

# INSPECTION REPORT

## VALLEY SCHOOL

Bramhall

LEA area: Stockport

Unique reference number: 106168

Headteacher: Catherine Goodlet

Lead inspector: Mike Kell

Dates of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> June 2004

Inspection number: 260361

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	2 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	80
School address:	Whitehaven Road Bramhall Stockport
Postcode:	SK7 1EN
Telephone number:	0161 439 7343
Fax number:	0161 439 0664
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Linda Hilton

Date of previous inspection: 12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> October 1998.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Valley is classed as a school for pupils with severe learning difficulties but there are now more pupils in the school with profound and multiple learning difficulties and autism than there are with severe learning difficulties. The designated roll is 76 pupils, which is much bigger than average for a school of this type and age range. Currently, 39 full time pupils attend the school and 41 children attend the nursery part time, either in the morning or afternoon. There are almost three times as many boys as girls in the school and most have a Statement of Special Educational Need.

There are seven classes in total, including the nursery. The nursery is a fully inclusive provision, taking local children as well as those with learning difficulties. There are a very few children of Reception age with special educational needs but they are taught in the main part of the school with Year 1 and 2 pupils. Pupils with autism are taught as two separate classes grouped mainly according to age. Other classes are grouped, broadly, by age rather than special educational need. This year, one for Year 2 and 3 pupils only has pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The three remaining classes contain a mixture of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and severe learning difficulties.

Because of the pupils' learning difficulties, their development, especially their attainment, on entry to the school is significantly delayed compared with others of a similar age. The school has a broad socio-economic mix in keeping with its intake from a wide geographical area. The vast majority of full time pupils have a White British background. Three pupils do not have

English as their first language, although this is not their main barrier to learning. Nine pupils attend classes at local mainstream schools in order to extend their learning and to encourage their personal development.

In 2004, the school was accredited by the National Healthy Schools Scheme in Stockport.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
13101	Mike Kell	Lead inspector	Music French History
9348	Mary Le Mage	Lay inspector	
2480	Christine Gilder	Team inspector	English Personal, social and health education and citizenship Religious education
22391	Nick Smith	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Art and design Physical education Special educational needs
19386	Trevor Watts	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Science Information and communication technology Geography English as an additional language

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Valley is a good school with some very good features. It is well led and managed.** Good quality teaching promotes pupils' learning well and they achieve well. The good school ethos is supported by strong links with parents and so pupils make good gains in all aspects of their personal development. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher and deputy share a very clear vision for the school's development, which is enthusiastically endorsed by staff and governors.
- The inclusive nursery provision is very good.
- Very good care and welfare initiatives maximise the learning opportunities for pupils.
- Very high quality relationships and the appropriate use of praise and encouragement underpin teachers' high expectations of pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
- A range of communication systems and aids support learning and pupils' personal development.
- Very good quality resources are used; these include teaching resources, communication aids and equipment to support physical development and mobility such as very high quality standing frames.
- Lesson planning is not always based on pupils' prior learning and lacks sharpness; some plans do not identify what it is anticipated that pupils should learn.
- There are inconsistencies in the breadth and balance of the curriculum offered to pupils in different classes in Years 1 to 6, and the teaching time devoted to each subject.

The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection. This is due mainly to improved leadership and management. Pupils' achievements have improved as teaching is more effective, so that pupils learn better. Key issues relating to attainment in religious education and information and communication technology (ICT) and pupil progress in history and geography have both been addressed fully. Most other key issues have been met. Teaching is monitored more regularly, co-ordinator's curriculum planning is improved, and assessment procedures now measure pupils' progress in different subject areas. The school development plan is more strategic and there are significantly more effective arrangements for literacy and developing writing skills. However, issues relating to the curriculum remain unresolved; the allocation and use of teaching time, curriculum breadth and balance and curriculum monitoring by senior managers.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Overall, in relation to their prior levels of attainment and capability, **pupils achieve well** at all ages and make good progress. Boys and girls make similarly good progress and pupils with

English as an additional language, and those with the most complex needs, achieve equally well.

Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well overall across the areas of learning and make particularly good progress in developing communication, language and literacy skills and in their personal and social development. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 achieve very well in physical education and their achievements are good in English, mathematics, science, music, religious education and design and technology. Achievement is satisfactory in ICT, art and design, history, geography and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils' achievement has improved well since the last inspection and this reflects improvement in the quality of teaching and learning.

Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to learning are good and their behaviour is very good, enabling maximum time to be spent on learning. **Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.** Pupils' attendance is also good, as is their punctuality.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a good quality education** for its pupils. Teaching and learning is **good with some very good features.** Teachers manage pupils extremely well and strong teamwork means that teaching assistants make a very significant contribution to pupils' learning; all pupils are involved in activities. Very good relationships and the use of praise and encouragement underpin teachers' high expectations of pupils. Adults support pupils' communication skills well through the use of augmentative communication systems such as signing, symbols, the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and ICT. Assessment information about pupil achievements is not used routinely, except in the nursery, to plan future activities to meet individual needs. Some lesson planning lacks sharpness and does not identify what it is anticipated that pupils will learn.

The school provides a satisfactory range of curricular opportunities, although the curriculum in the Foundation Stage is very good. Opportunities for additional activities outside the school day are very good. Good accommodation and very good resources meet the pupils' needs. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is satisfactory. All pupils have equality of access to the curriculum and opportunities within it, but class timetables are poorly constructed by individual teachers and they are not monitored and evaluated adequately.

The school meets a very high standard in the care, welfare, health and safety of its pupils. It provides good support, advice and guidance, based on effective monitoring of pupils' achievements and personal development. The extent to which pupils' views are taken into account is also good.

The school enjoys good links with parents and carers that contribute positively to pupils' learning and development. There are good links with the community and with other schools.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The governance of the school is good and governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met. The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is good. The school is well managed; very good induction procedures, good performance management arrangements and a focused programme of staff development have all combined to enable the school to meet the needs of a changing pupil population.



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

Parents hold the school in very high regard and are very positive about the education and care provided for their children. Pupils are very satisfied with the school.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Ensure that plans identify the subject-specific skills, knowledge and understanding that individual lessons are intended to develop and that learning outcomes stem from pupils' previous achievements that have been assessed.
- Establish a clear rationale for the curriculum that results in all subjects receiving sufficient teaching time, including sufficient time for PSHE; reflect this structure in clear and unambiguous class timetables; and monitor and evaluate the curriculum routinely.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Overall, in relation to their prior levels of attainment and capability, pupils of all ages achieve well and make good progress. Boys and girls make similarly good progress and those with additional learning needs achieve equally well.

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

- There have been good and, in the case of some subjects, very good improvements since the last inspection; as a result, pupils make good progress overall.
- Pupils in all years achieve well in their personal development.
- Some pupils' achievements are extended well through the school's links with mainstream schools.
- Very effective communication strategies and computer technology assist pupils with additional learning needs to make good progress.
- Teachers are skilled at promoting the skills of literacy and numeracy in different subjects but ICT skills are not developed as consistently or effectively.
- Shortcomings in some lesson planning, and some subsequent assessment procedures, affect pupils' achievements on occasion.

#### **Commentary**

1. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well and make particularly good progress in developing communication, language and literacy skills and in their personal and social development. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 achieve very well in physical education and they make good progress in English, mathematics, science, music, religious education and design and technology. Achievement is satisfactory in ICT, art and design, history and PSHE. There was insufficient evidence to judge achievement in geography.

2. Overall, achievement throughout the school represents good improvements on the findings from the previous inspection when achievement was judged as good only in the Foundation Stage. Achievement was judged as unsatisfactory in geography, history and religious education and poor in ICT. In all other subjects it was judged as satisfactory. Current levels of achievement reflect improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils are well taught; lessons have a number of strengths and so pupils make good progress in acquiring new skills, knowledge and understanding. However, even though on occasion lesson planning does not identify a clear focus on what it is anticipated pupils should learn, they generally achieve well at these times because adults' knowledge of their pupils means that they can reinforce and extend their learning.

3. Pupils with the additional special educational needs of profound and multiple learning difficulties and autism achieve well in all year groups. Their good progress is promoted by teachers' and pupils' use of communication aids. Teachers and teaching assistants are proficient in using a range of alternative and augmentative communication systems such as signing, symbols and PECS as well as text. Pupils respond using a similar range of systems and some have access to computer technology aids, such as switches, and modified computer hardware involving screens and keyboards that ensure equality of opportunity.

Pupils whose home language is not English make good progress towards their individual learning targets. Each pupil achieves as well as the other pupils who have the same level of learning difficulty; they are not held back by the lack of English language at home.

4. An important factor accounting for pupils' standards of achievement is the work of the range of adults involved with their education. Links with other professionals are a very important factor in maintaining pupils' physical development and extending their communication skills. Very close working relationships with physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists result in pupils' variety of needs being addressed in a holistic way. This means that pupils are as well prepared for learning as they can be and teaching assistants are able to implement programmes between therapy sessions. This arrangement maintains continuity of the exercises and activities with minimum disruptions to learning. Teaching assistants are an important ingredient in ensuring that pupils achieve so well. They work very effectively with teachers to ensure that all pupils participate fully in lessons and are included in all activities.

5. Good links with mainstream schools provide opportunities for pupils to be additionally challenged in some subjects. They generally respond to these opportunities well, but the main focus of the integration programme is to promote and enrich pupils' personal and social development in ways additional to the school's own arrangements. The promotion of pupils' personal development is a key feature of the school's aims. This is evident in its ethos and all the work that it does. Realistic and achievable personal improvement targets appear in individual education plans (IEPs). Pupils make good progress in achieving these. However, the school's curriculum provision for PSHE is less effective in providing more planned opportunities to promote all aspects of personal development. This is due to imbalances in the curriculum for discrete PSHE lessons, and a shortage of planned opportunities to encourage personal development through other subject areas.

