

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **GILBROOK SCHOOL**

Birkenhead

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105134

Headteacher: Ken Jackson

Reporting inspector: Michael McDowell  
1405

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> July 2003

Inspection number: 259887

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Special, (emotional and behavioural difficulties)

School category: Community special

Age range of pupils: 5 - 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Pilgrim Street,  
Birkenhead,  
Wirral

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Telephone number: 0151 647 8411

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Appropriate authority: Wirral

Name of chair of governors: Mr. J. Roper

Date of previous inspection: January 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Gilbrook is a special school for boys and girls, aged between five and eleven, who have statements of special educational needs because of emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is situated in Birkenhead but serves the whole of the Wirral, as it is the only provision within that authority for pupils of primary age with such special educational needs. There are 50 pupils on roll, 48 boys and 2 girls and all of them are white and British. Most pupils come from areas within the Wirral in which there is the highest unemployment, most significant social difficulties and greatest economic disadvantage. Three quarters of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. On entry the standards of most pupils are two to three years behind those of their contemporaries in English and mathematics. A very small number of pupils are even more significantly delayed and have moderate learning difficulties. A high proportion of the pupils has a medical diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, (ADHD), and is given medication to control this. To help with this, the school works closely with health authority services and clinics are held within the school. About half of the pupils who leave the school each year go on to mainstream schools. About 60% of pupils who will be leaving the school in July 2003 will return to mainstream education.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Gilbrook is a very effective school. It has built upon the strengths identified at the last inspection and rectified the specified shortcomings. Pupils now achieve very well and this is illustrated by the results of National Curriculum testing that show that in comparison with similar schools, pupils achieve higher than average standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and higher than average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Teaching and learning opportunities are good and the school makes very good provision to meet the special educational needs of its pupils. A high proportion of pupils are successfully returned to mainstream education after their stay at the school. The school is very well led by its headteacher, who has been effective in ensuring that it continues to improve and is managed well. It gives very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- By the end of Year 6 pupils have made significant progress and achieved very well in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology.
- The teaching of literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology is highly effective and encourages pupils to want to learn.
- Very good provision is made for the personal development of pupils.
- The school takes care of its pupils very well and works very effectively with other agencies, especially the health authority, to manage and meet pupils' special educational needs.
- The leadership of the headteacher is very good and he is well supported by senior managers and other staff with responsibilities.

#### **What could be improved**

- Because individual education plans are not always sufficiently specific to an individual pupil or consistently used when planning lessons, it is difficult to ensure that pupils from different years who are in the same class are set work that continually moves their learning forwards.
- The governing body is under-strength, which limits its effectiveness in challenging the school to achieve more.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in January 1998. It has improved well since then. Specifically, there is now better provision for pupils aged five to seven, more regular monitoring of teaching and learning, more non-contact time for teachers and co-ordinators and the appraisal of teachers' work is established by a performance management policy. There is clarity about who has responsibility for pupils' protection and health and safety. The curriculum has been improved by giving more time to science. The school has maintained and built upon the previously good standards of achievement reported and has improved accommodation and resources for learning very well.

## STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets.

Progress in:		by Year 6		
speaking and listening		A		
reading		A		
writing		B		
mathematics		A		
personal, social and health education		A		
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*		A		

Key	
very good	A
good	B
satisfactory	C
unsatisfactory	D
poor	E

\* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.

