

# INSPECTION REPORT

## THE ROWAN SCHOOL

Sheffield

LEA area: Sheffield

Unique reference number: 107171

Headteacher: Ms Susan Anne Chantler

Lead inspector: Rosemary Eaton

Dates of inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> May 2004

Inspection number: 259017

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 special
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	63
School address:	4 Durvale Court Furniss Avenue Sheffield South Yorkshire
Postcode:	S17 3PT
Telephone number:	0114 2350479
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Briony Taylor
Date of previous inspection:	21/09/1998

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

The Rowan School is a school for pupils aged four to eleven with autistic spectrum or speech and language disorders. Currently, 63 pupils attend the school, including nine children in the reception year. Only nine of the pupils are girls. When they join the school, the attainment of most pupils is well below average. All of them have statements of special educational need. Fifty pupils have autistic spectrum disorders and the remainder have speech and language disorders. Eleven pupils have particularly challenging behaviour, often combined with severe autistic spectrum disorders. The majority of pupils attending at the time of the previous inspection had speech and language disorders. A significant proportion of pupils now join the school after a mainstream placement has been unsuccessful. The majority of pupils are white British, but there are seven from minority ethnic groups. Two pupils have English as an additional language. Sylhetti and Shona are spoken in these pupils' homes. Most pupils live in Sheffield, with four from Derbyshire and two from Barnsley. Pupils' socio-economic circumstances are very varied but are broadly average. The local education authority has indicated its intention to close the school at some time in the future as part of its plans to reorganise its special educational needs provision.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15173	Rosemary Eaton	Lead inspector	The Foundation Stage curriculum, art and design, design and technology, English as an additional language
13462	Roberta Mothersdale	Lay inspector	
14691	Jenny Hall	Team inspector	Mathematics, music, physical education, personal, social and health education
29452	Christine Emerson	Team inspector	English, religious education, geography, history, special educational needs
32374	Paul Edmondson	Team inspector	Science, information and communication technology

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The Rowan School is a **good** school with many very good features. Pupils achieve well and their personal development is very good. The quality of teaching is good and the school is well led and managed. It provides good value for money.

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

- The headteacher's leadership is very effective, creating a drive for continuous improvement in the school.
- Staff consistently, and very successfully, help pupils to improve their ability to communicate.
- Pupils, including the children in the reception year, achieve very well in English, mathematics, and personal, social and health education.
- Teaching assistants make very strong contributions to teaching and learning.
- The curriculum is adapted very sensitively to meet pupils' special educational needs.
- There are very good arrangements for pupils' personal development.
- Achievement in design and technology is unsatisfactory.
- Subject leaders don't yet all play a large enough part in checking the quality of teaching and how well pupils learn and achieve.
- Very close links with pupils' families contribute well to their achievement and personal development.

The school has improved very well since the previous inspection. Pupils' achievement is better in most subjects, especially in English, religious education and information and communication technology. Their attitudes and personal development have improved. All this is especially significant, because the special educational needs of the pupils have changed markedly, with many more of them having severe autistic spectrum disorders and challenging behaviour. The quality of teaching has improved significantly and all the key issues raised previously have been dealt with successfully. Only in design and technology has there been insufficient improvement – pupils' achievement continues to be unsatisfactory owing to a lack of guidance to support teachers' planning.

### 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.*

Pupils' achievement is **good**. Children in the reception year achieve very well, particularly in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, and personal, social and emotional development. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well, as do those in Years 3 to 6. Throughout the school, achievement is very good in English, mathematics and personal, social and health education. In science, religious education and information and communication technology, pupils achieve well. Achievement in design and technology is unsatisfactory. Girls and boys and those from minority ethnic groups and with English as an additional language achieve equally well. Pupils with speech and language disorders or challenging behaviour get on as well as those with autistic spectrum disorders.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**. Their attitudes to school are also very good, as is their behaviour. Pupils make very good progress in learning to be independent, interact with other people, and tackle new experiences. Attendance is satisfactory.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching is **good** and, as a result, pupils learn well. Teachers are very skilled in working with pupils who have autistic spectrum or speech and language disorders, adapting teaching methods and resources very effectively to meet their needs. Tasks are matched carefully to pupils' ability, age and stage of development. Teaching assistants play a very significant part in helping pupils to achieve well and speech and language therapists work closely with teachers and provide very effective support. By making sure that lessons are varied and interesting, teachers keep pupils' attention. However, occasionally, activities go on for too long and pupils get restless.

The curriculum is well planned in the main and meets pupils' special educational needs effectively. However, the curriculum for design and technology is unsatisfactory. There are many activities provided to enrich pupils' experiences and make learning enjoyable. These are supported by very strong links with parents, other schools and the community. Pupils are cared for well and provided with very good support – for instance, to help them settle in or move on to the next stage of their education.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **good**. Leadership is good overall, but the headteacher's leadership is very good. She has ensured that all staff share her commitment to meeting pupils' needs as well as possible. Although subject leadership is good, there is a need for teachers to be more involved in checking the quality of teaching and how well all pupils are making progress. Management is also good. The school is clear about what it does well and where improvement is needed. Governance is good. However, governors do not comply with all statutory requirements, because the school does not have a written sex education policy.

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

Parents are very positive about all aspects of the school, although a very small number have concerns about pupils' behaviour. Parents are particularly happy with the quality of teaching, the arrangements for supporting children when they join the school, and the way in which the school is led and managed.

Pupils' views are very positive. They especially enjoy physical education and playtimes.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Raise achievement in design and technology.
- Continue to develop the role of subject leaders in improving further the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

**and, to meet statutory requirements:**

- Develop a policy that sets out the content and organisation of the school's sex education curriculum.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Achievement is **good**.

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

- Pupils achieve very well in English, mathematics and personal, social and health education.
- Children in the reception year achieve very well overall.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in design and technology.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups or with English as an additional language achieve as well as others with similar special educational needs.
- The very small number of girls achieve as well as the boys.

#### **Commentary**

1. All pupils – with autistic spectrum or speech and language disorders or challenging behaviour – achieve well in science, information and communication technology and religious education, because these subjects are taught well and the curriculum is well planned to meet pupils' needs. Because teaching is particularly good in English and mathematics and pupils have regular, carefully structured opportunities to develop and apply their knowledge, skills and understanding, achievement is very good. Personal, social and health education lessons are planned and taught well, but they are reinforced consistently by a wide variety of relevant experiences – such as lunch time and visits in the community. Consequently, pupils achieve very well.
2. The children in the reception year achieve very well in the areas of communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and personal, social and emotional development. The Foundation Stage curriculum is very well organised to ensure that children's needs are met and the quality of teaching is very good. The flying start made by the children, particularly in their ability to follow routines and be active and independent learners, stands them in good stead as they move up through the school.
3. The school is well aware that developments in design and technology have lagged behind those in other subjects. Because there is no agreed framework for the curriculum, pupils' learning does not build systematically on what they already know, understand and can do. This means that they are not able to achieve satisfactorily.
4. The teachers are very conscious of any additional needs which pupils may have and are vigilant in ensuring that these are met. As a result, for example, the very few pupils with English as an additional language get on as well as other pupils with similar special educational needs. There are many fewer girls than boys and teachers take great care to ensure that girls are not overlooked and boys are not allowed to dominate lessons. This means that there is no difference in their relative achievement. Small numbers of pupils get on so well that they are able to go on to mainstream schools, on a part time basis.