6. The promotion of pupils' language and literacy skills through other subjects of the curriculum has improved since the last inspection. There is now a greater focus on literacy teaching throughout the school. The staff's commitment to raising pupil achievement has resulted in improved standards; pupils have many opportunities for speaking and listening or using other systems to communicate and the levels of reading of more capable pupils has improved. Pupils' writing skills have developed in English lessons but writing as part of other subject lessons is a key area the school intends to develop. Teachers are effective in supporting pupils' learning of mathematical skills through other subjects of the curriculum. Generally, they use opportunities to allow pupils to rehearse their mathematical understanding and knowledge such as activities involving counting or measuring and weighing, as in subjects like design and technology. Pupils use computer technology satisfactorily, often in daily activities like using simple switches to make a choice about what things they want. Staff are good at arranging and preparing such choosing activities, but on occasion they need to match them more closely to the skills of individual pupils so that they are more imaginative and challenging. At the present time there are many difficulties with equipment and the software because the new computers, and the way they are linked together, are not working correctly. This causes unforeseen and time consuming problems and reduces significantly the potential for using ICT.

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

Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to learning are good and their behaviour is very good, enabling maximum time to be spent on learning. Pupils' personal development, including their

spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' attendance is also good, as is their punctuality.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are very well managed in a consistent way and there is a clear strategy for managing unacceptable behaviour.
- Very good relationships contribute to positive attitudes and very good behaviour.
- Children in the nursery make very good progress towards the early learning goals in personal and social development.
- Pupils respond well to the good opportunities for personal development.
- There are very good opportunities provided for pupils to develop understanding of their own, and others' culture and beliefs; there are good procedures for promoting their spiritual, moral and social development.

### Commentary

7. The school provides a supportive, happy environment which results in pupils wanting to attend. Therefore, attendance levels are good throughout the school and this has a positive impact on pupils' achievements. There are good procedures to promote good attendance and the school is thorough in monitoring and following up absence, which is generally due to medical reasons. Punctuality is good, when arriving at school and to lessons during the day. Underlying pupils' enthusiasm for school is the very high quality of personal relationships that pupils form with the staff. Teachers and teaching assistants take great care to understand the needs of their pupils so that a noticeable bond develops between adults and the pupils in their care. This results in pupils developing good attitudes to their learning; pupils trying hard and concentrating well on their work is commonplace across the school.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.9	School data	0.4
National data	9.1	National data	0.6

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

8. All adults in the school know the pupils very well, manage them in an appropriate way and help them to learn acceptable patterns of behaviour. Clear strategies are followed consistently, at all times and across all areas of the school. Developing self-control is a key focus of behaviour management and pupils in the school are encouraged and supported to become more independent and to take responsibility for their own actions. Consequently, the behaviour management procedures make a significant contribution to pupils' social and moral development. There have been no exclusions during the past year.

9. For those pupils whose behaviour is more challenging and for whom concentration is difficult, the clear strategies employed encourage them to respond well. Staff work very well together as class teams and reinforce good behaviour and respond to unacceptable behaviour in a consistent way. There are occasions when the behaviour of some pupils, particularly those with autism, might be very disruptive to their classmates but staff deal with these situations skilfully. This minimises the potential disruption, but other pupils also make a major

contribution because, in most cases, they continue to concentrate on their work to the best of their ability and ignore the distraction.

10. The personal development of pupils has a high priority across the school and underpins all activities throughout the school day. As a result, pupils develop a clear awareness of what is acceptable social behaviour and try, to their best of their ability, to conform to the high standards and expectations set by all adults in the school. For example, they accept responsibility for tasks allocated to them such as collecting class registers, they show pleasure in celebrating the achievements of other pupils in their class and they make choices in their lessons. Many show good progress in the way in which they co-operate with adults, such as the Reception and Years 1 and 3 pupils with autism who engaged with teaching assistants to use different doorbell chimes and examine pictures following the reading of *The Doorbell Rang*. Pupils' social awareness is enhanced further through visits into the community and the valuable experience of residential trips, such as the one to Cumbria that allows them to experience a range of outdoor pursuits. Pupils' good progress in developing spirituality occurs because the school provides many opportunities for them to think about themselves, others and the world around them. Assemblies at the end of each day are quiet, reflective times when teachers produce a calm atmosphere during which a story may be read, a song sung and a prayer said. Whole school assemblies are joyous occasions that enable pupils to participate in many ways, such as acting out the story of Jonah and the Whale. Displays around the school are colourful and simulating and draw pupils' attention to the beauty of nature and the environment. Pupils are beginning to respect and understand that everyone is different and have very good opportunities to learn about different faiths and cultures through religious education lessons, informative displays and school celebrations. These have included Shrove Tuesday, Divali and Japanese Children's Day, which was an activity that enabled them to join in with pupils from a mainstream school.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching is good overall with some very good features. Therefore, pupils learn well and make good progress in developing new skills, knowledge and understanding. Lessons also make a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. Assessment procedures are very good in the nursery and thorough elsewhere.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers manage pupils extremely well and involve all pupils in activities.
- Very high quality relationships and the appropriate use of praise and encouragement underpin teachers' high expectations of pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
- A variety of communication systems and aids are used very well.
- Strong teamwork means that teaching assistants make a very significant contribution to pupils' learning.
- At times, lesson planning lacks sharpness and does not identify clearly what it is anticipated that pupils should learn.
- On some occasions, assessment information about pupil achievements is not used to plan future activities to meet individual needs. This information is used routinely and very well by teachers in the nursery.

### **Commentary**

11. The overall quality of teaching and learning, in the nursery and in Years 1 to 6, is good and many lessons have very good features. All pupils, including those with additional special educational needs and those whose home language is not English, learn equally well. Teachers are well prepared and classrooms are generally well organised and structured. All adults know the pupils very well; very good relationships and encouragement are characteristic of all lessons so that they are generally rewarding experiences for pupils.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 43 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	16 (37%)	17 (40%)	9 (21%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

12. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and they manage their behaviour efficiently and with minimum fuss. Lessons are orderly and pupils understand, and follow, well established routines. This is particularly evident in classes of pupils with autism where pupils settle relatively quickly, listen to what they are asked to do and try hard. As a result, time is usually used efficiently with lessons being busy sessions during which pupils try very hard and approach their work with interest and enthusiasm. However, on occasion time is used less productively in other classes. In these sessions pupils spend time waiting while, for example, resources are passed around one after another, or teachers spend time talking to the whole class when time could be much spent working with smaller groups.

13. High quality two-way communication contributes greatly to pupils' good achievements. Their successes in learning owe much to the communication expertise shown by adults. Pupils' speaking, listening and reading skills are supported very well by a variety of alternative and augmentative communication systems. Adults work hard, and successfully, in encouraging pupils to listen and to speak during lessons. They give information orally and question pupils to ascertain evidence of learning. A number of oral activities take place in lessons and so pupils get used to adults' expectations of them to respond. For pupils who experience great difficulty with speaking and listening, symbols, pictures, signing and PECS are all used effectively to help pupils show what they know and understand and to allow them to make choices and confirm what will happen next. The school also employs a comprehensive range of communication technology aids, such as switches, to support pupils' communication. Adults are adept at encouraging pupils to use these devices in order to enable them to participate fully in lessons as well as encouraging their personal development as they can make independent contributions.

14. Overall, lesson planning and evaluations by teachers of pupils in Years 1 to 6 are satisfactory; some plans are extremely detailed but, at times, others have some shortcomings. The highest quality plans identify clearly tasks that are carefully chosen to meet individual pupils' needs, with planning based on teachers' detailed information about pupils' prior learning. The plans identify what pupils are expected to learn and show the activities that have been chosen to develop subject-specific skills, knowledge and understanding. At these times the learning needs of all pupils are met as tasks challenge the most capable pupils and extend their understanding. On other occasions, teachers' planning is much less effective; lessons do not have a clear focus on what it is anticipated pupils will learn and the progressive activities that will develop this learning. However, even on these occasions pupils generally achieve well because adults' knowledge of their pupils means that they can reinforce and extend their

learning although more precise planning on these occasions would better ensure such progress.

15. The sparseness of some lesson planning has implications for other areas. It reduces the capacity of teaching assistants to contribute actively, and in a focused way, to assessment and recording of pupils' achievement and progress during lessons. While teachers and assistants make observations of individual pupils, they are not always recorded, either at the time or during any plenary discussion at the end of lessons. Consequently, teachers do not have access to such assessment data to plan future activities that reflect individual needs. Other aspects of assessment are much better, such as teachers' accurate assessments of pupils' achievements for key events such as Annual Reviews of Statements of Special Educational Need and reports to parents. All elements of assessment procedures in the nursery are very good with activities being based very effectively on individual children's needs underpinned by what staff have observed.

16. The good achievements that pupils show owe much to the quality, range and expertise of the many adults who work very well together as teams. The high quality liaison between teachers and very effective teaching assistants plays a very important role in promoting pupils' learning. The assistants contribute greatly in ensuring that pupils with additional special needs participate fully in lessons and are included in all activities. Links with other colleagues, such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and speech and language therapists, identify specialist support and activities and teaching assistants carry out these procedures routinely during the week. They, too, contribute to pupils benefiting fully from their time in school.