The school sets targets in relation to pupils' performance in the National Curriculum assessments at the end of Year 6. It has met or exceeded these targets in each of the past three years. Pupils develop their learning skills very effectively while they attend the school and, overall, achieve very well. They make particularly good progress in literacy, especially, reading and speaking and listening, science and information and communication technology. Their progress towards acquiring numeracy skills is good. Pupils' achievement in personal social and health education is very good and they reach the targets set for them in the annual reviews of their statements. Not all individual education plans, (IEPs), have targets that are sufficiently individual and specific. Where this is the case, pupils' progress towards IEP targets cannot be properly judged. In the minority of cases in which targets are specific to the individual, very good progress is made towards reaching them.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	<b>Very good:</b> Pupils show their very positive attitudes to school by listening carefully in lessons and trying hard to do their best. They take pride in presenting their work neatly. They clearly enjoy the public praise that they receive when they do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	<b>Very good:</b> Pupils behave very well in lessons and work hard to improve their behaviour in the classroom. Over time, they learn to be attentive and not to distract others. They are sensible and quiet as they move about the school between classes. Their predominantly positive manner leads to enjoyable breaks and lunchtime activities. There are fewer fixed-term exclusions than at the time of the last inspection. Permanent exclusions are very rare.
Personal development and relationships	<b>Very good:</b> Pupils relate well to one another and very well to their teachers and their learning support assistants. In question and answer sessions they listen carefully and wait to take their turn and raise their hand before speaking. They are enthusiastic about the activities in their lessons and keen to earn the points that will gain them rewards at the end of each week. They try hard to rise to the weekly challenges that are set and take great pride in carrying out responsibilities that are assigned to them in the classroom.
Attendance	<b>Good:</b> Pupils attend well, despite, in some cases, having to travel a considerable distance. Attendance in the last year was 90.1 per cent.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 1 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

Teaching is of good quality and effectively supports pupils. It helps them to strengthen their learning skills and to develop the habits of appropriate behaviour in the classroom that they will need if they are to return, successfully, to mainstream schools. Lessons are frequently stimulating and interesting and the best are firmly based on an accurate perception of the needs of the pupils and a clear understanding of what they know, understand and can do. Pupils learn well, paying full attention in class and carrying out their tasks enthusiastically. In about a quarter of lessons, teaching was either very good or excellent. Lessons in each subject are planned with due regard for the requirements and programmes of study of the National Curriculum. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are very good and this is helpful in underpinning the consistent management of pupils' behaviour. The effective deployment of learning support assistants is a significant strength of the teaching in some of the best lessons. This is particularly strong in the class for the youngest pupils where excellent use is made of their special skills in analysing the underlying causes of literacy difficulties and working to rectify these. Teaching of English is very good with some excellent lessons. Pupils, by the end of Year 6, have benefited from a broad exposure to literature, stories poems and plays. Teaching in mathematics is good and enables pupils to recall number facts well and calculate confidently. Pupils are very well taught in science and in information and communication technology. In personal, health and social education the standard of teaching is good, overall, but on rare occasions, the purpose of activities is not shared with pupils and what has been learned within the session is not reviewed with them. These weaknesses led to one lesson being unsatisfactory. The needs of pupils who learn more slowly than others are met through grouping arrangements that are based in part on the known capabilities of pupils. The work that they are given meets their needs in most cases. However, especially in classes with mixed age groups, insufficient use is sometimes made of IEPs to ensure that the work set is matched to the individual capabilities of pupils. Those who have specific literacy difficulties have access to very good specialist teaching that meets their needs very well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	<b>Good:</b> As well as teaching all the required subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, French is offered to pupils in years 4,5 and 6. Very good provision is made to meet pupils' special educational needs including specific literacy difficulties. Good provision is made for learning outside of the classroom
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<b>Very good:</b> Pupils are helped, very effectively, to understand their need to control their impulses, to think of the consequences of their actions, to contribute to the community and consider the needs of people around them. They are given many opportunities to think about their own beliefs and those of others and to learn about their own culture and ones that are different.
How well the school cares for its pupils	<b>Very good:</b> the school takes very effective steps to protect its pupils and ensure their safety and welfare. Pupils' behaviour and work is carefully monitored and accurate assessments are made of what they know, understand and can do. In the class for the youngest pupils, plans have been put in place setting out precisely what each individual pupil must do



	next in order to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. For older pupils, these education plans are insufficiently specific to the needs of individual pupils.
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### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	<b>Very good:</b> The very good leadership of the head teacher has enabled the school to improve significantly since it was last inspected so that it now meets the needs of its pupils very well. Others with leadership responsibilities within the school carry these out effectively and the school is well managed.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	<b>Satisfactory:</b> The governors are supportive and know the strengths and weaknesses well. They are, however, under-strength and have been for some time, which makes it difficult for them to carry out their duties effectively and to continually challenge the school to improve.
The school's evaluation of its performance	<b>Good:</b> Making use of published data, the school compares aspects of its performance with similar schools. There is an established performance management strategy under which performance targets are set for the head teacher, senior managers and teachers. Through monitoring procedures progress towards these targets is kept under review.
The strategic use of resources	<b>Good:</b> A good school improvement plan is in place that links expenditure to planned priorities. The school's budget is prudently set so as to enable savings to be made in order to fund planned improvements. The school seeks to ensure that it gives the best possible value by striving to improve its performance and comparing its performance with that of similar schools.

### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like going to the school.</li> <li>• Teaching is good and teachers expect children to try hard and do their best.</li> <li>• Their children make good progress.</li> <li>• There is sufficient homework.</li> <li>• The school helps their children to become more mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few parents felt more should be offered outside of the classroom.</li> </ul>

Parents think very highly of the school. They believe that teaching is good and that the teachers expect their children to do their best. They say that the school keeps parents well informed about the progress their children are making. Minor concern was raised about the amount of out of classroom activity the school offers. The inspectors' findings support the positive views expressed by parents. They do not agree that insufficient provision is made for pupils outside of the classroom.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**By the end of Year 6 pupils have made significant progress and achieved very well in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology.**

1. Because of their special educational needs pupils have had unsuccessful and frequently severely interrupted educational experiences and their attainments are, in most cases, two to three years behind the average for their age. Before they come to Gilbrook they do not have the classroom skills necessary if they are to learn well and they have often had poor relationships with other children and with adults. When they enter the school a careful assessment is made of what they know, understand and can do and they are placed in a group with others of broadly similar capability. Despite the disadvantages arising from their special educational needs and their previous educational experiences, they respond to the good teaching and helpful support they are given and begin to make up lost ground very quickly.
2. Pupils in the class for the youngest age group make very good strides in developing their literacy skills. Their achievement in English is very good and this is a significant improvement since the last inspection. At the end of Year 2, the small number of pupils eligible are entered for the National Curriculum standardised attainment tests, (SATs). In 2003 these pupils did well with two out of four reaching the national average standard in reading. In writing, three out of four pupils were well on their way to achieving the national average standard.
3. In their lessons pupils in Year 2 are confident learners. They listen very well to their teacher and to others and make good contributions to discussions. All respond eagerly and with clear understanding to stories from the Big Book and anticipate what is going to happen next. When working in groups, those with the highest capability are attentive and involved with their task. They recall their previous learning and use it to good effect. They remember, for example, that particular styles of writing are required for different purposes and, with this in mind, they emphasise the importance of dialogue when they turn a story called, 'Just one spoonful', which is relevant to their social learning, into a play. They quickly learn the spellings and the meanings of the technical words they encounter in this story so that, by the end of the session, they know that a shop that sells medicines is a chemist's or a pharmacy, that a prescription is the name given to the paper on which a doctor writes a remedy and that temperature is measured with a thermometer. Pupils of similar age but with greater learning difficulties also make significant progress as they learn to spell simple words.
4. By the end of Year 6 pupils have, in most cases, good, functional literacy skills and many read for pleasure. Through their English lessons they have broadened their experience of story, poetry, plays and books. They listen carefully when others speak and make thoughtful and well-structured responses to questions. They recall much that they have read and showed this very clearly in a lesson in which the topic was drug abuse and, within that, the inadvisability of eating or drinking unknown substances they may have found. In this lesson they recalled many characters in the literature, fairy stories and plays, with which they were familiar, who had eaten or drunk substances that they had chanced across, or been given, without really knowing what these were. In a lively discussion, Goldilocks was taken to task for eating the bears' food, assuming that it was porridge. George's grandmother, from Roald Dahl's story 'George's marvellous medicine', was criticised for thoughtlessly drinking the potion given to her. One pupil castigated the crew of Odysseus' ship for gorging themselves in the land of the Lotus-

Eaters so that they fell into a coma. Some considered that Romeo was similarly foolish in drinking the apothecary's potion but others argued that his case was different since he knew and desired the result of his action. The nature and quality of this discussion provided much evidence that the pupils have read and understood a great deal. In the Year 6 National Curriculum tests in 2003, more than half of the pupils exceeded the standard expected nationally for pupils of this age in English.