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

5. Pupils' attitudes to their learning and their behaviour are **very good**. Their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is also **very good**. Pupils' attendance is **satisfactory**.



## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils enjoy coming to school and taking part in lessons and activities.
- Their behaviour is managed very effectively.
- Pupils make very good progress in learning to be independent and take on responsibilities.
- Moral and social development is catered for particularly well.

## Commentary

6. A small number of boys in Year 6 are ready to move on to secondary school. This shows in the way in which they try hard not to appear interested in lessons. However, even they find it difficult to resist the stimulating activities arranged by teachers and usually play a full part in learning and leisure opportunities. When the obstacles imposed by their special educational needs are taken into account, the majority of pupils throughout the school are enthusiastic learners. They co-operate with adults and work to the best of their ability. This is especially noticeable when they are pursuing independent tasks, as when children in the reception year work steadily through the activities in their trays, needing minimal prompting. Although many pupils find it hard to establish relationships with others, they often play with or alongside them – for example, during a long chasing game in the playground for younger pupils. Pupils are generally confident to tackle new experiences, because teachers warn them in advance of what is to happen. For instance, at the start of a science lesson, Years 5 and 6 pupils were told that they would be experimenting with high and low sounds, but that these would not be loud. However, despite this, one boy was anxious and used his initiative to ask if he could go to a quiet room for a short time. He then returned to class and continued successfully with his work.

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	56	3	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0

*The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

7. The school uses exclusion as a last resort. Generally, the strategies to avoid such extreme sanctions are very successful. This is particularly noteworthy since a high proportion of the oldest pupils are at Rowan because they have not coped at mainstream schools, several of them having been excluded permanently because of their challenging behaviour. Many pupils have targets to improve their behaviour and staff successfully help them to focus their attention on making small but significant steps forward. During the inspection, behaviour during lessons was very good and staff were able to maintain a calm and purposeful atmosphere without recourse to physically restraining pupils. The obsessions or anxieties of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are never ignored or their importance minimised. Instead, staff work with pupils to help them cope with stressful situations and this reduces the tendency for them to resort to challenging behaviour. Pupils are consistently helped to appreciate right and wrong ways of behaving, supporting very well their personal development.

8. From the reception year onwards, pupils are given steadily increasing amounts of responsibility. In addition to learning to work as independently as possible, pupils take on jobs in class and round the school. For instance, during whole school singing sessions, a weekly rota is in place to give Year 6 pupils opportunities to assist the staff. They turn over the pages of the music and change the overhead transparencies after each song. This is a well planned strategy to raise the confidence and self-esteem of the small number of boys who are not especially interested in school work. Another good development is a daily review of individual targets, when many pupils in Years 3 to 6 discuss these with staff. Pupils assess their own progress towards meeting these personal targets, so they are aware of how well they are achieving and what they need to do in order to make more progress.
  
9. Pupils' social development is enhanced in very many ways – for example, through visits within the local community, which help to develop confidence and independence. Older pupils increasingly learn social skills and become more able to interact with other people. In the dining hall, for example, a significant minority take turns to serve lunch without adult support. During lessons, they learn about friendships and how to hold a conversation. At residential camp, Year 6 pupils plan meals together and gain in confidence through using an indoor climbing wall and adventure trails outside. Pupils learn about different religions and ways of life and to value a variety of cultural traditions. For example, when looking at a video of a mosque, one pupil was very inspired ('Wow!') when he saw its dome for the first time. The school is involved in Sheffield's Children's Festival, through which pupils have been introduced to engineers and a potter. A dance specialist has worked in the school and an Asian dance group has visited. The impact of this performance on pupils from similar cultural backgrounds has prompted the school to seek out further such experiences.

## Attendance

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	14.8	School data	0.8
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.*

10. Last year, the reported attendance rates were below the averages for similar schools. However, the school has been advised by the local education authority's attendance and inclusion officer that errors in the codes written in registers resulted in a number of pupils being wrongly marked as absent. Were it not for these instances, attendance would have been in line with that of schools of a similar type. Attendance for the current school year is satisfactory. Pupils are usually on time for the start of the school day and for lessons.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning and the curriculum are good. Pupils are cared for well and supported very well. Partnerships with parents, other schools and the community are very good.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**. The assessment of pupils' work is also **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are very skilled in working with pupils who have autistic spectrum or speech and language disorders.

- Good procedures for assessment ensure that work set is well matched to pupils' individual needs. However, in a few subjects, assessment is under-developed.
- Teaching assistants make very effective contributions to pupils' learning and achievement.
- Lesson time is mostly used very efficiently.

## Commentary

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 30 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (7%)	12 (40%)	14 (46%)	2 (7%)	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.*

- Throughout the school, teachers make very successful use of teaching methods and resources known to be effective for pupils with the special educational needs for which the school caters. For instance, staff restrict the language they use and they speak clearly, using signing when necessary. Pictures and symbols are employed frequently, supporting pupils' understanding and providing alternative methods of communication. Simple strategies – for example, starting a question or instruction with the pupil's name or regularly using key vocabulary, such as 'looking' or 'choose' – are highly effective in focusing pupils and reducing the anxiety of those with autistic spectrum disorders. Where pupils struggle to control their compulsive behaviour or have difficulty coping with particular situations – for instance, changes of activity – staff invariably respond calmly but decisively, reassuring pupils and using language and techniques with which they are familiar. For example, when children in the reception year were beginning to echo a phrase that had provoked amusement, the teacher said firmly 'That's finished.' The children understood this, calmed down, and resumed work. Parents feel very strongly that their children are taught well.
- There are effective procedures in place to ensure that teachers have a detailed picture of the needs of pupils when they are admitted to the school. This includes a thorough assessment of pupils' speech and language skills which is carried out by the speech and language therapists. The assessment of children entering the Foundation Stage is particularly thorough. This means that teachers are very clear about the children's needs and can develop very well matched programmes for them. In several subjects, such as English and mathematics, pupils are assessed regularly using a variety of recognised assessment methods and standardised tests. The results are used well to promote pupils' progress, through developing detailed learning targets in English and mathematics and accurate grouping of pupils according to their ability in mathematics. However, in a few subjects, such as design and technology, art and design, and religious education, agreed procedures for assessment are not in place. Subject leaders have begun to produce examples of assessed work to help teachers to assess work accurately but this needs further development. Pupils' work is often marked well. This gives useful feedback to them about how well they have done and shows when the work was completed and how much support the pupil required. A strength of the assessment systems is the way in which older pupils are involved in setting their own targets and evaluating the progress they have made.
- In the key areas where pupils get on very well – English, mathematics and personal, social and health education – teachers make particularly effective use of their knowledge of each pupil's needs and stage of development. They take this information into account when planning lessons and activities, ensuring that pupils have to make just the right amount of effort. This means that they don't get bored, because the work is too easy, or dispirited, because it's too hard. Teachers bring their knowledge of pupils up to date on a very regular basis. For example, the content of lessons is adjusted according to how well pupils have learned on previous occasions.