17. In addition to providing opportunities for pupils to make academic progress, teachers are committed to developing their personal qualities. They are able to do this because they have good understanding of their pupils' personal targets as shown in IEPs. Therefore, they provide activities that require pupils to work independently, such as using percussion instruments in music, as well as paired work and in small groups. Pupils collaborate well at these times, whether they are slicing bananas in science or working together on the computer. They are also given opportunities to participate in large group activities, like the whole school assembly, which many participated in willingly.

## **The curriculum**

The school provides a satisfactory range of curricular opportunities. The quality of the curriculum in the Foundation Stage is very good. Opportunities for additional activities outside the school day are very good. Good accommodation and very good resources meet the pupils' needs. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is satisfactory.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- All pupils have equality of access to the curriculum and opportunities within it.
- There are inconsistencies in the breadth and balance of the curriculum offered to pupils in different classes in Years 1 to 6, and the teaching time devoted to each subject.
- Very good activities outside lessons are provided.
- The learning of pupils with the most complex physical disabilities and profound learning needs is facilitated by the extremely well organised liaison with other agencies to meet their medical and therapeutic needs.
- The curriculum provided for individuals and groups of pupils is not monitored and evaluated sufficiently well.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Some teachers rely too heavily on activities such as circle time as the main opportunity to promote personal and social development, and teachers are generally not following the school's curriculum procedure by showing clearly how they intend to promote pupils' personal; development through other subjects.

## **Commentary**

18. The curriculum provided by the school meets statutory requirements and provides pupils with a number of valuable learning experiences. These are generally provided within Valley School but for some individual pupils they are enriched through opportunities to learn alongside their peers in mainstream schools. These arrangements are effective in promoting many aspects of pupils' personal and social development as well as providing them with additional curriculum opportunities designed to meet their needs and capabilities. As a result, all pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Children in the nursery are prepared very well when it is time to leave as very good contacts with the receiving schools encourage them to settle in very well.

19. All pupils have very good equal opportunities. Teachers use a range of communication strategies and pupils have access to a variety of electronic communication aids so they are able to join in all activities. Many pupils require therapeutic intervention such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy. This is high quality provision. Therapists frequently work with pupils in the classroom, so maintaining their access to the curriculum through participation in lessons, and a number of teaching assistants maintain these programmes between sessions with the therapists.

20. All pupils have access to the statutory subjects of the National Curriculum but the school's curriculum policy, and its implementation, monitoring and evaluation are not effective in ensuring adequate curriculum breadth and balance. There are some significant shortcomings in these areas of the school's work. The curriculum policy shows the allocation of time to each subject but it is imprecise and, therefore, not sufficiently detailed in identifying how curriculum balance will be identified; for example, the policy states that the time allocation for PSHE can be in the range six to ten hours each week. However, when this same document



depicts the breakdown of a typical curriculum in terms of the time allocation to each subject, it shows six hours for PSHE. There is no indication of the potential impact on the time allocated to other subjects in respect of those pupils for whom ten hours PSHE is considered appropriate. In addition, design and technology is not shown at all in this breakdown, although the subject is taught.

There are inconsistencies between class timetables. They each have a different format and there are wide variations between the time allocated to different subject areas in different classes. Pupils' achievements in English and science are both influenced by the time devoted to the subjects in some classes. Consequently, the net result is that senior management cannot be assured of the exact curriculum that pupils are receiving because timetables are not being scrutinised. This situation is unsatisfactory.

21. There is very good provision to extend the curriculum through clubs, day visits in the locality and residential trips. Lunchtime clubs are strong initiatives to consolidate what has been learnt in the classroom. There are many opportunities for pupils to play games, such as bean bag relay races, and to join in with music and songs and while doing so they rehearse counting and reinforce vocabulary like 'in', 'out', and 'turn around' when they sing the *The Hokey Cokey*. Pupils with the most profound difficulties also have the opportunity to participate in lunchtime clubs. A special one is provided using a sensory approach linking music and a rich variety of different sensory props to stimulate pupils; texture, noise and shape are all used effectively. Pupils make a number of excursions into the community to enrich what they have learnt in the classroom and these also include residential visits to Cumbria for outdoor pursuits. Residential visits such as these provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop awareness of living in a community.

22. Accommodation overall is good. Some aspects are particularly good, such as the hydrotherapy pool and the rooms for therapy provision. Classrooms are generally of a good size and allow wheelchairs to circulate comfortably, and the extension for pupils with autism has been designed specifically with their needs in mind. The nursery playground is well equipped with large and small equipment and provides opportunities to extend the curriculum outside. There is a good match of teachers to the curriculum, and teaching assistants are very experienced and knowledgeable. Resources to support the curriculum are very good overall. These include teaching resources, communication aids and physical equipment such as very high quality standing frames. There is sufficient of these resources, they are of high quality and teachers use them appropriately and effectively.

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

The school provides a very high standard in the care, welfare, health and safety of its pupils. It provides good support, advice and guidance, based on the effective monitoring of pupils' achievements and personal development. The extent to which pupils' views are taken into account is also good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very high quality of a wide range of care and welfare initiatives maximises the learning opportunities for pupils.
- Very good relationships throughout the school support pupils, enabling them to develop well.
- Pupils' access to support and advice about their learning is inconsistent.
- Pupils with additional special educational needs are supported particularly well.

## Commentary

23. Pupils' care and welfare is given a very high priority by the school and it is supported in this by the range of other professionals who work in the school or who visit on a regular basis. There is a nursing team that tries to maintain a full-time presence in the school. This ensures that a medical professional is available to advise teachers on health matters or pupils' comfort. It also ensures that parents are informed at the earliest opportunity of any additional health needs their child may be displaying and, therefore, enables them to contact the necessary professionals at the earliest opportunity. A paediatric consultant holds a clinic each half term and an orthoptist and dietician hold clinics termly in the school. Pupils and staff also receive support from therapists who visit the school. Speech and language therapists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists all make valuable contributions to the care that the school provides although the school and parents are concerned about the reducing levels of this support. Because the health needs of pupils are overseen so rigorously, minor ailments are spotted early and pupils' comfort is given high priority. This ensures that pupils are enabled to attend school as much as possible and, because they are as physically comfortable as possible, they are able to focus on their learning. In addition, very good equipment such as highly adjustable standing frames are used judiciously to promote good positioning and ensure that physically disabled pupils can play the fullest part in activities.

24. Daily care routines, such as toileting and feeding programmes are well established and managed unobtrusively. Pupils are treated with dignity and respect. They are looked after very well in a happy and secure environment. The school is both vigilant and sensitive in exercising its responsibilities. An appropriate level of supervision is always provided and pupils attending off-site activities are extremely well supported. Adults in the school are very good role models and there is a consistency of expectation of how pupils will work and behave. The school ensures that regular health and safety checks are carried out and, where possible, involves external agencies to provide additional checks. The school carries out high quality risk assessments rigorously, including prior to all school visits. Effective child protection arrangements are in place and all adults working in the school are aware of them.

25. Staff have pupils' well-being in mind at all times; all through the school there are clear indications of very good relationships between pupils and adults. Adults are patient, kind and very supportive which means pupils feel very secure. Pupils are very well known by the adults in the school and this has a very positive effect on their attitudes to their learning, and to school life in general. The consistent, supportive way in which the pupils are dealt with at all times underpins the quality of these relationships and facilitates the good progress that pupils make. The strength of these relationships gives pupils the confidence to express their views and the range of communication strategies used gives them the chance to do so.

26. The advice and guidance given to pupils is good overall. Effective behaviour management plans are drawn up as necessary to support pupils in improving aspects of their behaviour, and parents are involved with this in order to ensure a consistency of approach. Pupils are encouraged to develop mobility and communication skills through the effective therapy programme that is provided, which enables pupils' progress to be monitored effectively. Pupils' personal development is monitored appropriately through IEPs, but these plans are less effective in giving pupils guidance about how to make academic progress. This is because the quality of IEPs is inconsistent, with some being more clearly focused than others. This has an obvious effect on the quality of the advice given to the pupil by adults working from the plan.

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

The school enjoys good links with parents and carers that contribute positively to pupils' learning and development. There are good links with the community and with other schools.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school values the views of parents and responds positively to them.
- The school supports parents well but they are not always sufficiently involved in children's learning at home.
- Pupils benefit from good links with other schools.
- The school has good links with the local community that enhance the learning opportunities for pupils.

### **Commentary**

27. The school values the views of parents and works actively to seek them. Because the school serves a wide geographical area, and most pupils go to school on organised school transport, there is very little opportunity for parents to have casual, informal contact with the school. In order to address this, the school always attempts to meet a parent's request to come into the school to discuss their child's progress or well-being. If necessary, members of the school staff visit parents in their home to provide information and additional support. In addition, the school asks parents to complete a comprehensive annual questionnaire about what the school provides and to make suggestions about future development. Responses are generally very positive, with few suggestions for school development, and the results are fed back to parents. All parents who expressed a view during the inspection are very supportive of the school. They find it very open, approachable and feel valued. These views are endorsed by the inspection team.

28. Overall, the school offers good support to the parents of its pupils. For instance, the school nurse organises regular coffee mornings for parents that are run as a support group and frequently involve relevant speakers from outside sources. Parents receive an informative newsletter at the end of each term, but this tends to give them a comprehensive review of everything that has happened, rather than providing detailed information about what is to come. Not all classes produce a curriculum newsletter at the beginning of each term and the newsletters provided during the term do not give regular information about experiences, such as visitors to school, which the pupils may be enjoying. On a daily basis, staff complete a home/school diary for each pupil. These have the potential to provide a dialogue between home and school enabling both to respond to daily events that they themselves have not been part of. However, school tends to focus on welfare information and few parents enter into a 'true' dialogue with school. All these procedures mean that although parents are well-informed, they are not able to fully support learning at home, build on the experiences their children are having, or even have conversations with them about school.