5. Pupils become confident in the use of number and accurate in calculation so that by the end of Year 6, almost a quarter have made up lost ground and attain the national average standard for their age in mathematics. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection. In their lessons, pupils approach their tasks with assurance. They show their good memory and grasp of number facts as they practice tables and they employ sensible strategies to help with swift mental calculations. For example, when asked to add 27 to a sum, they employ the tactic of adding 30 because, as a product of ten, it is an easier number to work with. They then deduct three to get the right answer. They have developed skills useful in everyday life such as using and interpreting timetables to plan a journey. Most of the pupils who do not have significant learning difficulties have made such good progress in mathematics as to be well placed to successfully move on to the next stage in their learning in mainstream secondary education.
6. Pupils' achievement in science is now very good and, by the end of Year 6, more than a third of pupils attain or surpass the nationally expected standard. In the 2003 National Curriculum tests, eight out of ten pupils reached or exceeded National Curriculum level three. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection and shows the benefit of allocating more time to science than formerly. Pupils now have two science lessons each week. By Year 6 pupils have completed a course in science that closely follows the National Curriculum programme of study. They have extended their knowledge, broadened their understanding and developed their investigative skills. Their practical work has included planning and carrying out experiments that adhere to sound scientific principles and emphasise the important features of a fair test. In recent classroom work on food chains it was evident that the significant features were understood very well. Pupils made accurate use of correct technical terms such as herbivore, omnivore and carnivore, understood that all food chains begin with a green plant and that predators stand at the top of the chain. When asked to do so they were able to put groups of plants and animals into their proper places in a food chain.
7. There has been notable improvement in pupils' achievement in information and communication technology, (ICT), since the last inspection. Pupils now have the opportunity to make use of a suite of computers during their ICT lessons and the advantage of specialist teaching. By the end of Year 6 pupils use computers very competently. They make effective use of selected programmes to bring together text and images and publish their work. They have used remote sensing apparatus in conjunction with computers to track temperature changes in scientific investigations and have entered data onto tables. Using simulation software they have programmed and controlled the movement of a 'turtle' on the screen. They make safe and effective use of the Internet in searching for images and information. In a very good art and design lesson, for example, ICT was used to generate pictures in the manner of Picasso's cubist period by down loading stored images and using the cut and paste function to rearrange these.
8. Since the last inspection the school has improved its educational provision in many ways and this has had a very positive impact on pupils' achievement. The results of the annual National curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 show that pupils' attainment is always well above the average level attained by pupils in similar schools elsewhere. This difference

is most marked in English and in science. Pupils with greater degrees of learning difficulty or who have specific difficulties in literacy, while they do not attain national average scores in the National Curriculum tests also make very good progress in relation to their capabilities and achieve very well.

**The teaching of literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology is highly effective and encourages pupils to want to learn.**

9. Overall, the standard of teaching is little different from that reported at the last inspection but in some areas and subjects the standard is consistently higher. A teacher who is experienced in working with this age group now teaches the class for the youngest pupils in the school and teaching is now strongly informed by the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. There is very good understanding of pupils' needs and a clear view, which is shared with pupils through their individual education plans, (IEPs), about what they must do to improve. There is very good assessment of what each pupil knows, understands and can do in mathematics and English. Pupils for whom initial assessment suggests difficulty with literacy skills are further tested and their level of performance in reading, writing and spelling is thoroughly analysed. Using the information gained from these processes, teaching of literacy skills is firmly based and follows the recommendations of the National Strategy. These factors were strongly apparent in an excellent literacy lesson for the younger pupils which started with them coming together to share the experience of reading from the Big Book. This part of the lesson was very well organised and pupils were given the chance to make their contributions, to read individually or in chorus with others, and to guess what was going to happen next in the story. The pupils were then divided into groups to do work that was related to their capabilities. For example, one group worked with a learning support assistant to turn a story that they knew well into a play. Another group who had less well-developed literacy skills worked with the teacher on a spelling task that arose from a dressing-up game. All the pupils, whatever their capability, enjoyed the work that they were asked to do because it was at the right level for them and it captured their interest.
  