14. Teachers and teaching assistants work together very effectively. Teaching assistants are very flexible and may, for instance, work closely with particular pupils, provide general support during lessons, or take responsibility for certain activities – such as food technology. Teachers usually make sure that the support staff are thoroughly briefed about their role in helping pupils to achieve, thus making very efficient use of a valuable resource. For instance, all staff share similarly high expectations for pupils' behaviour and use agreed methods to manage them. Because they know the pupils so well, teaching assistants regularly use their initiative in order to make learning even more successful. For example, during an English lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6 with autistic spectrum or speech and language disorders and very challenging behaviour, the teaching assistant helped them to understand what is meant by a 'boarding school' by relating it to Harry Potter's experiences. In the same lesson, very effective support was provided for a pupil who struggles with reading, so he was able to be fully involved in a discussion about letters to a newspaper. Again, teaching assistants know when to allow pupils to be independent, resisting the temptation to do too much for them. This is especially evident when younger pupils are learning to work through their individual tasks. Staff sit nearby and observe, but don't intervene unless this is absolutely necessary. Very occasionally, teaching assistants' skills are not used to the full, generally when the teacher is leading an activity for the whole class.
15. Teachers are very aware of the need to maintain pupils' interest and concentration during lessons. They usually achieve this by organising a variety of activities which involve pupils in different styles of learning and which are interesting and relevant to their ages. For example, during a literacy lesson for children in the reception year, an extensive range of tasks were presented, all reinforcing children's knowledge and understanding of the letter 'f'. Children were very excited by a game, made by the teacher, during which they used a magnetic fishing rod to catch pictures of objects – fish, flower, foot – repeated the words, and matched them to others on the game board. Before they had time to tire of this, they were introduced to another game, then watched a television programme and finally did some individual reading and writing tasks. The lesson passed very quickly, with children learning eagerly and extremely effectively. Occasionally, teachers misjudge the time needed for particular parts of the lesson. The pace may be too fast for some pupils or – more usually – a task runs on for too long, pupils start to get restless, and learning slows down.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is **good** as are opportunities for enrichment. The accommodation and resources are **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A high staffing ratio, carefully adapted accommodation, and specialist approaches to planning for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder, create a very good environment for pupils to learn in.
- Subjects are mainly well planned and there are a number of very effective curriculum developments. However, planning for design and technology is unsatisfactory.
- The personal, social and health education programme, together with learning opportunities in other subjects and activities, enable pupils to achieve very well in their personal and social development.
- A good range of educational visits, visitors into school, and residential opportunities, help to make learning interesting and enjoyable.
- Carefully written individual targets are used to help pupils improve the standard of their work, especially in English and mathematics.
- Staff design and make high quality resources which they share with other staff.

### **Commentary**

16. Classrooms are carefully arranged to ensure that the learning environment is very well matched to the pupils' needs. Pale colours are used throughout the school, to create a calm atmosphere.

In the classes for the reception year children and youngest pupils, and in the specialist class for pupils with the most severe autistic spectrum disorder, the working areas are screened, and 'clutter' is kept to a minimum. This means that pupils can learn well, as they are not distracted and they feel secure. Staff are very skilled at adapting the curriculum so that it can meet the particular special needs of pupils with autistic spectrum or speech and language disorders. Consequently, there is a very strong emphasis on using visual aids, such as photographs and symbols, to support spoken language in all subject areas. Specific methods, such as the 'Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communications Handicapped Children' approach, give a structure to learning which pupils understand. There is a high number of support staff and they are well deployed so that all pupils, including those with more complex needs or challenging behaviour, can participate fully in activities.

17. Very good use is made of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy in order to support pupils' achievement in English and mathematics. Planning in English is enhanced by the very good collaboration with the speech and language therapists, promoting pupils' communication skills. Amongst a variety of collaborative methods of working, a social use of language programme supports pupils who have difficulty interacting with others. They learn, for example, how to speak to adults appropriately, cope with winning and losing board games, and share and take turns. In mathematics, the recent introduction of ability groupings for several pupils in Years 3 and 4 and most of those in Years 5 and 6 is very effective in helping teachers to match work very closely to pupils' learning needs. The senior staff ensure that the curriculum is continually being developed. For example, currently, a very interesting programme, taught by a visiting music teacher, helps a number of pupils to communicate by composing music on a computer. Teachers often plan very useful links between subjects. For instance, a 'Katie Morag' day, for pupils in Years 3 to 5, was based on a story they had read. It linked work in English, mathematics, geography and personal and social development very effectively. Events such as this help pupils to appreciate the relevance of what they are learning and to practise using skills and knowledge. Unlike in other subjects, there is no agreed planning framework to help teachers organise the curriculum for design and technology. As a result, pupils do not consistently have a broad enough experience of the subject and their achievement is unsatisfactory.
18. The curriculum supports pupils' personal and social development very well. The programme for personal, social and health education begins with the development of personal self-help skills for the youngest pupils – for instance, putting on shoes and coats. By Year 6, pupils are helped to develop social skills such as having a conversation and being co-operative, understand about friendships, and learn how to express their views – on drugs, alcohol and smoking, for example. A transition programme has been developed for pupils in Year 6 which prepares them very well for transfer to secondary school. Educational visits, travelling on the minibus, residential activities, routines in the dining hall and at snack time, play time, and paired and group work in lessons, are all examples of how the school provides extensively for pupils' personal and social development.
19. Teachers work very hard to make the curriculum interesting and relevant to pupils. They arrange visits to parks, museums, transport centres and libraries, for example, and to other schools for swimming. There are visiting musicians, singers, dancers and footballers. Pupils have listened to pianists, sopranos, harpists, and a lute player. They have experienced the sounds of jazz, pop, and classical music. There is a residential holiday for Year 6 pupils combining problem solving activities, personal and social development, design and technology, art, and physical education. Pupils enjoy the adventure playgrounds and outdoor spaces and resources at lunchtime and in their breaks, but there are few organised games and no clubs during which they can socialise with other pupils who share a common interest.
20. Last year, the school analysed pupils' success rates and discovered that in many cases it was difficult to measure progress, because the wording of the targets was not sufficiently specific. As a consequence, targets have improved significantly. Currently, individual targets for English, mathematics, and personal development are worded very precisely so that pupils know what they have to learn in order to make progress. When the regular reviews show that pupils have

achieved their targets, new ones are written. As a result, pupils are continually challenged to extend their learning and achievement.

21. The quality and range of learning resources are good. Purchased resources are augmented by ones made to suit pupils' needs exactly. Teachers regularly hold evening workshops to discuss and share the resources, such as games, they have designed and made to help all pupils with autistic spectrum and speech and language disorders to benefit equally from lessons and the curriculum.

### Care, guidance and support

The arrangements for ensuring pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **good**. **Very good** support, advice and guidance are provided. The ways in which the school seeks to involve pupils in its work and development are **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff know the pupils very well and understand the impact of their particular special educational needs. Consequently, they provide very effective support.
- Pupils are well cared for with good attention to their welfare, health and safety.
- The school takes good account of pupils' opinions.

