excite the pupils.
- Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently to support the teaching of science.

### **Commentary**

65. Teaching and learning are consistently good with activities carefully planned so that pupils of all ages enjoy their work and learn well. Planning includes clear statements of what is expected from the pupils, activities, opportunities for assessment and key language. This makes it easier for staff to assist the pupils in making rapid progress. At the end of each term’s work, teachers assess what each pupil knows and can do, and they make good use of this information to plan future lessons. Pupils’ attitudes to learning and behaviour are very good, they are highly motivated by the exciting activities and so, by the end of Years 2 and 6, all pupils are showing good achievement in science.
66. By the end of Year 2, pupils explore the effect of forces pushing and pulling with a collection of objects like toy dogs on wheels and pushchairs. By the end of Year 6, pupils plant beans and say what plants need in order to thrive. They answer questions about solids, liquids and gases. They learn in a practical way about the effects of gases and make predictions about the windmills they have made – what will happen outside in the wind.
67. The enthusiastic subject leader provides good leadership and management of the subject. There is a well-planned curriculum in place, which builds on what pupils already know, understand and can do. The subject leader has provided a good range and quality of stimulating resources and is keen to improve even further by developing resource packs for each science topic in the curriculum. In the lessons seen very little use was made of computers or other technology, and this is a weakness. Good progress has been made in science since the previous inspection. Pupils of all ages are now making good progress and the time allocated to science is now up to what is nationally recommended.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

*Two lessons were seen and further evidence was collected from discussions with key staff and examining pupils' work*

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although teaching is good there is insufficient curriculum time for discrete ICT lessons and this limits the progress pupils can make.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to ICT and their behaviour is very good.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and lessons are very well planned.
- Teaching is supported by good quality assessment and clear objectives for what pupils will achieve.
- Leadership and management are good with very high aspirations for the subject.
- ICT is not used enough to support every subject.
- There are not enough computers in the school to support pupils' learning.

### Commentary

68. Overall achievement by pupils is satisfactory, including those with additional special educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. This represents satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Although pupils make good progress within the lessons, there not enough lessons on the timetable and staff do not always incorporate ICT into their planning when teaching other subjects. This limits the achievement which pupils can make. By Year 2, pupils understand the basic functions of a computer and use a keyboard and a touch screen, and higher attaining pupils use a mouse and type out their names. Pupils have experienced using a digital camera and have successfully photographed "still life" displays of either fruit, vegetables or flowers. They were able as a class to represent their choices on a pictogram and interpret the resulting data. Pupils in Year 4 use presentation software to enter text and images on the same page. They understand the meaning of the "red line" under text. By Year 6, pupils change font styles, save and retrieve work and resize images. Higher attaining pupils write a programme using forward, left, right and repeat and one pupil was able to write a list of commands to produce a flower. In a good Year 6 lesson, pupils were able to formulate their own questions to create branching databases. The Internet is used appropriately and pupils are able to use email and have connections with Canada, America, Denmark, France, Sudan and China.
69. Teachers plan lessons very well and share the lesson objectives with the pupils. Teachers use whole-class sessions well to reinforce learning and in a good Year 4 lesson, pupils were made aware of how they could use their skills in other areas of the curriculum. There are very good relationships with the pupils and as a result, pupils behave very well and are eager to learn. Teachers use and constantly reinforce key words and phrases, such as 'document', 'cut and paste' and 'insert'.
70. Leadership and management is good. The subject leader has produced an effective development plan and is ensuring that staff are effectively trained and are becoming more confident in their use of ICT. She has improved the curriculum, which is now based on recommended units. Discrete curriculum time has been improved, but it is still not sufficient. Resources are satisfactory and are improving, with plans for an interactive whiteboard in most classrooms. However, there is a need for more computers to enable all pupils to have use of a computer during ICT lessons. The school has contributed to and makes use of the ICT suite in the neighbouring primary school. The subject leader has a valuable partnership with an IT consultant to ensure that all hardware is of good quality and that e-learning credits are used effectively.

## ICT across the curriculum

71. The use of ICT in other curricular areas is satisfactory. Relevant software is used in literacy lessons with Years 1 and 2 to help pupils to write in sentences. In a very good Year 4 literacy lesson, the teacher made very effective use of presentation software to promote interest and enthusiasm. This significantly enhanced the pupils' ability to concentrate for a considerable length of time. However, there are no CD ROMs or a computer in the library. In numeracy, a Year 1 pupil was enthusiastic when using the touch screen for simple addition and made good progress. There is an impressive selection of music technology equipment, including a sound to light system in the multi-sensory suite. In art, pupils have used the digital camera to take photographs of still life. However, ICT is not used sufficiently in science and there is no software itemised in the audit of religious education resources.