29. The school has good links with the local community. Pupils make good use of visits and trips to support their learning in different subjects of the curriculum. These include history trips to Tatton Hall and Vernon Park Museum, geography field trips to Alderley Edge, science visits to local parks, a zoo and pond dipping, and horse riding. Visitors into school range from a hairdresser, who demonstrated aspects of her work as part of PSHE, to a storyteller from the local library. The school also establishes itself as part of the community by allowing use of its

facilities, such as providing community placements for pupils from local secondary schools and accommodation for the Opportunity Group, involving a member of the Portage service and community and school helpers, to meet regularly.

30. The school has forged two types of effective links with mainstream schools that provide many pupils with social experiences and, in some cases, with very appropriate opportunities to learn alongside others. At times, small groups of pupils from local primary schools attend classes at Valley, in subjects such as art and physical education. In addition, individual Valley pupils attend local schools as part of the inclusion programme. Currently nine pupils are involved on integration programmes. Schools, and the pupils themselves, are well prepared before the phased integration begins and the process is well monitored and evaluated. Generally, the integration programme is well managed and supported on a day-to-day basis and pupils learn well, but on occasion planning and preparation are less effective so that pupils' experiences are more limited. However, the placements are generally successful and provide valuable experiences so that pupils are able to increase the amount of time they spend there; currently one pupil is able to integrate for two days each week prior to permanent transfer.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school by the headteacher and other key staff are good. The governance of the school is good and governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher and deputy share a very clear vision for the school's development, which is enthusiastically endorsed by staff and governors.
- Together, the key staff have led and managed a sustained and effective programme of improvement since the last inspection in response to a changing profile of pupils' needs.
- The nursery provision is very well led and managed.
- Senior managers' commitment to inclusion for all pupils within the school and, for some, in mainstream schools, benefits all pupils.
- The curriculum is not sufficiently well monitored and evaluated to ensure that the learning opportunities provided for different classes and groups of pupils are broad and balanced and match the school's curriculum policy.
- Good management procedures have resulted in very good induction procedures for new staff and effective performance management arrangements, which are linked with a well managed programme of staff training.
- Governors' monitoring activities do not always provide a sufficiently robust challenge to proposals and suggestions.

### **Commentary**

31. Governors are very supportive of the work of the school. The governing body promotes and encourages the school's aspirations and ensures that their work provides the financial and moral support for developments required to meet the wider range of pupil needs. Governors are now much more involved in working with senior managers in identifying the schools' priorities and reviewing its progress towards earlier ones. Consequently, school development planning has improved. At the last inspection, the number of governors was judged too small for them to carry out all their responsibilities. The increase in number of governors is welcome

and their commitment and support for the school is unequivocal. However, the proportion of the governing body comprised of parents, staff, ex-parents and ex-members of staff is unusually high. This may have had the unintended consequence of reducing their ability to fulfil their role as a 'critical friend' of the school by diminishing the likelihood of monitoring very closely all aspects of its work; questioning the school's practice and priorities closely and forming an independent view to enrich its leadership by providing a high level of challenge.

32. Governors have worked very well with senior managers in the school to amend provision in the light of a changing school population. The first signs of this were reported at the last inspection, and this trend has continued and accelerated. However, instead of senior managers reacting slowly to change, which was the situation at that time, the school now plans for it; senior managers embrace change with enthusiasm, with clear plans for the future. This is because the strong partnership between the headteacher and deputy is grounded in a shared vision for the school's key priorities and development. They have a clear understanding of how they see the school evolving and are translating this into practice through an effective strategic plan.

33. The school's developing programme for inclusion and integration reflects the good quality of leadership in the school. The very strong commitment to inclusion provides equality of opportunity for all pupils within the school, irrespective of their special educational need, as well as the two way movement of pupils between Valley and mainstream schools. This commitment to inclusion shown by the leadership team and governors has a direct impact on the quality of education for pupils. Priority is given to removing as many of their barriers to learning as possible. The senior team and governors have put a range of improvements in place that provide the right conditions for all pupils to learn effectively. An example of this is the project to secure a new extension designed specifically for pupils with autism. The care taken over the design ensures that the teaching spaces meet the pupils' needs for quiet areas and small spaces and give the staff flexibility in terms of grouping and quick response to individuals' moments of anxiety and frustration. The annual improvement plan also recognises the need to combine such physical developments with an ongoing investment in staff training and development. Governors are committed to this and consistently ensure that the programme is well funded in each annual budget.

34. The improvement in the quality of leadership is matched by some improvements in the effectiveness of management. This is evident in some of the improvements that have taken place since the last inspection. Very good induction procedures, good performance management arrangements and a focused programme of staff development have all combined to bring about change, even though long term illnesses have had an impact on staff deployment. Staff have been managed very well during this period. As a result, standards of achievement have risen because the quality of teaching and learning has improved. Teachers are adept at meeting the widening range and increasing severity of the disabilities many pupils exhibit. The management team also makes good use of the information collected about pupils' progress in different subjects and against the whole school targets, including monitoring the proportion of pupils who achieve their IEP targets.

35. Although effective whole school management has secured some clear improvements since the last inspection, one area remains unresolved. The curriculum is not sufficiently well planned, monitored and evaluated to ensure that all pupils in Years 1-6 receive a broad and balanced education. Whole school monitoring of medium term planning for each subject, by co-ordinators and the deputy headteacher, ensures that what is going to be taught fits in with the long term programmes of work but there is no routine monitoring of class timetables to

check that there is sufficient time available to actually teach what is planned. As a result, a number of class timetables are too imprecise and this can have an effect on the range of learning opportunities that some pupils may receive.

36. Subject co-ordinators, and those with other responsibilities, are managed well and they carry out their duties effectively. The nursery is led and managed extremely well. Subject co-ordinators have developed programmes of work and monitor routinely how different teachers extend these into six week teaching blocks. They also monitor teachers' lesson planning and evaluations on a rolling programme but this is not proving effective. The absence of regular sampling or spot checks means that teachers are not producing lesson plans with clear references to learning objectives expected from individuals or groups of pupils or to how lessons will promote pupils' personal and social development, which they are expected to do.

***Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	835923
Total expenditure	799063
Expenditure per pupil	13099

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	41180
Balance carried forward to the next year	78040

37. There are good approaches to financial management. There has not been a local education authority audit since 2001 but all issues identified at that time have addressed. There are clear and thorough accounting and monitoring procedures so that financial procedures are able to support development planning well. Any balances remaining at the end of the year are planned, and supported by the local education authority, for example to protect against a reduced income following a drop in numbers if a large number of pupils leave

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

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

Provision in the Foundation Stage is very good, and this represents good improvement in provision since the previous inspection. Almost half of the children have special educational needs. None of these are of Reception age; there are few children of this age in the school but they are taught in the main part of school with Year 1 and 2 pupils. This is entirely appropriate for them.

Children with special educational needs and the mainstream children, mix very well together in all activities and benefit from each other's presence. Staff work very hard to ensure that all children get the most from their half-day's attendance. All children, whether they are the most capable, or the most disabled, or are from different ethnic backgrounds, achieve well in the Foundation Stage. Those with special educational needs require a great deal of staff skill and attention in order for them to achieve as well as their mainstream peers, but the nursery's success is evident in the fact that approximately half of the children with special educational needs are going on to mainstream schools when they transfer this year.

The Foundation Stage is very well led and managed and so children are provided with a very good curriculum that balances the different areas of learning. This is evident in the very high quality of teamwork, as teachers and teaching assistants work exceptionally well together. Their responsibilities are changed regularly to make sure that everyone experiences different aspects of the nursery's work; planning lessons, preparing activities, teaching groups, supervising play and snack times, and taking part in the swimming sessions, for instance. Staff have excellent relationships with children; they are warm and supportive, but manage behaviour very well, and give endless encouragement to the children who are shy or not as active.

Children's introduction to the nursery is very good. Parents are welcomed into the nursery and home visits and discussions help in getting a good picture of new children. Staff observe the children carefully during the first weeks and then decide on the priorities for the early teaching. This very high quality assessment continues throughout the children's time in the nursery, with activities being based very effectively on individual children's needs underpinned by what staff have observed. Children are prepared very well when it is time to leave the nursery. There are very good contacts with the receiving schools and children are helped to settle in very well, especially those who have special educational needs.

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

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

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

- Children achieve very well because they are very well taught.
- Staff have very high expectations that children will learn to sit together, will share things with each other, and will pay attention.
- Personal development is encouraged very well through all lessons and other activities.

#### **Commentary**

38. The most capable children are well on target to reach the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development by the time they enter Year 1. Children with special educational needs enter the nursery with underdeveloped personal and social skills and, therefore, do not achieve the same standards. However, they achieve very well and make very good progress because they are extremely well taught. The children with special educational needs benefit greatly from the presence of the more capable mainstream children around them in all of the activities.

Staff are very consistent in planning all lessons to encourage learning in this important area and they have very high expectations. These expectations are applied consistently and so children know what is expected of them. As a result, children make very good progress in listening to, and co-operating with, each other and in developing understanding of acceptable ways of behaviour. Consequently, children of all abilities take part in many activities in which they work alongside each other, have lunch and snacks together, play together and share things.