### Commentary

22. Because staff are very skilled in using strategies suitable for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder, the support they provide ensures that pupils feel secure and confident. Visual aids, such as photographs and symbols, are used throughout the school day to support pupils and help them understand what is happening to them. An example of this was when staff prepared a reception aged child for a hospital visit, when he would be required to wear a special helmet. Staff worked with the pupil to make a replica of the helmet and took photographs of him wearing it. These were included in a book for him to look at, in school and at home, which was very effective in enabling him to understand what would happen at the hospital. Very good support is given to pupils with severe autistic spectrum disorder and those with challenging behaviour so that they participate in group activities such as snack time. Staff gently redirect pupils who try to injure themselves. There are very good procedures, much appreciated by parents, to support new pupils joining the school. Careful preparation and links with families ensure that young children entering the Foundation Stage make a confident start in school.
23. Termly checks take place and reports are written on health and safety in accordance with the school's policy. However, during the inspection, a couple of matters relating to the full implementation of the health and safety policy were reported to the headteacher. During play times, staff are vigilant in their supervision of the adventure playgrounds and other resources. They are meticulous in their preparations to take pupils out in the minibus. Procedures for the administration of medicines are conducted very well. The arrangements for child protection are securely in place and education staff know how to implement these procedures. Further training on child protection is planned for July this year, but only for education staff. Child protection training for other staff who have contact with pupils is not yet planned. The school provides many opportunities to help pupils learn to take responsibility for their own safety – for example, to cross roads and travel safely in the minibus. Girls receive very good care and support at puberty, to help them cope with personal hygiene.
24. No formal method of representing pupils' views – such as a school council – is in place at the moment. Encouraging pupils to express their views is, however, a focal point of lessons and pupils are accustomed, through making choices, to demonstrate their needs and opinions. The school went to great lengths to ensure that all pupils could respond to the Ofsted pupils' questionnaire and devised five different versions of it, in order to achieve this. Following a period of unsettled and disruptive incidents at break times, the school asked a group of pupils how they thought that playtime could be improved. They came up with very definite and

effective ideas, as a result of which playtimes are now more structured and friendly, have more toys and games available, and are not considered 'boring.'

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

There are **very good** links with parents, other schools and the community.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school is very well regarded by parents and is in regular contact with them.
- There is a very good range of information for parents which often helps them to deal with their children's needs.
- Very close links to the local community support pupils' personal and social development.
- The school offers a wide range of training and educational opportunities to schools and students.

### **Commentary**

25. Parents are very positive about the majority of aspects of the school, although a very small number have reservations about pupils' behaviour. They are very happy that their children like coming to school and recount instances when their child has displayed the symbol for 'school' on their timetable at home, indicating that they want to be there. The school has a very clear complaints procedure for parents, who feel very comfortable about approaching staff with queries or problems. Several parents describe how the efforts of the school have had a profound impact on the whole family, through sharing approaches and resources.
26. Home/school diaries are a major method of passing information between parents and staff on a day-to-day basis. They illustrate the detailed communications that take place, often daily. For example, the school might suggest a variety of ways to help a parent tackle issues at bedtime or mealtimes, or create a 'social story' that is pertinent to a specific topic – such as a visit to the dentist. Several parents call in every day to bring and collect their children, and this provokes further regular dialogue between staff and parents. As several of these parents are governors, they are in a very good position to see the daily life and events of the school and pass this information on to other parents. A special notice board is overflowing with local and national information of interest to parents, and is a focal point for news and meetings held by the Rowan Support Group. These meetings provide an important source of advice and information for a significant number of parents. Each term, parents receive copies of their children's individual education plans and letters from their child's teacher to let them know what is being studied. Annual review reports are very detailed. As a result of measures such as these, parents feel well informed about how their children are getting on.
27. The school makes very good use of facilities close at hand, such as the local library and shops, as well as visits further afield. These support the curriculum and promote personal and social skills – for example, road safety and behaving well when out in the community. This can have a huge impact on parents' lives. At the meeting for parents, a carer spoke movingly of the difference made by being able to take her grandson to shops, into which he had previously refused to go.
28. The school is constantly in use as a training resource. There are established placements for community service modules for secondary school pupils, as well as work experience students and pupils completing elements of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Training for teaching assistants and other local education authority staff includes workshops and opportunities to work alongside Rowan's staff in the classroom. These provide much appreciated expertise and guidance on working with children with autistic spectrum disorders. There are very well thought out transition programmes for Year 6 pupils who are moving onto other schools, which revolve around very close collaboration between Rowan and the schools concerned.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are **good**. Leadership, management and governance are each **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides very strong leadership.
- Although subject leadership is good, the role needs further development.
- The induction and continuing professional development of staff are managed well.
- Governors understand their role and provide very good support.
- Financial management is very effective.
- The school does not have a written sex education policy.

### Commentary

29. Parents have great confidence in the school's leaders. The headteacher has established a very clear vision of how the school will develop and improve. She has ensured the school's very good improvement since the previous inspection, by carefully analysing what needed to be done, prioritising tasks and keeping a watchful eye on developments. There is a fundamental commitment to providing the best possible quality of education for all pupils and to develop the school as a centre of expertise for pupils with complex needs. This vision is shared by the deputy headteacher and staff, which results in a strong sense of teamwork. The headteacher is very outward-looking and ensures that the school is included in initiatives such as the local education authority's Assessment for Learning project. This approach helps staff to keep abreast of developments in education locally and nationally. Although the overall leadership of the curriculum is good, deficiencies in design and technology, identified during the previous inspection, have not been attended to quickly enough.
30. Subject leadership ranges from very good to satisfactory, but is good overall. Here, the deputy headteacher has set a very positive example through her very good leadership of mathematics. Several subject leaders are relatively new to their roles, which they have not yet fully developed. For example, they do not all systematically check the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress. Additionally, when lessons are visited, the focus of the observations is not always sufficiently precise. The school has already identified these areas for development and has begun to rectify them – for example, by entering pupil information into a computer database. This is set to provide the school with a clear profile of pupils' achievement as they move up through the school, particularly in the areas of communication, literacy, numeracy and personal development. It will also make it possible to compare the rates of progress of different groups of pupils – for example, those with particular special educational needs – and in each subject.
31. Pupils' good achievement is maintained and improved by a strong commitment to the professional development of all staff and governors. The performance management system has been extended to include teaching assistants, and there are good plans to involve all other staff. The school's self-review process accurately identifies priorities for development and these are set out very clearly in the school improvement plan. Currently, these include updating staff training in an approved method of physically restraining pupils, in order to support the school further in managing pupils with very challenging behaviour. The staff undertake a good range of courses and newly appointed staff receive effective support. For example, a very recently appointed teacher has already been given opportunities to observe more experienced colleagues and attend a course on autistic spectrum disorders and challenging behaviour. When new subject leaders are appointed, the school ensures that the transition runs smoothly, by including a period of time when the past and present post holders to work together.
32. The governors play an increasingly active role in decision-making, informed by their good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have ensured that their role



has developed very effectively since the previous inspection. This now includes maintaining an overview of finance, the curriculum and policies. To this end, governors' committees are very significant and a schedule of meetings, linked to the school improvement plan has been developed. The strategic role of the governing body has committed the school to enhancing staffing in a class where the pupils are particularly challenging. This decision had to be weighed up very carefully, because it has had an impact on the funds available for other purposes – for example, learning resources. Although all other statutory duties are fulfilled, a sex education policy has not been written or approved by the governing body, although sex education is included in the school's curriculum.