## HUMANITIES

*In humanities, religious education was inspected in full and is reported below. Work was sampled in geography and history. There was not enough evidence to make overall judgements about provision in these subjects.*

72. One lesson in **geography** was seen. In this lesson, pupils in Year 3 learned about the features of rooms and made good progress. The teacher did well in providing a range of activities that would interest the pupils including making and using plans and a model of a room with furniture. Staff made good use of symbols to assist some pupils, and other pupils could say that the bin was next to the sink. There was a good emphasis on working as a member of a team, with good reminders about being polite and caring towards each other.
73. By Year 2, pupils in **history** have experienced language related to the passing of time through daily use of a visual timetable. Higher attaining pupils know the days of the week and can recall past events. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have studied the Tudor period and know that this was a long time ago. Pupils have looked at World War II and there is an effective display showing a visit to a local War Museum. In a good history lesson with Year 5, the teacher effectively reinforced pupils' understanding of the siege of Troy with effective role-play. The pupils co-operated enthusiastically, especially the two pupils "hiding" in the wooden horse. In this lesson, pupils were clearly beginning to understand the idea of the passage of time. There is appropriate development planning in place, which includes updating the scheme of work, maintaining links with Environmental and Outdoor Education Services, and monitoring and reviewing planning and pupils' progress. The subject leader checks how well other teachers are teaching the subject and ensures that pupils are regularly assessed. Good use is made of visits to museums, art galleries and places of historical importance. The subject leader has identified the need for more use of ICT.

## Religious Education

*Two lessons were observed in religious education, and further evidence was collected from discussions with key staff and examining pupils' work.*

Provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan lessons well but some parts of the lessons are not always effective.
- A good range of educational visits is undertaken.
- Insufficient opportunities have been given for the subject leader to see others teach the subject.

## Commentary

74. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in religious education. Although the teachers have good ideas for lessons which will engage the pupils, and prepare them well, sometimes the teaching is not as inspiring as it might be. For example, in a lesson for pupils in Year 5, the pupils learned about some of the wonderful aspects of our planet. They looked at a bird's nest with eggs in it, cress growing in a pot, some butterflies and pictures of a newborn baby. The teacher asked the pupils to tell the class of anything that made them say "Wow!" and one pupil said this happened when he saw a caterpillar change into a butterfly, and another said it happened when a tadpole changed into a frog. However, there was too little variety in the part of the lesson which followed, and pupils were not really involved, and their learning was also only satisfactory.
75. In the other lesson which was for pupils in Year 4, the lesson started well with some reflective silence and the lighting of a candle. The teacher made good use of a pupil who is a Sikh to tell others about his traditions and beliefs. Pupils learned about how Sikhs believe that sharing is very important. The middle part of the lesson was less effective, however, because the activities were not sufficiently demanding. At the end of the lesson pupils learned the tangible benefits of sharing when the teacher produced a selection of Indian cakes for everyone to eat.
76. The analysis of planning and scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that religious education has a secure place in the curriculum, and pupils achieve satisfactorily over time. There is a good subject policy and scheme of work, and resources are satisfactory, although there is very little relevant computer software available to teachers. Leadership and management in the subject are satisfactory. There has been no monitoring of teaching and learning in the subject, although this is planned for next year. Photographic evidence indicates that pupils enjoy religious education and that the subject contributes significantly to raising their awareness of cultural diversity at a level suitable for them. Good opportunities are made of visits to places of worship and the subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual development.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

*Physical education was inspected in full and is reported below. Work was sampled in art and design and technology. No work was seen in music. There was not enough evidence to make overall judgements about provision in these subjects.*

77. In **art and design**, displays of pupils' work show that they have opportunities to try different techniques and work with a variety of materials. For example, pupils in Year 3 have made collages using different textures and pupils in Year 1 have scrunched up tissue paper to make pictures of flowers.
78. In **design and technology** pupils in Year 2 learned about wheels, axles and vehicles, and could point to the wheels on different vehicles. There were some good follow-up activities with pupils looking outside for examples of wheels and axles, while others fixed wheels and axles on model cars. The teaching was good overall, although the pace in the first part of the lesson was a little slow. Staff did well to calm down a pupil who became upset and the lesson showed the very good relationships that have developed between staff and pupils.