10. By Year 6, pupils have made significant strides in reading and writing. The teaching of English, which again follows the recommendations of the National Strategy, is occasionally excellent and often very good. Lessons are stimulating and challenging and reflect the teachers' knowledge about the pupils' needs. Lessons are matched to the capabilities of pupils and are frequently challenging in their expectations. Pupils respond to such challenges very well and there is evidence in their work and in displays on classroom walls that they have taken advantage of the many opportunities they have been given to explore story, poetry and literature. The effectiveness of teaching was demonstrated well in an English lesson for pupils in Year 6 that required them to make social judgements and discuss their reasons with others in the class. The discussion was calm and orderly with pupils listening to others carefully and taking turns. Since all of the pupils in this class have emotional and behavioural difficulties and past records of being disruptive and inattentive, it is clear that teachers manage behaviour very well. They successfully foster within their pupils the kind of classroom skills that are necessary if they are to return to mainstream schools. It was also clear from this lesson, as well as from the pupils' work, that a love of stories, books, poetry and plays has been developed. Pupils recall without effort many instances from their reading of characters behaving in a particular way. Several pupils have good knowledge of the plots and main characters of many Shakespeare plays.

11. The teaching of numeracy is very effective because pupils make significant gains over time and by the end of Year 6 they gain SATs grades close to or in line with those of their peers in mainstream schools. The best lessons start with oral work and mental mathematics and the pace of questioning is brisk. In directing questions teachers show that they have a good understanding of the capabilities of their pupils. Because they are given opportunities to practice calculation and helpful strategies for mentally adding and subtracting, pupils become very competent in these skills. Teachers are careful to introduce real life elements into mathematics work to make it more meaningful. The relationships between teachers and their pupils in mathematics lessons are very good and this helps pupils to gain in confidence.
12. Teaching is very good in science and the excellent relationships the teacher has with pupils helps significantly with the management of classes. Pupils are encouraged to ask and answer questions and praise is used very effectively to reward their good efforts. The teacher has good specialist knowledge of the subject. Lessons proceed at a good pace and effective use is made of learning support assistants to help those pupils who need it. Expectations that the pupils will learn and make progress are high and are shared with them. As a result, when doing their work, pupils take a lot of care with presentation and they are pleased when they remember facts from earlier lessons that they can use to help with their learning. Behaviour in science lessons is very good as a result of the teacher's good humoured and relaxed approach and consistent application of the school's strategy for monitoring behaviour. Over time, pupils are led to a good understanding of the principles of investigation and testing and they acquire significant knowledge about each of the topics that they study.
13. Teaching in information and communication technology, (ICT), is very good and has proved effective in enabling the pupils to become competent users of computers with a good understanding of the range of things that computers can be used for. Making use of good new facilities the teacher links the work in ICT to topics drawn from other subjects. An example of this was seen in a very good lesson for pupils in years 4 and 5, when ICT was linked to literacy and pupils used computers to produce formal invitations that were technically correct in terms of their grammar but which also incorporated the use of appropriate software. Because the pupils were making a real and useful product, they were strongly motivated to do it as well as possible. In a further very good lesson with pupils in Year 6, ICT was used to modify selected images and make original works of art. Because the teacher in this instance used high-quality paper to print off the images that pupils had made, she showed great esteem for their efforts. This was a very successful way of getting the pupils to work as well as they could and to develop positive feelings about their own success as learners.

### **Very good provision is made for the personal development of pupils**

14. Through increasing pupils' awareness of their own needs and feelings and those of others the school enables them to improve their social behaviour and moral understanding. The most important task for each pupil is to gain control of their impulses and become more mature in their relationships. All have failed in this task prior to coming to the school. To help their personal development the school has set up structures that are consistently used to help improve behaviour. The school is honest with its children. It makes very clear what behaviour is acceptable and what is not. A behaviour modification scheme is in place and by avoiding unacceptable behaviour pupils can earn up to one hundred points a day. To do this they would have to show very positive attitudes in all their lessons and throughout breaks and lunchtime. The target for each child is more realistic and if sixty points are earned each day the reward of enjoyable options on a

Friday afternoon is available. Pupils are awarded the points at the end of each lesson and are involved in discussion about the reasons for the award. This gives every pupil a great deal of feedback during the day about how well they are doing and since it is possible to make up in the remaining lessons what might have been lost previously, they have a strong motivation to behave well.