33. The school buys into the local education authority's financial bursar service and the budget is managed very efficiently. All financial decisions are linked to the school improvement plan and can clearly be seen to have led to improvements – for example, through the constant development of the accommodation in order to make it more suitable for the special educational needs of the pupils. The local education authority's recent audit report was very positive in its judgements about the school's financial controls and management.

### **Financial information**

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	756329
Total expenditure	741642
Expenditure per pupil	12158

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	8373
Balance carried forward to the next	32879

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

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

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

*Six lessons were seen involving children in the reception year. Judgements have not been made about the following areas of learning: creative development; physical development; knowledge and understanding of the world. This is because not enough lessons were seen in these areas.*

34. The nine children in the Foundation Stage are taught in two classes, working alongside older pupils. All the children have autistic spectrum disorders. It is not possible to compare children's achievement with that at the time of the previous report, as the Foundation Stage was not reported. The provision is very well led and managed, with close collaboration between the teachers and a very clear sense of direction established by the co-ordinator.

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

The provision is **very good**.

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

- Very positive relationships with staff mean that children are confident to tackle new learning.
- Throughout the day, children are encouraged to be independent.

#### **Commentary**

35. Children are taught very well. Teachers and teaching assistants acquire a very detailed knowledge of each child's special educational needs and stage of development, including through very close links with their families. This knowledge is used to set challenging targets – for example, to improve children's personal and social skills. Important issues such as dressing and undressing, toilet training and taking account of other children, are tackled systematically and sensitively, with considerable success. Staff manage children's behaviour firmly but kindly, so they are clear about what is expected of them. Their concerns are taken very seriously. For instance, one child was worried when a television programme, used regularly to support numeracy, was shown during a literacy session. The teacher took time to reassure him, preventing the situation from escalating. Although most of the children choose to play on their own, several of them are very aware of what others are doing and will play happily alongside them. Classroom routines are very well established and many of these rely on children acting responsibly. For example, they work through tasks such as tracing letters, threading cards or matching patterns, needing no prompting to take each activity from their individual 'Start' tray and put them into the 'Finish' one, when completed. When a timer goes off, the children each check their personal timetable, collecting the symbol for their next session and posting the previous one. Because the children become so independent, the staff are able to focus on teaching new work to each child in rotation and the classroom is calm and very purposeful.

### **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

The provision is **very good**.

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

- Staff are very skilled at encouraging and enabling children to communicate.
- The time available for learning is used very efficiently.

## Commentary

36. When they join the school, most children have very little spoken language and several do not speak at all. They rapidly begin to communicate, because so much emphasis is placed on providing opportunities that stimulate children's understanding and their desire to be fully involved in activities. For instance, when Mrs Wishy-Washy (a puppet) greets each child and adult by name, the more vocal children, and the staff, respond with 'Hello, Mrs Wishy-Washy.' The quieter children try very hard to copy their example, responding to the teacher's encouragement and everyone's praise and delight when they are successful. The familiar rhymes and songs that are a regular feature of lessons and activities, give children the confidence to use their voices. At drink and biscuit time, children use a picture exchange system to indicate their choices, often supplementing the symbols with spoken words. Staff are always very kind but insist that children conform to their very high expectations, which are another source of the very good achievement in this area. Teaching is very good and lessons and activities are planned very carefully. For instance, a literacy lesson of nearly an hour passed very quickly and, throughout it, almost all children remained focused and working hard. This was because the teacher had prepared a wide range of interesting and relevant tasks, linked to the letter 'f', which flowed on very smoothly. Consequently, children did not have chance to become restless or bored. Additionally, the work was matched very accurately to each child's level of knowledge, skills and understanding. When they were practising recording and writing, their tasks ranged from choosing and sticking down the correct symbols to copying words that higher attaining children had matched to pictures of fish, frogs and feathers etc. This very close attention to what each child needs to learn next means that they make very good progress in speaking, listening, reading and writing.

## MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

The provision is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources are used very imaginatively, so children want to be involved in learning.
- Teaching assistants make very strong contributions to children's learning.

## Commentary

37. Children are taught very well, with lessons planned very thoroughly to meet each child's particular needs. As in all the other areas of learning, many of the learning resources are made specially by the staff. This is often necessary to ensure that children are able to have plenty of opportunities to practise particular skills or to reinforce a specific piece of knowledge without them becoming bored. For instance, during one numeracy lesson, children played a game with a large foam dice, counting the spots (from one to six) and matching them to number cards. The higher attaining children, including two from minority ethnic backgrounds, were quick at doing this and were soon moved on to dice with numerals up to 12 or 20. While they were still enjoying the game, a new toy was introduced, ejecting plastic balls when children pressed a switch. They were captivated by this – 'Oh my goodness!' said one. Nevertheless, after they had each had a turn, they were happy to move on to another activity, working with numbers from four to 20, tailored to their particular stage of development. As a result of this careful preparation and accurate matching, children achieved very well. Each child has a 'key worker' (one of the classroom staff) who is responsible for organising the tasks he or she works on independently and during the individual teaching and learning sessions. The teaching assistants also use their detailed knowledge of children during whole class activities, encouraging and prompting them, rephrasing questions, praising, and reminding them how to behave. They also play a full part in recording how well children learn, helping the teachers to maintain a close overview of the performance of each child.

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

38. Classrooms are organised to provide distinct areas for various activities – such as group work or watching television. This helps children to understand and negotiate their immediate environment. They also learn to find their way around the school and about the wider community, through visits – for example, to use the facilities of other schools. Regular and constant references to visual timetables not only reassure children but enable them to appreciate the passing of time and the sequence of daily events. They learn about the roles of people who help them – the dentist and postal worker, for instance – and activities such as making cakes help them to understand about personal safety and hygiene. By using computers, children come to understand that their actions can affect what happens – for instance, to animated characters in a game.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

39. Children have very many worthwhile opportunities to learn how to control their bodies and take enjoyment from exercise. For instance, they follow a carefully structured programme to help them become accustomed to a swimming pool, visit a soft play room, and have regular sessions in the school hall and outside in the playground. They also develop their fine motor skills through activities during which they learn to use tools such as pencils, brushes, glue sticks, and wooden spoons.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

40. There are daily opportunities for children to choose from a range of activities which are designed to support their creative development. For example, during the inspection, the staff had set out a dolls house and furniture, easel and paints, dry sand, and toys that made sounds and music. Additionally, children take part in more formal sessions, such as when they join the rest of the school for singing and music-making.

## **SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2**

### **ENGLISH**

*Seven English lessons were observed.*

Provision in English is **very good**.