## Physical Education

*Two lessons were observed in physical education, and further evidence was collected from discussions with key staff.*

Provision for physical education is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge which they use well and this supports pupils' physical development.
- Pupils' social and communication development are promoted well by good teamwork.
- There are good external links which further help pupils to make progress in the subject.

## Commentary

79. Teaching and learning are good in physical education. This is because teachers have good subject knowledge, and staff work well as a team. Lessons begin with good warm-up exercises which include both jogging and then stretching. The warm-ups are followed by clear explanations and demonstrations. Lessons feature good planning, frequent feedback to pupils on how well they had done, and enjoyable activities. For example, in a lesson in Year 1, the pupils were learning how to travel around the floor, and then how to link two movements together. The teacher made sure she got her message across by using traffic light symbols – red for “stop!”, orange for “walk!”, and green for “run!” The teacher was well supported by a support teacher and a small team of support assistants who worked very hard to keep the pupils on track.
80. Teachers make good use of symbols and signs, and pupils know what is required and then make good progress and achieve well. For example, in a lesson for pupils in Year 3, the teacher was training pupils for outdoor and adventure activities. This time, she used a projector to show up the words and symbols which she wanted the pupils to follow like “trust”, “follow” and “step forward”. Again, there was good staff support and teamwork, and pupils made good progress. Pupils especially enjoy ‘trust’ exercises, which involves them guiding a blindfolded partner around an obstacle course using words alone. In the lesson seen, they took very good care of each other and reassured their partners throughout. This is a good example of how teachers ensure that pupils develop socially as well as physically. All pupils, at every level of ability, are fully included in all the activities with due account taken of their particular needs.
81. A temporary manager is satisfactorily co-ordinating the subject, and a permanent appointment should be made in September. The temporary co-ordinator has kept a watchful eye on the provision, by ensuring that there is a good range of activities, a good assessment system and a satisfactory range of resources. Accommodation for the subject is sufficient for the pupils' needs, with a reasonably sized hall and outside playgrounds. The school also has the use of the playgrounds belonging to the neighbouring primary school, and swimming lessons are held at a nearby municipal pool. The school has developed strong links with Aston Villa Football Club who hold training events for them at the ground, and who visit the school and work with the pupils. Each year, pupils in Year 6 attend an outdoor pursuits centre in Wales. These links widen even further the opportunities available to the pupils. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The provision then was criticised for weaknesses in teaching, especially in planning, and behaviour management.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

*One lesson was seen. A variety of other activities were also observed and contributed to the judgements made.*

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

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good use of the local community develops pupils' self-confidence and social skills very well.
- Carefully planned reward systems promote pupils' social development and help them to learn to be good citizens.

- The work that the school is doing to achieve the 'Healthy School' standard promotes pupils' health education very well.
- The school is effective in teaching pupils to make choices and develop independence skills.

### **Commentary**

82. Teaching and learning in personal, social and health education and citizenship are very good for pupils of all ages and abilities. This is because the school places a high priority on developing pupils as individuals, and takes every opportunity to promote the subject. All pupils have many opportunities to develop and practise their personal and social skills in the community. Pupils regularly visit the garden centre to buy plants and items to maintain the fish tank. As part of their topic on transport, pupils travel on a bus and express train to visit the airport. Year 6 pupils visited a creperie restaurant and ordered their meal in French. Through these experiences the pupils gain confidence and learn to behave well in public settings. The school has a range of reward systems, which are very effective in promoting pupils' social development. These include class star books through which pupils earn rewards at the 'good work assembly' and a monthly 'citizenship award' which is given to a pupil who has shown good citizen skills such as being considerate to members of the public on school visits.
83. Citizenship is also promoted very well through activities such as the pupils working together to draw up class rules. Through work towards the 'Healthy School' standard, pupils are developing their understanding of healthy lifestyles very well. For example, they are designing posters to be placed in the cloakrooms to emphasise good hygiene such as the importance of washing hands. The school is very effective in helping pupils to develop independence skills. The youngest pupils are helped to make choices through using symbol cards. Classes have a 'special person' which changes daily or weekly and the chosen pupil has classroom duties such as taking the register to the office. A very good emphasis is placed on giving pupils practical activities to practise road safety. The school raises money for charity through activities linked to events such as 'red nose day' Unicef day, and the Princess Diana Children's Hospital . There has been good improvement since the previous inspection when provision was good.
84. The subject is very well managed by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic leader. She has held training events for staff, conducted an audit of resources, and monitored some teaching. She has many good ideas for future development.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### **Grade**

<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	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>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	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).*

\* In a special school such as this, 'standard achieved' are judged in relation to pupils' individual targets and not in relation to national standards.