15. Achievement is celebrated in weekly assemblies when badges and certificates are given out. A house system supports social development because individual achievement counts towards house points. The house system also provides an opportunity for pupils to take personal responsibility as house captains.
16. Pupils are offered the opportunity of Brief Therapy. This facility is chiefly for the benefit of those children who find it hard to conform and who are not sufficiently motivated by the behaviour modification system and the celebration of their achievement. The aim of the therapy is to find solutions to behaviour problems rather than to discover or analyse causes of the problems. Pupils judge their own behaviour on a scale of nought to ten and positive elements arising from this are discussed. The purpose of this is to enable the pupils to improve their self-discipline and their self-assessed score. Records show that seven out of ten pupils taking part in Brief Therapy have made improvements in their behaviour. This is a very effective means of helping pupils with behaviour problems.
17. At break times and lunchtimes the school provides staff to organise and supervise play and sports activities. The presence of adults who set a good example of appropriate behaviour helps pupils to see how they should act when playing or taking part in sport.
18. Circle Time has been introduced and this enables pupils to understand and express their feelings in a safe environment. Through these sessions pupils who are preparing to leave the school are enabled to voice their fears about bullying or other concerns that may arise when they move to secondary school. Their personal development is greatly enhanced when they learn to use an extensive vocabulary about their feelings because this gives them a very good chance of expressing in words what they may formerly have acted out through inappropriate behaviour.
19. School assemblies are used well to encourage the pupils to be honest and to avoid the pitfalls of life outside the school. Visiting speakers such as the Community Police Officer reinforce these messages. In assemblies pupils learn to celebrate each other's success and to treat each other with respect.
20. Each week the school issues a challenge to its pupils. These concern social behaviour, for example, being polite, showing kindness, being helpful or looking after the school. Pupils who do best in these challenges are praised at assembly and their photographs are placed in the foyer. This is a powerful motivation to pupils that encourages them to behave responsibly.

**The school takes care of its pupils very well and works very effectively with other agencies, especially the health authority, to manage and meet pupils' special educational needs**

21. The school places a strong emphasis on getting pupils to understand the dangers and risks inherent in everyday life. It also offers strategies to deal with difficulties effectively. In their lessons in English and personal, social and health education, awareness of the dangers of drugs, for example, is tackled in imaginative ways. In English lessons the

unwise behaviour of characters in stories was discussed and pupils were invited to correct this with thoughtful written advice.

22. A clear policy for ensuring child protection is in place and all members of staff are certain of what to do should an issue involving child protection arise. Following the criticism in the last report, the policy for ensuring health and safety at the school has been re-drawn and those who have particular responsibilities know what these are. This is a significant improvement.
23. Because of the strong possibility that, on occasion, a pupil who has lost self-control might have to be restrained, the staff have been trained in an approved technique. The use of restraint is very carefully governed and incidents are meticulously logged.
24. It is a very positive feature that the school's offer of care stretches beyond its boundaries. A laminated 'Helpline' card has been produced for all those who are leaving for secondary schools this year, so that they can telephone for support if they have problems.
25. The introduction of Brief Therapy is a positive response to difficulties that arise when the school's well-established behaviour modification scheme does not work as well as it should. Because of this additional support, a number of pupils who might have had problems being kept on at the school have successfully gained more control of their behaviour and completed their time at Gilbrook.
26. Perhaps the most significant feature of the school's efforts to ensure that pupils' needs are met is the very good liaison it has developed with the local health authority. A very high proportion of the pupils has a clinical diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, (ADHD). The treatment for this condition requires that drugs be administered to a consistent regime during the school day. The school has facilitated this very well and has put in place a secure system to ensure that pupils receive their medication when it is due. However, it has gone further than this. Through the school nurse and community paediatrician of the Wirral Hospital NHS Trust and Wirral and West Cheshire Trust Child and Family Therapy Unit, it has set up a school-based service for pupils and their families. The school now hosts clinics at which pupils already diagnosed as having ADHD have the effects of their therapy assessed and, if necessary, their medication adjusted. Pupils with symptoms, but who have not yet had a diagnosis of ADHD, are also seen at the clinic. Parents greatly appreciate the convenience of this arrangement and are reassured that the school and the doctors are working in harmony.