39. Appropriate levels of challenge are evident in all the activities that teachers plan. The quality and appropriateness of these activities stimulate children and therefore they are keen to learn. Lessons are thoroughly enjoyable and so children show interest. They behave appropriately and many concentrate very well. The most capable children maintain this focus even when not directly supervised. Adults are very adept at giving children with special educational needs the time and opportunity to develop personal skills, such as playing alongside and with others, but they are skilled at choosing the right time to intervene or prompt. When they do so, children with special educational needs benefit from adults' use of additional communication techniques such as signs, or giving them the opportunity of choosing from pictures or symbols.

40. Children's personal, social and emotional development is encouraged in all lessons and at every other opportunity. Their personal development is also facilitated very well through links with the community. They go out on visits to many places that extend their experiences, broaden their interest, and improve their knowledge about different people and places. Other people come into the nursery, such as a storyteller from the local library during the inspection, and activities such as this bring learning 'alive'.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve very well in communication skills.
- Communication is fully integrated into all areas of learning.
- Teaching and learning are very good and are based on very well structured planning.

### **Commentary**

41. There are separate lessons each day for communication, language and literacy although targets are included in the planning for lessons in all other areas of learning too. Consequently, mainstream children are well on target to reach the early learning goals in this area of learning by the time they enter Year 1. Children with special educational needs do not attain these goals, but they, too, make very good progress in developing these skills. The



progress made by those children with the more complex language difficulties is very well enhanced by short separate sessions with staff, doing different activities, to encourage their attention span and speech skills.

42. Teachers are very consistent in planning all lessons to encourage learning in this area of learning. They create many opportunities for children to listen and understand, such as singing rhymes and songs to lead from one activity into the next. As a consequence, all aspects of children's communication skills are promoted very well; adults promote their attention skills, their ability to express themselves in different ways and their understanding of what is said to them.

43. Staff are very skilled in communicating with children and encouraging a response, with very good attention given to the development of children's speaking and listening skills. Consequently, mainstream children make very good progress in asking and answering questions and listening to instructions. The language development of children with special educational needs is supported very well by adults' use of additional and augmentative communication systems. For instance, staff use symbols to show the day's activities on a picture timetable and they give every encouragement for the less communicative children, who find it difficult to respond with speech, to use other forms of communication. Therefore, children make their views known through signs or by choosing from a set of pictures or symbols.

44. Very good use is made of books and other stimulating visual resources. The children learn to love books as they handle them and listen to stories. Displays in the nursery and around school provide further opportunities for children to look at the printed word and so mainstream children make very good progress in taking the first steps towards reading. Children with special educational needs achieve equally well. Adults encourage them to look at pictures, symbols, cards with words on, and books so that they are able to recognise pictures and symbols as representing real things or activities, such as swimming and animals. These sessions might be in one-to-one activities with a member of staff, but they are often group sessions during which they discuss with staff topics such as their holiday or weekend, or share a story from a big book.

45. Mainstream children make very good progress with their early writing skills. Some hold a pencil correctly and make marks on paper from left to right, with some beginning to shape their marks towards letters and words. Some children with special educational needs also make meaningful marks on paper, while others make sand patterns with their finger and make chalk marks on boards or on the playground.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children are taught well and they make good progress in discrete number lessons.
- Very well planned activities to develop mathematical skills generate pleasure in learning and enquiry and meet the needs of a range of capabilities.
- Teachers provide many opportunities for children to develop understanding of mathematics and increase their mathematical vocabulary.

## Commentary

46. Pupils achieve well in mathematics sessions. As a result, mainstream children make good progress towards the early learning goals for this area of learning. Children with special educational needs do not attain such high standards, but they make good progress towards their personal targets.

47. Teachers' planning of lessons ensures that teaching assistants are all fully engaged in working with individuals or groups of children. Staff use a very good selection of equipment such as number fans, counting blocks and picture cards to stimulate and engage children. Every lesson includes evaluation of pupils' progress and achievement, to which all members of staff involved contribute.

48. Activities involving exploratory play are used very well to encourage children to discover things for themselves, and adults are very skilled at seizing all opportunities to teach and reinforce the technical language of mathematics. In the sand tray, for example, children learn about mathematical ideas and vocabulary such as 'full' and 'empty'. Playing with building bricks, toy animals and vehicles they learn about colours, different sizes and staff often prompt children about numbers through comments like "Give me *two* cars". Furthermore, adults emphasise positional vocabulary such as 'next to' and 'over' when telling stories or requesting children to put items away.

49. Staff are also effective at using simple activities like singing to reinforce learning. This means that some of the children with special educational needs who do not understand about counting are encouraged to try to repeat the numbers to five or to join in with lots of counting songs and games such as "*Five little speckled frogs*" and "*Five currant buns*". Children join in songs and number rhymes with enthusiasm. Many activities support children's wider learning and personal development; they work with a friend, listen to instructions, share things, and practise handling small objects.

## KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are taught well.
- A very good variety of appropriate, interesting activities is planned to stimulate the children's' curiosity and enhance their understanding.
- Very good opportunities are provided for the children to explore and manipulate objects within the natural world.

## Commentary

50. Children achieve well in this area of learning because teachers and support staff plan a good variety of lessons imaginatively, with separate and group targets for mainstream children and those with special educational needs. Consequently, children make good progress towards the early learning goals. Always, children are very well encouraged to get along well together, and to behave very well, to listen, and to take their turn in having their own say about things. Therefore, they work very well alongside each other during activities like making a den.

51. Teachers provide a very varied and wide range of appropriate and interesting activities that stimulate children's curiosity and develop their awareness and understanding of their environment. Very good opportunities are provided for the children to explore and manipulate objects within the natural world. Teachers structure the learning environment very well, with a range of relevant resources to promote learning and the children are encouraged to use these resources extremely well through adults' skilled combination of questions, prompts and instructions.

52. There is always a strong emphasis on examining how things happen and why they work, such as cogwheels and a whisk in a bowl of soapy water. There is an appropriate focus on information technology; the most capable children use the computer and others manipulate switches and equipment such as the microwave oven. The more capable children learn that things are always changing, including changes in themselves as they grow up, and those with special educational needs are beginning to understand about time within a day and the different activity sessions, and different days and weeks of school or holidays. Mainstream children know that things used to be different many years ago, and learn to play old games such as 'Shove Ha'penny'. Religious education and a sense of spirituality are taught well, with children learning about "God's beautiful world", for instance.

53. Sometimes, children's learning is reinforced and extended well by using the local community. They go out on trips, perhaps to the zoo or park, where they can experience the weather, meet people doing different jobs, and see the ducks and other animals.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in physical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning is good.
- Very good resources and good accommodation are used effectively.
- Teamwork with a range of therapists promotes pupils' progress well.

## Commentary

54. Mainstream children make good progress towards the early learning goals in this area of learning. They get many opportunities to play actively indoors and outside; they walk on 'plant pot' stilts, climb steps to use a slide, hang upside on a bar and kick a ball to a partner. Very often, children with special educational needs have poor physical skills when they first come into the nursery and, therefore, this area of learning is a priority with staff because it is so important that children learn to sit up to pay attention, stand up, and move towards an activity that attracts them. As a result, these children achieve well too.

55. An impressive feature of lessons is the way in which children trust the adults who work with them. This gives them the confidence to attempt new activities and to widen their experiences. In swimming, for example, the quality of relationships, trust and encouragement support children's good progress even when activities are challenging. In addition, teachers' planning identifies aspects of personal and social development that are to be promoted as well as children's physical skills. This is because teachers are very adept at organising lessons that address and touch upon many areas of learning.

56. The effective teamwork between teachers, teaching assistants and physiotherapists and occupational therapists contributes significantly to the good progress made by children with special educational needs. Teachers plan very well for children to do exercises, to hold brushes and crayons, to stand up when operating computer switches or painting at an easel, and to practise walking around the school. The least skilled children may not succeed in some of these tasks, but they achieve well at their own level in activities such as sitting up, rolling over, moving on a flat buggy or a tricycle, pushing a large ball away, or trying to stop a ball coming towards them.

57. Children's learning is greatly enhanced by the quality of the accommodation and resources. A good outside environment inspires and challenges children, with well equipped areas for play and physical activities. Indoor facilities, such as the hydrotherapy pool, provide staff with many opportunities to encourage physical development; children gain confidence in the water very well, as they are encouraged to splash, move, and relax.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning is good.
- Staff make very good provision for the wide range of children's needs.
- Children achieve very well because of the staff's very good understanding of their needs.
- Children have many opportunities to discuss, to share thoughts and ideas and feelings through a range of art, music, movement, dance and role play activities.

## Commentary

58. Children are taught well. Teachers inspire children; they encourage them to explore; they require them to make choices; they provide them with activities that fire their imagination. Teachers' expectations are high, but realistic, because they know the children so well and set appropriately challenging individual targets. These targets are reflected in lesson plans and

children's progress towards achieving them is carefully monitored. The nature and appropriateness of the activities mean that children have very good attitudes to their work and behave extremely well. Their degree of success is aided considerably by the quality of relationships that exist between the children and adults. As a result, mainstream children achieve well and are well on course to achieve the early learning goals. While not all those children with special educational needs will not attain these goals, they achieve equally well. Teachers provide a wide range of well planned opportunities for children to explore and experiment with ideas and materials. Children experience a very good range of opportunities to explore art; they paint with their fingers and with brushes; print with building blocks and with the wheels of toy vehicles; and stick paper, foil and materials together to make flowers, animals and pictures.

59. Many lessons provide children with activities involving making, singing and listening. They help with preparing food such as Christmas puddings, and take part in the Christmas play. Children sing and play simple instruments, with children with the more complex special educational needs making good efforts to make sounds, pay attention, and allow themselves to be prompted to shake or hit the instruments. In each activity children learn about materials, gain skills in handling things and improve their understanding. Children are also given many opportunities to experience oral work, particularly singing and imaginative play, and many join in enthusiastically.