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

- Pupils achieve very well because work set is very well matched to their individual needs and offers many very good opportunities to develop their skills in reading and writing.
- Speech and language therapists work very effectively with teachers and support staff to develop the pupils' communication skills.
- The 'Rowan sentence maker' is an excellent strategy for developing pupils' independent writing skills.
- The subject leader provides a very good role model and leads developments very well.
- High quality resources are used very effectively to interest and motivate pupils.
- Pupils have very good opportunities to develop their language and literacy skills during lessons in other subjects.

#### **Commentary**

41. Pupils are taught very well. Teachers are very skilled at giving individual pupils work which is carefully adapted to suit their particular needs. Consequently, they make very good progress during lessons and achieve very well in reading, writing and communication. For example, in an excellent lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6, the subject leader and support staff worked as a

highly effective team to deliver a diverse range of activities which presented just the right level of challenge for each pupil. Lower attaining pupils and those with more severe communication difficulties received very good small group and individual support to develop their reading skills using a stimulating 'big book' about animals. As a result, they made clear progress in identifying rhyming words, recalling facts about the characters in the story and predicting what might happen next. All the pupils were confident to speak out. Teaching assistants showed considerable skill in developing the points which the pupils were trying to make and helping them to use a wider vocabulary and improve their articulation so that they could more easily be understood. Pupils were then able to record their answers, because the staff used symbols and pictures very effectively to support the written word. At the same time, the teacher really extended higher attaining pupils, through asking them to consider 'persuasive writing' as a particular writing style and plan an advertisement to attract pupils to their school. The pupils thoroughly enjoyed this activity and tried very hard. They were able to read magazines competently, select advertisements they liked and comment on the punctuation and style, such as the use of speech bubbles and explanation marks. They then adopted similar techniques in order to produce pieces of very good, independent writing.

42. The speech and language therapists provide very good support to help pupils to develop their speaking and communication skills. Although the time they have in the school has been reduced, it is still sufficient to enable them to offer a very effective service. This is because there are very good systems in place to ensure that their time is used very efficiently. All pupils are given a thorough assessment on entry so that advice can be given to teachers on how best to support individual pupils to develop speech and language skills. Where appropriate, assessments are then updated through the annual reviews. The speech and language therapists support staff development very well, providing individual and whole staff training on particular methods – such as a social use of language programme – which can be used in class. A particularly effective method which has been developed by therapists is the 'Rowan sentence maker'. This is a colour coded system to help pupils to construct sentences. Although it was originally used to promote spoken language, its use has now been extended to help pupils to compose written sentences. During the inspection, excellent use was made of this method to support independent writing with pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5. Consequently, with support, lower attaining pupils were able to construct simple sentences using symbols, whilst several higher attaining pupils worked independently to compose and write more complex sentences.
43. The subject leader has been instrumental in ensuring that English is promoted very well throughout the school. She checks teachers' planning carefully. This ensures that lessons include a good range of opportunities to develop skills in reading, writing and communication. A very good scheme of work has been developed incorporating aspects of the National Literacy Strategy and effectively adapted to meet the pupils' particular special needs. A good focus is placed on using information and communication technology for recording, so that pupils become confident in word processing their written work. Good strategies are in place to assess the progress which pupils are making. The subject leader has worked with English specialists from other Sheffield special schools to develop guidance on assessing pupils' writing skills. The quality of teaching is monitored through lesson observations which are conducted by the subject leader. There is a good variety of high quality books for use in classrooms and in the library. The library is well used and pupils are encouraged to take library books home. There has been very good improvement in the provision for English since the previous inspection.

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

44. Teaching methods are very effective in promoting pupils' speaking and listening skills. An example of this was in a mathematics lesson for higher attaining pupils in Years 5 and 6 where pupils learned to use mathematical vocabulary such as 'symmetry' and 'ratio'. Because relationships with adults are so good, pupils are confident to practise using their voices. They are encouraged to use their reading skills wherever possible. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 read the instructions so that they could follow a recipe in food technology. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 were able to read the targets on their individual education plans and then assess

how well they were doing. Pupils improve their writing skills through a very good emphasis on using writing to record their work. An example of this was when Year 6 pupils used neat, joined up writing to write about musical instruments.

## **MATHEMATICS**

*Four lessons of mathematics were seen.*

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve very well across all areas of mathematics.
- Teachers make very good use of targets, helping individual pupils to become increasingly competent in their understanding of number, calculations, problem solving, shape, space and measures.
- The organisation of many pupils in Years 3 to 6 into groups according to their ability in mathematics supports their learning very well.
- Teaching is often highly creative, but computers need to be used more.
- Teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to practise mathematical skills in other subjects or when pupils are at home.

### **Commentary**

45. Because of pupils' special educational needs, there is very relevant attention given to number and simple calculations for the younger pupils. A boy in Year 2 whose home language is not English and who has a speech and language disorder has made good progress rote counting to 20. He has learned to add two single digit numbers together in various ways, initially to make five. He has progressed well and is now adding single and two digit numbers together to make 15. His particular mathematics targets are specific and precise and carefully matched to his learning needs. Throughout the school, pupils' individual targets are similarly well written. Because pupils' learning is assessed frequently and targets adjusted accordingly, they are always relevant to pupils and so help them to improve and progress.
46. As pupils move up through the school, they develop an increasingly wide range of mathematical knowledge, skill and understanding. By the time they are in Year 6, the highest attaining pupils learn to solve mathematical word problems using real life situations that involve money, time, and measures. They learn about fractions, ratios and proportions, and extract information from diagrams. The lower attaining older pupils can use coins up to five pence for shopping, they can estimate small numbers of apples in a fruit bowl, and understand terms like 'more' and 'less'. Pupils develop a very good understanding of time over their years in school. The youngest pupils, for example, read their daily individual timetables using symbols and pictures. By Year 6, the leavers learn very well how to read the more complex secondary school timetables they will use in Year 7.
47. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers make very good use of the National Numeracy Strategy to plan their lessons, to assess pupils' progress in each area of mathematics over time, and to introduce increasingly complex mathematical ideas. The recent organisation of many of the pupils in Years 3 to 6 into ability sets for mathematics is a very successful development. This is because teachers used their accurate assessments of pupils' individual achievements to group pupils, and they plan work that is very appropriate for each set. In the highest attaining set, teaching is especially creative and challenging. For instance, during the inspection, pupils learned about ratio, by mixing paint and water in varying proportions. The activity motivated pupils very effectively, particularly a small number of Year 6 boys who are highly capable in mathematics, but generally not very interested in their school work. However, computers are rarely used to support learning in mathematics and this is an

area for development. Similarly, there is not enough encouragement for pupils to do mathematics work at home.

48. A new subject leader is building very effectively on the work of the previous one, who developed the subject very well. There has been good improvement in mathematics since the previous inspection. Pupils' achievement in mathematics has improved. The monitoring of pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and the quality of planning have also developed well.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

49. Pupils are given a satisfactory range of opportunities to use their mathematical skills to support learning in other subjects. This is an area of planning in other subjects that requires further development. There are a few good developments where mathematical skills are integrated into the work of other subjects. For instance, in athletic activities, pupils use timers and stop watches. In a science lesson about sound, pupils in Years 5 and 6 add ten gram masses to an elastic band to stretch and tighten it and raise the pitch of a note. In a music lesson for pupils with severe autistic spectrum disorders in Years 3, 4 and 5, they sing number rhymes like 'Ten Green Bottles'. However, there are also missed opportunities to use mathematical skills and promote mathematical language. In Years 1 and 2, for example, pupils paint pictures of hedgehogs and cut and paste drinking straws to stick on as spines. They are not encouraged to measure the spines and cut them to the same length or make some spines longer or shorter than the others.