**The leadership of the headteacher is very good and he is well supported by senior managers and other staff with responsibilities.**

27. Since the last inspection there has been significant improvement in both leadership and management, and, as a result, the school is now very successful in enabling its pupils to modify and learn to control their behaviour. It is also very successful in enabling them to acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding that are essential to them when, as a high proportion does, they return to mainstream schools. Parents have confidence in the leadership and management of the school and appreciate that the head teacher emphasises the academic as well as the emotional needs of pupils and has given the school a clear sense of direction.
28. The head teacher has a realistic and critical appreciation of what the school now does well and what still needs to be improved. This is because he has established a school self-evaluation process and uses this to guide management decisions. There is now

regular monitoring and revision of action plans in the well-constructed school improvement plan and the school uses its resources to support the educational developments that are its priorities. Forward planning is strongly established and budget making and financial arrangements are very strong areas of management.

29. When the need has arisen the head teacher has not been afraid to take steps and make decisions that did not reflect established custom and practice but which he felt were in the interests of the school. For example, when a vacancy arose for the deputy headship he initiated the suggestion, approved by the governors, to appoint two assistant head teachers rather than a single deputy. This has worked out well in sharing the responsibility for school development and has strengthened the management of the school.
30. Over five years, much upgrading and refurbishment of the accommodation has been managed and staffing levels have been improved. Very effective use has been made of the Standards Fund and formula-related capitation grants. Best value is sought and comparisons between outcomes for pupils in this school and those in similar schools elsewhere are made to ensure that the school does as well as it should. The head teacher, who is now retiring, is able to point to a range of outcomes that show that the school is doing its job. He has met the performance management targets set for him by the governors, as have both assistant heads.
31. The head teacher is fully aware of those areas of school management that still need to be improved. He knows, for example, that those with subject leadership responsibilities should bring more time and rigour to the process of checking teaching and learning. He is clear that the present arrangements under the performance management policy for co-ordinators to be informed about the overall standards in their subjects are better than they were.
32. The assistant head teachers carry out their duties well. They have been encouraged to use their initiative and have, for example, trialled and established effective means of helping pupils to understand and manage their own behaviour, such as "Brief Therapy", as well as carrying out their curriculum responsibilities in science, physical education, personal, social and health education, and humanities. Other curriculum leaders do their work well and in the class for the youngest pupils good methods that are highly appropriate to the pupils' age and stage of education have been introduced. Leadership in information and communication technology is particularly good.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

**Because individual educational plans are not always sufficiently specific to an individual pupil nor consistently drawn upon when planning lessons, it is difficult to ensure that pupils from different years, who are placed in the same class, are set work that continually moves their learning forward.**

33. Pupils are referred to the school, when, following a full assessment, they are found to have special educational needs because of their emotional and behavioural difficulties. This referral may take place at any stage of an individual pupils' primary school career so there is no fixed age or fixed time within the school year when pupils start at Gilbrook. In 2002-3 about a quarter of the school's pupils transferred to Gilbrook other than at the usual time in September. In addition, because the age of pupils referred to the school is not known much in advance of entry and there may be many more of one age than another the school cannot always form viable class groups from the pupils within each



single National Curriculum year. From time to time, class groups may contain pupils from three different National Curriculum years. The school attempts to ameliorate the potentially damaging effect that this arrangement might have on progression in learning by bringing together in classes or sets pupils with similar capabilities especially for mathematics. It also takes steps to ensure that the topics studied in, for example history and geography, within each class are different year on year so that pupils who may stay in a class for two years do not repeat the work they have done already.

34. In these circumstances it is of great importance to ensure that proper account is taken of pupils' ages when work is planned. At whatever the level of their capability, the expectation of what each pupil is to do must be, to some extent related to how old they are. The same standard, application and range of interests should not be expected from pupils whose age differs by as much as three years. To help with planning educational experiences that take account of such individual differences IEPs are invaluable. These are well structured and used well in the class for the youngest pupils where they are an aid to planning the specific work that they do. The targets within these plans reflect expectations of performance appropriate to both the pupils' capability and the pupils' age.
35. Elsewhere in the school, IEPs are not sufficiently specific; the school understands this and is piloting computer software that might help to rectify the problem. However, the proposed computer programme may not help with what appears to be at the heart of the problem, an imperfect understanding of how, in a special school, IEPs may best be used. They are not, for example, used, in some classes, to inform the lesson planning process and make sure that individual and small group work is given that moves pupils towards the targets set for them, especially in literacy and mathematics. All teachers should ensure that IEPs are used as effectively as they are in the class for the youngest pupils.