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

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- Pupils achieve well overall in lessons; this is considerably better than at the last inspection, especially in reading and writing.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Additional communication systems are used very well to support pupils with complex needs.
- Teaching is good with some excellent teaching in literacy and when multi-sensory approaches are used.
- Teachers do not all maintain records of pupils' work that show their progress clearly.
- Teaching time for the subject is unbalanced between classes and, in some cases, it is insufficient.

#### **Commentary**

60. When the school was last inspected, pupils' achievement and progress in English were good in speaking and listening, and satisfactory in reading and writing. Writing was not well linked to their work in other subjects. There has been improvement in all these four elements even though the ability range of the pupils on roll is now lower overall, with more having profound and multiple learning difficulties or conditions related to autism. However, while pupils achieve well in lessons, there is wide variation in taught time between classes and this has an impact on the progress that some pupils make over time.

61. Pupils now achieve very well in speaking and listening and the more competent pupils make good progress in learning to read. The pupils' writing skills are now good and have improved because the school identified that teachers in English lessons could do more to foster the early writing skills of those with severe learning difficulties. Therefore, they now have more opportunities to practise these skills in English lessons but this is not always extended to enable them to embark on more personal and extended writing regularly. A wide range of other communication systems is available to help pupils show what they know and understand. Symbols, pictures and PECS are all appropriately well used for pupils to make choices and confirm what will happen next. In particular, this helps the pupils with severe autism who are not able to use spoken language. They also benefit from shared symbols and signs that the whole group uses, such as to indicate that an activity is over. Some staff sign very well, and this helps pupils of all abilities take a fuller part in lessons. However, even experienced staff sometimes forget to sign consistently and new staff should have more intensive signing training as part of their induction. The weekly session for those with very complex needs, using a multi-sensory approach to promote communication and participation, is outstanding.

62. Pupils receive very good support and encouragement to develop an interest in reading. More competent readers' interest in text is promoted through a good use of a range of books in class and by reading aloud regularly, including at home. Reading records show several pupils' enthusiasm for particular stories, which they move through at a good pace. The most competent pupils read well and use a range of approaches to help them decode new words. Some of them read aloud with lively expression and enjoyment. For pupils with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties this includes activities such as sharing books, showing an interest, and recognising symbols and a sequence of symbols .

63. Teachers help pupils with the most complex needs to take part in reading in two ways. The first is in reading well chosen stories from big books supported by multi-sensory resources, when pupils' understanding of the events is enriched by having a good range of items to look at, feel, touch, smell, and sometimes taste. The second way is by using specialist equipment to allow them communicate their understanding. All the pupils who are able to use switch systems have them and they enable them to give an answer or make a clear choice. Staff work closely with the trained communication assistant to devise individual approaches for pupils. For example, in a story session for younger pupils the pupil was able to press the switch with the picture of the correct animal attached to demonstrate understanding.

64. The very best teaching shows first rate lesson planning that identifies a rich variety of activities and judicious grouping of pupils. Some activities involve the whole class, while others are planned for pairs, small groups or individuals. The learning expected for each pupil is laid out clearly, which helps teaching assistants to focus their efforts with individual pupils. Familiar rhymes and new poems form a key part of the communication/literacy scheme of work and are well used as a whole class opening activity. The pleasure a mixed ability group of Reception and Years 1 and 2 pupils showed when taking part in these rhymes with action, singing, chanting and mime was infectious and the least capable pupils clearly anticipated what was coming by recognising familiar rhythmical structures. In these very best sessions, pupil progress is captured in the teachers' evaluation of the lesson and this record then shapes the plan for the next lesson. At other times, lesson planning is much weaker; the activities or tasks provided for pupils are described rather than the outcomes expected for individuals or ability groups within the class.

65. The library area attracts pupils at lunchtimes, despite its limited space in the school foyer. It stocks very well chosen literature and a good range of materials to develop and inform

existing interests outside school. The library is complemented well by resources in classrooms. They are well stocked with books, which are attractively displayed and well used, and there are designated carpeted areas or book corners for quiet reading and research. All classrooms have access to the Internet. Some of the pupils with autism, who are amongst the most able learners in the school, are adept computer users and are often highly motivated by researching their special interests and they are able to do this in the small ICT room off the main classroom.

66. The subject is well led and managed and this has been instrumental in achieving the good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in terms of monitoring teaching and producing an effective programme of curriculum development. The recent audit of teaching and pupils' achievement in literacy is thorough and identifies the correct areas for further improvement. However, areas for development remain. There is variation in the extent to which teachers include telling examples of work in portfolios that show the progress made by individual pupils.

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

67. Pupils have good literacy skills; this has improved since the last inspection as there is a greater focus on literacy teaching throughout the school. This is evident in most subjects. Teachers and teaching assistants increasingly use an extended range of communication systems for pupils with complex needs or speech and language difficulties, and there is a wider availability and use of switch systems for pupils with complex physical disabilities. Some teachers and support staff use Makaton signing very well to support language development but this remains inconsistent, as at the last inspection. The staff's commitment to raising achievement in language and communication has resulted in improved standards; levels of reading of more capable pupils has improved; pupils' writing skills have developed in English lessons but writing as part of other subject lessons is a key area the school intends to develop.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Learning is supported well by very good quality resources that teachers use creatively
- The needs of pupils with additional learning difficulties are met very well.
- Lesson planning, based on the National Numeracy Strategy, is inconsistent.
- A very good range of additional communication systems are used.
- Assessment procedures are good but the information is not always used effectively in planning activities to meet individual needs.

### **Commentary**

68. Pupils achieve well. For instance, they learn successfully about the sequence of the days of the week, shapes and numbers. Some pupils make measurements; others understand how time is worked out. Pupils also start to use and apply their learning to problem solving, such as carrying out a survey to determine the price they should charge for a product they have made for the summer fair.

69. Pupils' good level of achievement is a direct result of good quality teaching. In the best lessons teachers provide exciting learning experiences, supported by very strong and positive relationships between staff and pupils. Because staff have such a good knowledge of the pupils and their needs they expect them to participate and contribute fully to the sessions. As a result, pupils behave impressively and have very good attitudes to their work. In these sessions the principles and practice of the National Numeracy Strategy have been adapted and implemented so that there is effective planning and an appropriate emphasis on mental work and pupil involvement. At other times, some staff do not use this structured approach and, therefore, learning is less effective. Opportunities to reinforce understanding and extend skill acquisition are not always utilised.

70. High level communication skills, such as the use of additional strategies like Makaton signing and PECS are an impressive feature of lessons and these enable all pupils to participate fully by demonstrating their understanding and learning. However, this does not detract from pupils developing listening skills; speech underpins all teaching and adults use their voices imaginatively to stimulate pupils and grab their attention. For instance, songs and rhymes are used very well to reinforce counting. Information technology, such as electronic switches, is used effectively to allow pupils with more complex profound and multiple learning difficulties to make decisions indicate answers.

71. Learning resources are well chosen to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are stimulated by equipment such as drums used to beat out numbers and colourful number cards that encourage them to reach out and touch. Pupils with autism are stimulated by other equipment, such as information technology. For example, a group of Year 3 pupils wrote answers on a whiteboard as part of a competition counting letters in names before reinforcing their learning through using an appropriate CD-ROM on the computer.

72. There has been good improvement in provision since the previous inspection. Leadership and management are satisfactory and the co-ordinator has made a number of improvements. Lessons are now observed and suggestions are made for improving planning, but these are not always followed up. This inconsistent practice manifests itself in two ways. Individual lesson plans are not always underpinned by assessment information about what pupils can do and understand. Therefore, while some lessons plans incorporate this information very well to identify precisely what it is intended that pupils will learn during the course of a session, others do not articulate these anticipated learning outcomes so sharply.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

73. Teachers are effective in supporting pupils' learning of mathematical skills through other subjects of the curriculum. There were many examples of pupils being encouraged to count during the inspection. These included counting the number of seeds in different fruits in science, counting and matching items in snack sessions, counting before beginning musical activities. Other skills, such as measuring and weighing, are developed well through subjects like design and technology.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**



- Pupils are taught well and achieve well in lessons.
- There is a good emphasis on investigative work.
- Assessment information is not used sufficiently well in all lesson planning.
- Too little time is allocated to this subject in some classes, and this limits progress over time.
- The local community is used well to support learning.

## **Commentary**

74. Pupils' good achievement, particularly in their understanding of how to carry out investigations, occurs because they are encouraged to think ahead. They learn to prepare and to plan how to conduct simple experiments with different materials, with forces such as gravity, and with things that live and grow. They also learn how to record the results of their experiments in simple ways. Therefore, they improve their knowledge well in the different areas that they study, such as the way in which electricity is used around the home and the different environments that plants and animals need in order to live. However, some pupils' progress over time is restricted because insufficient time is allocated to science for pupils to consolidate their learning. However, pupils' developing scientific knowledge is often supported well through other subjects of the curriculum. In particular, science is well integrated with subjects such as art, English and geography through topics like "Homes" and "Hot and cold".

75. Teachers have positive relationships with their pupils, and manage their behaviour well. The learning by the least capable pupils is helped by the close attention they receive from teachers and very effective teaching assistants. Teachers prepare well for lessons, and use good resources to make learning exciting and interesting. Consequently, all pupils are well motivated by the activities provided and so they enjoy their science lessons. However, teachers mostly do not use computers often enough, or very imaginatively to support the pupils' learning. Visits to places of interest add greatly to pupils' learning. Trips to the zoo, garden centres, science and industrial museums and a safari park help to extend pupils' awareness. Activities such as pond dipping, to study the small wildlife, are enjoyable and rewarding experiences.