### **SCIENCE**

*Two science lessons were seen.*

Provision in science is **good**.

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

- Pupils of all abilities are achieving well because of the good quality of teaching.
- Teachers' planning ensures that all pupils develop good knowledge and skills in science.
- Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to teaching and learning.
- Leadership and management are good, but there is a need to develop a regular pattern of checks on the quality of teaching.

#### **Commentary**

50. Teachers have agreed what pupils in each year will learn, and this enables them to learn a range of scientific facts and use a variety of equipment. As a result, they make good progress as they move up through the school – for example, in their knowledge and understanding of physical processes. With support, pupils in Year 2 can correctly identify pictures representing day and night time and sort out objects that require pushing or pulling to make them work. By Years 5 and 6, pupils construct electric circuits and predict whether more bulbs on the circuit would make the light brighter or dimmer.
51. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and use this when planning activities that are relevant to pupils' age and special educational need. Like the teachers, teaching assistants know the pupils very well. Because relationships between pupils and adults are very good, a climate of trust and security is created in class, enabling pupils to concentrate more easily on their work. Teaching assistants play a valuable role in supporting pupils and helping them to remain on task. For example, in a Year 6 class, teaching assistants were ensuring that pupils with challenging behaviour remained on task, by asking individuals questions connected to the topic of light and reflection and encouraging them to contribute to the lesson. However, during this lesson, a discussion about reflection was allowed to run on for too long. Pupils began to get restless and they had insufficient time for the planned practical activity.

52. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, where pupils' progress was satisfactory overall. The current subject leader has been in post for two terms, and has already identified what needs to be done to raise standards. This includes giving greater emphasis to learning through investigations and visiting classrooms to check that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

*Two lessons were observed.*

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has made very good improvements since the previous inspection.
- Resources are good, with a wide range of software and hardware available to ensure that all pupils' needs are met.
- Leadership and management are good but the quality of teaching has not yet been checked in all classes.
- Teaching assistants provide valuable support to pupils.
- Information and communication technology is well used to support most subjects.

### **Commentary**

53. At the time of the previous inspection, progress in information and communication technology and the quality of teaching were judged to be unsatisfactory. In order to help to improve the situation, there has been a substantial improvement in the resources available to support teaching and learning. These now include an electronic whiteboard and a computer network. To ensure that expensive resources are used to the full, each class has planned, weekly use of the library, where the whiteboard is sited. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers mostly make good use of the available equipment, planning activities that are well matched to pupils' needs and interests. For example, during the inspection, a pupil in Year 1 with autistic spectrum disorder used a computer keyboard, with lower case letters, to create a graph. She was able to use the mouse independently and follow the teacher's instructions successfully. This represented very good achievement for the pupil. Year 6 pupils learned to use digital cameras successfully and then print the photographs on the computer. Pupils throughout the school are well motivated both by the subject and the quality of teaching.
54. The subject leader has clear vision and enthusiasm for the subject and provides effective leadership and management. A comprehensive file of pupils' work has been produced. Each sample has been labelled to show the context within which it was produced, how much support was needed and the National Curriculum attainment level it illustrates. This is a very useful resource for teachers to consult and demonstrates that all aspects of the subject are being covered. The subject leader has begun to observe lessons throughout the school. This initiative is currently in its infancy and needs to be developed further in order to provide information that will guide further developments in the subject.
55. In the lessons seen, the constant reassurance, support, and challenge from the teaching assistants helped to ensure that pupils concentrated and successfully completed their tasks. As a result, for example, a Year 5 pupil with very challenging behaviour and an autistic spectrum disorder was able to use a symbols writing program with some independence, to create a weather forecast for the day.



## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

56. In most subjects – for example, English, music and science – teachers incorporate information and communication technology into their planning. In music, several pupils currently use a specialist computer program that enables them to successfully compose and play music using a range of instruments. However, not all teachers plan sufficient opportunities for pupils to use computers to develop and practise their skills and knowledge in mathematics.

## HUMANITIES

*One lesson was seen in geography and none in history. Judgements were not made about these subjects. Three lessons were seen in religious education.*

### Geography

57. Teachers' emphasis on using the local environment is a suitable approach to the subject as it helps pupils to understand the world around them more readily. For example, pupils in Years 2 and 3 have visited a garden centre and taken photographs and made a class book to record the visit. Younger pupils note the weather each day on the class chart and pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 have looked at the differences in the seasons of the year. The lesson observed was taught very well. Pupils in Years 3 to 5, with autistic spectrum disorders, developed their understanding of tourism as they made a leaflet for visitors. To do this, they drew upon experiences gained during a visit to Chatsworth, the previous week, reminded by the teacher's skilful questioning.

### History

58. Lively displays show that pupils take part in stimulating activities to develop their historical knowledge. An example of this is the writing and pictures which pupils in Years 5 and 6 have produced about myths. The quality of the 'news flash' which they have written about St George killing the dragon is clear evidence that they respond well because teachers make the work interesting. The starting point for their understanding of history is often the consistent use made of pictorial timetables. This helps the youngest pupils and those with the most severe autistic spectrum disorders to appreciate that events happen one after another and that some are in the past.

### Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good variety of well planned activities and high quality resources ensure that pupils are interested and learn well.
- Good questioning helps pupils to extend their vocabularies so that they can join in discussions about religious topics.
- Opportunities to visit places of worship enhance pupils' learning.
- Religious education lessons support pupils' spiritual development well.
- Current procedures for assessment are not sufficient for teachers to measure how well pupils are learning.

### Commentary

59. Religious education is taught through work which is based on the Sheffield Agreed Syllabus. The quality of teaching is good. Carefully planned activities and good opportunities to take part in practical exercises make religious ideas and messages meaningful to pupils. An example of this was a very good lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6, during which they looked at the Qur'an, when learning about the Islamic faith. Prior to touching the Qur'an, the pupils were told to wash

their hands as the teacher explained that Moslems wash before praying. Consequently, the pupils understood that this was a special book which should be treated with respect. Good quality resources are used effectively to motivate pupils and make lessons interesting. This was evident in a very lively lesson about the story of Noah, for pupils in Years 2 and 3. The teacher made the story real through using a wooden ark with pairs of animals and games which she had made. Pupils really enjoyed activities using these resources and learned very well. Teachers are skilled at supporting pupils' attempts to communicate through asking well thought out questions and using pictures and symbols where appropriate. This enables pupils to learn words to convey religious ideas and to join in class discussions. An example of this was when a Year 6 pupil said that Moslems take off their shoes 'to respect God.'