**The governing body is under strength, which limits its effectiveness in challenging the school to achieve more.**

36. With a small number of very minor exceptions, the governors fulfil their statutory duties. They oversee the provision made by the school, the extent to which its policies and practices are inclusive, the way in which its budget is planned and how its financial resources are used. They are very supportive and the headteacher has been able to draw on their experience, when necessary, to help in resolving difficulties.
37. For far too long, however, the governing body has had too few active members. Recruiting parent governors who are consistently able to attend meetings has been a persistent problem, particularly as the pool of eligible parents is very small. The governors to be nominated by the local education authority are not in place and these vacancies have persisted for years. Many of the remaining governors are drawn from the staff of the school. Because of this connection to the school they are not eligible for membership of certain key committees. This throws an extra burden of responsibility on the others. It has not proved practicable to form committees for such matters as finance or the curriculum and the lack of this mechanism lessens the opportunities for accountability of the managers and teachers.
38. While the governors operate a performance management policy as they are required to do, and set targets for the head and senior managers, they are not going beyond this to

creatively and dynamically reflect upon performance and contribute to development planning.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

In order to build on its many strengths and to further improve the standard of education it provides, the headteacher and senior managers should:

(1) Ensure that individual education plans are sufficiently specific to each pupil and that they are used consistently when planning lessons so that the work offered is always appropriate to age and capability and continues to move learning forward. (Paragraph numbers 33, 34 and 35).

The governors with the help of the local education authority should:

(2) Take steps to ensure that there are sufficient governors. This should be done by the local authority nominating suitable candidates so that the governing body is up to strength and can carry out its role in challenging the school to achieve more. (Paragraph numbers 36, 37 and 38).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	17
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	7

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	4	5	5	1	0	0
Percentage	12	24	29	29	6	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than five percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	50
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	37

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.8

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.2

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

### **Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)**

The school has very few pupils eligible for the Standard Assessment Tests, (SATs), at the end of KS1. Therefore percentage comparisons should not be made with national averages. In 2003 four pupils undertook National Curriculum tests and assessments and were assessed by their teachers in English and mathematics with the following results: **Reading**, one pupil reached level 2B, and two pupils reached level 2A. **Writing**, one pupil was working towards level 1, two pupils reached level 2C, and one pupil reached level 2B. **Mathematics**, one pupil was working towards level 1, two pupils reached level 2B, and one pupil reached level 2A. These results are significantly higher than those achieved in similar schools.

### **Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)**

In 2003 fourteen pupils undertook the National Curriculum tests and assessments the end of KS2. In **English**, one pupil reached level 2, five pupils reached level 3, and three pupils reached level 4. These results are higher than those achieved in similar schools in 2002. **Mathematics**, two pupils reached level 2, five pupils reached level 3, two pupils reached level 4, and one pupil reached level 5. These results are slightly better than those achieved in similar schools in 2002. In **Science**, six pupils reached level 3, four pupils reached level 4, and one pupil reached level 5. These results are higher than those achieved in similar schools in 2002.

### **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	50	94 (32 pupils)	1
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y1 – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.1
Average class size	10

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y1 – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	227

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2002/2003
	£
Total income	482,921
Total expenditure	498,406
Expenditure per pupil	9,968
Balance brought forward from previous year	56,485
Balance carried forward to next year	41,000

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	50
Number of questionnaires returned	19

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63.2	31.6	0	0	5.3
My child is making good progress in school.	68.4	26.3	0	0	5.3
Behaviour in the school is good.	36.8	57.9	5.3	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	63.2	36.8	0	0	0
The teaching is good.	89.5	10.5	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	63.2	31.6	5.3	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	89.5	5.3	5.3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	84.2	15.8	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	68.4	26.3	0	5.3	0
The school is well led and managed.	84.2	10.5	5.3	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	78.9	21.1	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47.4	36.8	5.3	5.3	5.3