76. Teachers carry out good assessments of individual pupils' learning but they do not use this information sufficiently well when planning lessons. This is particularly evident when they plan lessons in blocks, often for several weeks in advance. As a result, lesson planning fails to show clearly exactly what it is intended that individual pupils should learn through the activities provided.

The leadership and management of science are good. There has been a satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection, with particular improvement in the quality and range of learning resources. Staff have had some effective training in how to teach different aspects of the subject and there are plans to improve the overall quality of the subject curriculum through re-writing plans showing what should be taught in the long term.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

77. The school plans for ICT to be taught as a separate subject in the first half of each term and so no discrete lessons could be observed during the inspection. An examination of pupils' work and assessment records showed that pupils achieve satisfactorily. Good leadership and management have improved provision well from its poor state at the time of the previous

inspection. A good plan of what should be taught in the long term has now been adopted, and pupils' progress is now assessed satisfactorily.

78. Since the previous inspection, the equipment has been updated significantly. Many staff, including teaching assistants, have had effective training in how to use this new equipment and programs that have been purchased. There are now sufficient computers and programs to support pupils' learning across the school. In addition, a good selection of other equipment is used to help pupils to practise control and to understand the idea of cause and effect; food blenders, CD players, microwaves, videos and televisions are all used well to support learning. Technology is also used effectively as a way of supporting pupils' communication skills. Simple switches, that some pupils operate independently, speak pre-recorded sentences or operate programs or additional items such as tape recorders.

79. Currently, there are difficulties with the equipment and the software programs because the new computers, and the way they are linked together, are not working correctly. This is outside the control of the school, but it causes unforeseen and time consuming problems. Teachers find that some computers do not work, or do so erratically; a new electronic white board does not always work correctly; and the microscope that shows the pictures on the computer screen often fails to work at all. Many programs are not compatible with the new systems and cannot be used, teachers are not yet fully familiar with them, and there are not enough programs to enliven learning in some subjects. The school has the potential to overcome these problems, but at the moment they limit the school's use of information technology.

80. The second half of each term is planned to ensure that ICT is used much more in lessons across the curriculum so that pupils can practise and extend the skills that they have learned in the previous six week block. This plan is not working as well as it could because of inconsistent practice. Some teachers plan well for children, in some subjects, to use computers or other information technology equipment. However, for many classes, teachers do not plan their lessons well enough to ensure that pupils are getting good practice during the second half of each term. This loss of time with the equipment reduces the progress that pupils make over time, and it limits the range of skills that they can develop.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

81. Pupils use communication technology well in some areas, and these are often associated with daily activities. For instance, they use simple switches to make a choice about what things they want, or wish to do. Staff are good at arranging and preparing such choosing activities, but sometimes need to look more carefully at the needs and skills of individual pupils to make the choosing more imaginative and challenging. At other times, computers are used well to calm pupils down, to divert their disturbed behaviours, and to support learning in areas such as reading and counting. Generally, pupils' use of computers satisfactory when they are able to use it, but its unpredictability is holding back pupils' progress.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History**

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good resources and artefacts are used to enrich learning, but time is not always used productively.
- The school makes good use of the community to bring the subject 'alive'.
- Lesson planning lacks clarity and preciseness.
- The subject is well led and managed.

## Commentary

82. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory. The pupils study history in half term blocks, as it alternates with geography. The programme is adequately planned over the six years for which they could be in school. This gives pupils a sense of chronology and some understanding of life in earlier times. For pupils with the most profound and complex needs this means developing understanding of chronology in terms of, for example, *today*, *yesterday* and *last week*, and learning about their own past and that of their families. More capable pupils know about periods of British history, such as the Vikings, and other civilisations like Ancient Egypt.

83. The subject is taught satisfactorily. Lessons are characterised by very good relationships and the consistent use of encouragement and praise. The main weakness in teaching is the paucity of planning, as teachers do not identify in any depth what they expect pupils to learn by the end of a lesson. That means that the teachers have very limited opportunities to evaluate what pupils have learned during the lesson because they have not identified in advance what they are going to measure progress against. Pupils are motivated by high quality artefacts, which they handle carefully. Different groups of pupils were observed studying Victorian Britain; one class examined articles associated with everyday life such as a candle snuffer and articles of clothing, while the other class compared toys from the Victorian times with modern ones. Although learning was stimulated by these resources, they were not used as effectively as they could have been. Too much time was spent simply showing the pupils one article after another, rather than introducing some structure into the activity. For example, the toys, which were generally wooden or metal, could have been used to reinforce learning in science when pupils had considered different sorts of materials; the everyday articles could have been used to consolidate simple chronology and shown in an order that would have paralleled a normal Victorian day from waking to bedtime.

84. Very effective teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. They know the pupils very well and are particularly effective at encouraging the physical skills of those with the most complex needs. For instance, when the old and modern toys were being passed around they were highly skilled at getting individual pupils to stretch out their arms to take the toys, to extend their fingers, to grip more tightly and to use both hands if possible.

85. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, when pupil progress was judged as unsatisfactory. This is due mainly to the improved co-ordination of the subject. Leadership and management are good; there is improved monitoring of the curriculum and assessment procedures are more effective. Pupils' work is now annotated and the context within which it was produced is frequently shown, supported by photographic evidence. This often entails the very good experiences that pupils get off site when they visit places like Bramhall Hall and the Hat Works.

## Geography

86. No geography lessons were seen during the inspection. This was largely because the subject alternates with history and in most classes history was being taught during the half term in which the inspection took place. Other evidence shows that pupils make satisfactory progress overall. There is a satisfactory plan of what is to be taught in the long term and displays around the school, such as maps of the playground and treasure maps, and a sample of pupils' other work shows that they achieve satisfactorily. Good use is made of outside visits, such as one during the inspection to Alderley Edge which was very well planned and prepared. Other valuable visits have been made to local parks, the safari park and around the town to see an urban landscape.

## **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Effective leadership and management have greatly improved all aspects of the subject.
- Pupils achieve well and enjoy their lessons.
- The curriculum is well designed and makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There is an inconsistent approach to the opening and closing sections of the lessons so that not all pupils are provided with periods of quiet reflection and spirituality.

## **Commentary**

87. The co-ordinator has been in post for three years and is enthusiastic and committed to the subject. She is planning to increase, still further, the role religious education plays for the pupils and she has the capacity to bring about such change. Her wide-ranging development plan has proved very effective in tackling the weaknesses in provision identified during the last inspection. All the serious shortcomings have been fully addressed, and the co-ordinator's monitoring and support records confirm that all pupils now receive their weekly lesson. Assessment in religious education has improved from poor at the last inspection to satisfactory now. Previously, it was confined to recording participation in assemblies and outings but now the pupils' response to what the teacher intended them to learn is recorded after many lessons. However, this is not yet routine practice as in some cases teachers do not focus as much on the pupils' achievement of learning objectives as they do on the success of the strategies or materials and activities they used in class.

88. Investment in training, support and classroom resources have improved teachers' confidence and enthusiasm about the subject. This has been rewarded by steady and continuing improvement in the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Pupils are now taught well. Interesting, but challenging activities are supported by good quality resources. Consequently, pupils have very good attitudes to their learning and make good progress. Teaching assistants provide effective support and, therefore, all pupils are able to participate. Many of these features were evident in a lesson about Islam with Year 3 pupils, including some with autism. In this lively lesson pupils' previous learning about Islam was drawn together and new information and experiences were provided. The quality of resources sustained pupils' concentration and supported their learning very well; they had items of clothing and artefacts to look at and handle. The level of challenge provided for the more capable pupils in terms of new knowledge and understanding was good and the teacher's subject knowledge enabled her to explain key points very well.

89. Planning now ensures that pupils' subject learning contributes more widely to their personal development as well. The co-ordinator is keen to develop the distinctive qualities of religious education lessons more fully, to reinforce the nature of the experience that is planned for pupils. She intends to develop a range of introductory activities to promote a quiet, still and reflective climate for the start and end of lessons and make sure this is consistently used. This will enrich pupils' experience of the spiritual aspects of the subject and define the different kinds of learning that happens in these lessons. The development of such a lesson structure should maximise the opportunities for pupils to be reflective and share, in their own ways, what they have learned.

90. Whole school assemblies continue to play an important role in pupils' religious education. These weekly events are extremely well managed by the headteacher. For example, there was a splendid assembly about Jonah and the whale when very good use of active participation by the pupils and many large and colourful resources ensured that the content of the story and its message were communicated well to all the pupils.

91. The use of the community contributes very well to pupils' knowledge of religion and also contributes to their personal development. A class of younger pupils with autism were seen benefiting from these links when a visitor brought an excellent range of items for the pupils to handle and consider. Very good liaison and planning was evident and the teamwork between the class teacher, teaching assistants and the visitor meant that all the pupils were included. Pupils of all abilities were very well catered for and their interest in the visitor, and respect for the precious items, represented very good achievement for pupils with autism.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

### **Art and design**

92. It is not possible to make an overall judgement on the provision for art and design as only one lesson was sampled. However, the quality of pupils' work on display, assessment records, workbooks and photographs show that achievement is satisfactory. Teachers try hard to develop pupils' artistic skills both within art lessons and through activities in other subjects of the curriculum.

### **Design and technology**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils are well taught.
- Learning is supported through good links with other subjects.
- Planning and assessment procedures are not sufficiently consistent or detailed.