60. Pupils have visited a variety of places of worship including a cathedral, a church and a mosque. They enjoy the visits and remember what happens in a place of worship. During lessons, there is a good emphasis on pupils' spiritual development. For example, in a lesson for pupils in Years 2 and 3, the teacher drew their attention to the sunny weather and reminded them of the lovely world that God had created. The subject is well led and managed and there has been very good improvement since the previous inspection, when provision for religious education was unsatisfactory. However, to develop the quality of the provision further there needs to be a greater emphasis on assessing the progress which pupils make and using the information to inform planning.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

*Two design and technology lessons were seen.*

Provision in design and technology is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is no agreed framework to support teachers' planning and many pupils receive a narrow or unbalanced curriculum.
- The subject leader appreciates what improvements are necessary.
- Pupils learn useful food preparation and cooking skills.

### **Commentary**

61. At the time of the previous inspection, the curriculum was judged to be unsatisfactory. The situation today is very much the same, because improvement since then has been unsatisfactory. Individual teachers decide what skills their class will learn and what materials will be used. As a result, and because the school has a food technology room, the curriculum for most pupils is very heavily weighted towards the use of food. Resistant materials, when they are employed, are generally confined to card. Textiles are used occasionally. Additionally, little in the way of designing, planning and evaluating takes place. Consequently, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.
62. The subject leader is currently evaluating a commercially produced programme of work, with a view to its possible adoption by the school. Her accurate analysis of the present situation means that the subject is now being led and managed satisfactorily. She has attended a course on the use of textiles and disseminated this to staff. Further training – for example, in ways of teaching designing skills – will be necessary if the subject is to move forward successfully.
63. Food technology is often delegated successfully to teaching assistants. In the two lessons seen, pupils were taught well – for example, how to make a chocolate cake or a pizza. The teaching had several strengths, such as the effective use of symbols to display the sequence of actions necessary and the requirement that pupils be as independent as possible – weighing

ingredients, for instance. Pupils enjoy the sessions greatly and produce creditable results. However, there are only limited opportunities for them to make choices and learn from existing products.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

*One lesson was seen in art and design and one in music. Judgements were not made about these subjects.*

### **Art and design**

64. Pupils have regular opportunities to be creative and learn skills such as painting and printing. The Years 5 and 6 classrooms are enhanced by high quality displays of pupils' work, based on the art of different cultures and periods in history and by famous artists. These pupils have recently worked with a potter, to produce striking masks and figures. In the lesson seen, pupils in Years 3 to 5 with autistic spectrum disorders achieved well as they painted pictures of sunsets, trying hard to follow the teacher's example. The task was well chosen, requiring pupils to observe images downloaded from the Internet, think carefully about their work and make choices from within a suitably narrow range of colours.

### **Music**

65. The music lesson observed was taught very well. Pupils with severe autistic spectrum disorder and challenging behaviour in Years 3, 4 and 5 joined in the actions to songs, shook percussion instruments, and counted during number rhymes such as 'Ten Green Bottles'. They recognised feelings like 'happy' and 'sad' during the song 'How do you feel today?' Teaching was very effective because it not only promoted music-making but also pupils' personal and social skills, their understanding of emotions, their co-ordination of physical actions, and consolidation of their number skills. During a whole school singing session, songs like 'When you're smiling' were sung with gusto, accompanied by staff on the piano and guitar. 'Can we sing that again?' asked one boy, clearly enjoying the experience. This was a fun and joyful occasion.

66. Currently, a special music programme is in place to support a small number of pupils who are benefiting from making music using a computer. A Year 2 boy with autistic spectrum disorder concentrated very well, was able to follow oral instructions from a visiting music teacher, and composed a short sequence of notes. He used the computer mouse independently to choose the musical instrument that would play his tune and to draw lines on the screen to represent the pitch and duration of the notes. In these sessions, pupils also use a large, interactive touch screen to select instruments they would like to hear.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

*One lesson was observed. Judgements were not made about physical education.*

67. The physical education lesson observed had plenty of pace and activity to prevent pupils in Years 1 and 2 becoming distracted in the hall. They discovered different ways of moving bean bags and quoits and practised knocking down skittles, and, working in pairs, tried to stop balls with their feet. They found this very difficult but they persevered. Pupils worked very hard and behaved very well in the open space of the hall. Teaching was very effective because it promoted a positive attitude to physical development, listening skills and personal and social development.

68. The programme for swimming is increasingly challenging as pupils move up through the school. In Years 1 and 2, there are no independent swimmers yet, but pupils have gained in confidence in the water. A few have progressed to opening their eyes under water. In Year 6, over half the pupils have reached the national standard and swim at least 25 metres. A small number of pupils can swim 50 metres.

69. Staff have opportunities to improve their physical education teaching skills through the school's involvement in the national physical education and school sport professional development programme. There are good plans to link with physical education teachers from two secondary schools to extend even further the professional development opportunities for staff.

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

*Three lessons were seen. Observations of activities such as breaks and lunchtime also contributed to the judgements made.*

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' personal and social development is very good.
- The taught elements of the subject are supplemented by a wide range of other activities to promote personal and social development.
- Lesson planning is not always of a high enough quality.
- There are good plans for the subject but the quality of teaching and pupils' progress are not yet checked systematically.

### **Commentary**

70. Pupils' achievement is very good. Younger pupils learn how to look after themselves – for example, how to get the sequence right when dressing. They get changed for physical education and, after the lesson, fold away and store their physical education clothes and shoes. They learn how to travel safely in a minibus, make choices at snack time, be safe on the roads, read their timetables using symbols and pictures, name parts of their body, have good table manners, and pour a drink. Individual pupils have challenging targets to achieve, set by each class teacher. These targets are reviewed regularly and changed as appropriate so that pupils are continually challenged to make progress. Over time, pupils develop their ability to interact with others, learning, for example, to make eye contact, attend assembly without causing a disturbance, and take turns and share. The oldest pupils are able to express their views on topics like smoking, drugs and alcohol. They learn how to discuss their personal targets and assess how far they have progressed in meeting these.
71. It is clear from all the achievements described that the curriculum in this area is very good. The programme begins with a strong focus on developing pupils' personal skills and continues with an increasing emphasis on helping pupils to interact socially. Because it takes such good account of pupils' age, special educational needs and stage of development, from teaching basic self-help skills to the promotion of more complex social skills, it is very effective in enabling pupils to build steadily on what they already know, understand and can do.
72. Pupils have regular timetabled lessons which are taught well. In Year 6, for example, teachers have planned a very effective 'transition programme' to prepare pupils for transfer to secondary schools. Pupils learn how to read and understand secondary school timetables, for instance. This is because teachers have established very good links with the secondary schools and use the 'real' secondary school timetables as the basis for discussion. Not all of the lessons for personal and social education, however, are planned as well as this programme. During the inspection, one lesson had not been very well thought out and there was an inadequate range of sensory activities for the pupils with more severe autistic spectrum disorder. Teachers do not make enough use of computers to support learning in personal, social and health education.
73. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject leader has been appointed only very recently. As a result of this staffing change, there has been a delay in setting up a programme of checks on teaching and pupils' progress. There is a good action plan produced by the former

post holder – for example, to update the subject policy. Girls are very well supported at puberty, despite the lack of a written sex education policy. The subject was not reported at the time of the previous inspection, so it is not possible to make a judgement about its improvement since then.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	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	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
<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, 'standards achieved' are judged in relation to pupils' individual targets and not in relation to national standards.