### **Commentary**

93. Overall, pupils achieve well in this subject and there are many examples of pupils' work in the school to illustrate this. These range from designing and drawing cartoon characters to mechanical toys and three-dimensional models of rockets. Some pupils illustrate their wall displays with items they have designed and made; ice shapes to signify cold, and with butterflies to show warmth, while others make puzzles, sew and stitch materials and design

tie/dye projects. The models they have made to illustrate aspects of different religions are very good examples of the quality and standards expected in the subject.

94. Teaching is generally good as teachers are imaginative in the way they use simple, everyday resources items to develop and illustrate work, such as the tooth brush used to portray the whiskers on a walrus they had made following a visit to the zoo. Relationships are good and this allows teachers to set high standards. They expect pupils to behave well and to try hard, and they do. Pupils are encouraged to share experiences and they celebrate each others' successes when they do well. Pupils are very interested in every aspect of design. Many take great pleasure in designing cars of all shapes and sizes and most are fascinated by work that includes parts which move.

95. Effective long-term planning of the subject by the co-ordinator enables pupils to develop skills in making and designing, and some are beginning to evaluate their own work and consider how it can be improved. Planning also identifies opportunities for other skills, such as numeracy, to be reinforced in lessons. For instance, the mathematical skills of counting, measuring and weighing are supported in lessons; Shrove Tuesday was used as an opportunity to extend learning about Lent through making and cooking pancakes in food technology. Design and technology is a subject which is used well to forge links with other schools. For example, a class of Year 6 pupils was joined by a small group from a local mainstream school who helped them to make pictures from folded paper; an individual pupil integrates into a local school for art and design lessons.

96. There has been good improvement in provision since the last inspection. The subject is now well managed by a newly established co-ordinator, who has improved the quality and range of resources and is developing medium and short term planning and assessment procedures. Currently, lesson planning does not focus on detailed learning intentions and assessment information is not sufficiently sharp. For instance photographic evidence of achievement does not contain enough information, such as context and degree and type of support, to describe pupil progress.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils are taught well and enjoy music, being keen to join in; they achieve well.
- Planning identifies activities that promote pupils' personal development.
- Lessons provide many opportunities for pupils to gain valuable experiences of listening and performing.
- The input from specialist peripatetic staff is an important feature of the provision.
- Individual lesson plans do not identify sufficiently clearly what it is intended that pupils will learn.

## **Commentary**

97. Pupils are taught music in relatively large groups, as three classes come together for each session. At these times, teachers and teaching assistants are assisted by a member of the local education authority peripatetic music service and his specialist contribution is a significant factor in pupils' good achievement. During these lessons pupils have many

opportunities to listen to music, sing and play instruments, as well to learn about some very simple elements of musical features such as pitch.

98. Lessons are fun and pupils thoroughly enjoy them. These lessons take place in a large hall and are potentially difficult situations to control but the high ratio of adults to pupils means that teachers and teaching assistants are able to manage pupils very effectively. In addition, adults are able to ensure that all pupils participate in what is on offer and, therefore, all are able to make good progress. For instance, a lesson involving younger pupils involved each class responding to musical instructions when performing a piece, based on an animal, they had previously rehearsed. *'The Cheetah'* involved a group of pupils in wheelchairs but teachers and teaching assistants wheeled them around at speed so that they could get full enjoyment from the music.

99. Lessons promote many aspects of pupils' communication skills and personal development. A variety of well chosen activities are used effectively to encourage listening, watching, moving, following instructions and working together. For example, younger pupils were required to respond to spoken instructions, supported by stop/go 'traffic light' cards, to begin and to cease playing percussion instruments. A game of 'musical statues' was also used very well to encourage listening skills and to consolidate body control, by requiring pupils to remain still. Older pupils were presented with more complex spoken instructions and symbol cards to produce high / middle / low notes on request and some had the opportunity to 'make their own tune'. This was cleverly managed, as pupils moved up and down a set of simple steps the peripatetic teacher played corresponding notes on the keyboard so that the pupil was able to control what was being played.

100. On occasion, music is taught at other times but these sessions are not always as effective. In particular, time is not used efficiently and in part this is because planning is much too sketchy. Shortcomings in planning are characteristic of all music lessons because the plans tend to cover too long a period, often a half term. Therefore, individual lesson plans do not identify sharply articulated learning objectives because they do not incorporate assessment details based on pupils' prior learning.

101. There has been good improvement in provision since the last inspection. The subject is well led and managed by an enthusiastic co-ordinator who has produced a well structured and organised subject curriculum.

## **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The input of physiotherapists and occupational therapists ensures that pupils receive support which extends their mobility and independence.
- Pupils learn very well and the teaching of some specialist work, such as the Shelbourne programme, is particularly good.
- The presence of mainstream pupils in some lessons helps to promote pupils' social skills and increases the level of attainment and challenge in lessons
- Planning identifies clear learning targets for pupils.
- Resources, the accommodation and community facilities promote learning well.

## Commentary

102. The combination of very good teaching and therapy input is responsible for pupils enjoying good quality provision where challenge is clear and activities very exciting. The wide range of opportunities on offer means that every pupil is able to follow a full curriculum in physical education. Therefore, overall pupils achieve very well and make very good progress in the range of activities available to them. For example, the more capable pupils throw hoops and balls accurately; some succeed in 'follow the leader' challenges and, with support, handle and hold a parachute by co-operating with others.

103. The school places great emphasis on linking elements of physical development, mobility and independence skills. Therefore, it uses elements of both the MOVE and Shelbourne movement programmes for those pupils with the most complex needs in order to develop confidence and improve mobility. Highly skilled therapists are significant contributors to these programmes and also carry out specialist work with individual pupils.

104. Teachers plan lessons well and identify specific learning objectives. Pupils are able to achieve these because the activities are exciting and geared to individual and group challenges. Adults include all pupils in the lessons even though there may be a very wide range of attainment in those lessons, which occur regularly, that also include small groups from a mainstream school. These inclusive sessions are particularly important in developing pupils' personal development and social awareness.

105. Learning is enhanced by the appropriateness of resources, the good quality of the accommodation and the use of local facilities. Simple resources like tunnels and the parachute are used very well to develop the idea of routines and sequences and to develop a mood of anticipation. The school's hydrotherapy pool is a valuable and well used facility; community resources that are used include a swimming pool, trampoline and riding stables.

106. The subject is well led and managed by a recently appointed co-ordinator with very recent mainstream experience. There has been good improvement in provision since the last inspection.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

### Personal, social and health education

Provision in personal, social and health education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' personal, social and health development is very well promoted informally by everyone throughout the school day.
- Pupils are very well taught in lessons and during activities like circle time.
- Pupils make good progress meeting PSHE targets in their IEPs.
- Some teachers' reliance upon activities such as circle time, snacks and lunch time as their main opportunity to promote personal and social development is too limiting.
- When planning lessons in other subjects, teachers are not following the school's curriculum procedure by showing clearly how they intend to promote pupils' personal development.

## Commentary



107. All staff share the headteacher's strong commitment to promoting pupils' self-esteem, mobility, self help skills and preparation for independence. From their arrival at school to their safe departure for the journey home, pupils' personal needs and development are uppermost in everyone's mind.

108. The focus on pupils' personal development is evident in the routines that constitute part of the PSHE programme, such as circle time, snack times and the lunch period, are used consistently. Many social and personal skills are developed well in these sessions, such as listening carefully to others' contributions, making choices, taking turns and, if they are able to, undertaking classroom tasks such as clearing, tidying and helping others. For instance, one of the strengths in the first session of the day with Year 6 pupils was the quality of relationships that were evident amongst the pupils. In their own ways, three ambulant pupils each showed pleasure in the arrival of their less mobile classmates. Two sought them out to greet them by touch or sign and all spoke to them sensitively. The staff commitment to the inclusion of everyone was shown well in these activities, which form a significant part of each day's provision. At these times, teaching and learning are very good.

109. Those pupils who have dedicated PSHE lessons are taught equally well. Effective planning shows clearly what it is anticipated that pupils should learn and these learning outcomes are based on teachers' very knowledge of the pupils. High expectations of behaviour are evident throughout, with appropriate behaviour being constantly reinforced through praise and encouragement. Pupils' interest is maintained through the quality of the activities provided and the skilful way in which teachers change the activities. Such very good quality teaching enabled a class of Reception and Years 1 and 3 pupils to make very good progress in learning about keeping safe.

110. However, there are too few of these discrete PSHE lessons to support the daily routines in delivering a fully planned programme of personal, social and health education. While the upon circle time type activities are significant in promoting personal and social development, they are unplanned and relatively limited in scope. Consequently, the range of knowledge and understanding that these daily routines encourage is not sufficiently broad. The subject policy shows that much of the planned PSHE programme should be covered in some topics that pupils study each year and through all subjects of the curriculum. However, this approach is not effective because teachers do not routinely show in their lesson planning how they are going to encourage specific aspects of pupils' development. While some teachers' lesson planning shows links between IEP targets and the learning objectives for the lesson, this is not consistent practice.

111. The school meets its statutory requirement to provide aspects such as sex education, but the planned PSHE programme was developed some time ago. There is a need to update the policy and programme of work in a way that identifies recording procedures that enable the school to keep robust evidence of each pupil's coverage of the topics and clear evidence of their achievement and progress over time. Leadership and management of the discrete subject are satisfactory, but current procedures mean that the management team is unable to monitor or evaluate that enough of the prescribed subject content is covered in a systematic and progressive way. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

## **PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS**

*Inspection judgement*

*Grade*

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3

<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
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 against individual targets and not national standards.*