

INSPECTION REPORT

BROADMEADOW NURSERY SCHOOL

Wolverhampton

LEA area: Wolverhampton

Unique reference number: 104416

Headteacher: Miss Karen Warrington

Lead inspector: Mrs Rosemary Eaton

Dates of inspection: 15th – 18th November 2004

Inspection number: 268540

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	2 - 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	38
School address:	Lansdowne Road Wolverhampton West Midlands
Postcode:	WV1 4AL
Telephone number:	01902 558330
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Terry L. Davis
Date of previous inspection:	21/06/1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Broadmeadow is a school for boys and girls aged two to seven with severe learning difficulties. Although it is called a nursery school, of the 38 pupils currently on roll, half are in Years 1 and 2. There are eight children in the nursery year and 11 in reception. Just over one third of the pupils are girls. Nine pupils have statements of special educational needs. The remainder are still undergoing the assessment process. When they join the school, most pupils' attainment is well below average, as a result of their special educational needs. In addition to severe learning difficulties, 17 pupils have some degree of autistic spectrum disorder, with ten of these being taught in special classes. Eleven pupils also have behavioural difficulties. No pupils are in public care. Pupils' homes are throughout Wolverhampton. Although their socio-economic circumstances are varied, overall they are below average. Half the pupils are white British, nine are of Indian heritage, two Pakistani, and two are of other Asian backgrounds. There are two black pupils. One of these is of African descent. One pupil is Chinese. Two are of mixed background and one is white but is not of British origin. Thirteen pupils have English as an additional language, with Panjabi, Urdu and Mandarin Chinese spoken in their homes. At the time of the inspection, about half of the pupils had only been with the school for two months. The school is funded to provide an outreach service, supporting pupils with severe learning difficulties in mainstream nursery schools.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15173	Rosemary Eaton	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage curriculum Science Religious education English as an additional language
32676	Nicolas Power	Lay inspector	
31914	Colette Gribble	Team inspector	Mathematics History Geography Personal, social and health education Music
30071	John Pearson	Team inspector	English Art and design Design and technology Physical education Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

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

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher's leadership is very strong and clear-sighted.
- As a result of very high quality teaching, care and support, pupils become confident and enthusiastic learners who achieve very well.
- The school uses the skills and expertise of all staff very effectively and the way in which staff work together is extremely good.
- Very good assessment procedures enable the school to meet the needs of all pupils very well and to prepare them for the next stage in their learning.
- The school works very successfully to help parents to support their children's learning.
- The curriculum and pupils' personal development are enhanced significantly by opportunities for learning outside the classroom.
- Not all teachers make full use of computers and other technology to help pupils to learn.

The school has improved very well since the previous inspection. The issues identified previously have been tackled systematically and successfully. Pupils' achievement is now better, as are their attitudes and personal development, and the quality of teaching has also improved. There have been particularly effective developments in the curriculum and the use made of assessment information.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement is **very good**. Children in the nursery and reception years achieve very well overall, particularly in personal, social, and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development. Their achievement is good in knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development.

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

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

Pupils in Years 1 and 2 also achieve very well. Their achievement is very good in English, mathematics, personal, social and health education, music and physical education. They achieve well in science, information and communication technology and religious education. Girls and boys, those from minority ethnic groups and pupils with English as an additional language achieve equally well. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders make as much progress as other pupils.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**. Their attitudes to school are also very good, as is their behaviour. Because they have such confidence in the adults who teach and care for them, pupils are willing to try very hard and take full advantage of new experiences and opportunities. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils are seldom away unless they are ill.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **very good**. Teaching is **very good** and, as a result, pupils learn very well. Teachers, nursery nurses and teaching assistants plan lessons together and share teaching and the assessment of what pupils learn. As a result of this teamwork, all staff are fully aware of each pupil's needs and how best to cater for them – for example, helping them to communicate or control their behaviour. Assessment information and pupils' individual targets are used very effectively to plan work that helps each pupil to learn and move on. The use of signs and symbols makes a very good contribution to pupils' achievement, but new technological resources are underused at present.

The curriculum has recently been reorganised and now ensures that all pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding through relevant and varied experiences as they move up through the school. For instance, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders have very good arrangements to help them to learn. A very wide range of activities is provided to enrich the curriculum and make learning enjoyable – for example, making use of the school grounds and the locality. Pupils are cared for very well and given very good support – for instance, to help them settle into school quickly. There are strong links with the community and very good partnerships with parents and other schools, including a very effective outreach service to mainstream nursery schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. Leadership is very good, with the headteacher ensuring that all staff share her commitment to providing the best possible quality of education. Management is also very good. The school carefully establishes how well it is performing, identifies ways in which it can improve further, and plans very effectively to achieve this. Governance is good. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities and are well informed, supportive and committed.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very positive about nearly all aspects of the school. In particular, they are very happy that their children enjoy school, are helped very well to settle in, and are treated fairly. They are a little less convinced that behaviour is good.

Pupils show by their responses to lessons, activities, and daily routines, that they are very happy at school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important thing the school should do to improve is:

- Carry out the plans to increase the use of modern technology by teachers, during lessons in all subjects.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve very well in English, mathematics, personal, social and health education (PSHE), music and physical education.
- In the Foundation Stage, achievement is very good in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development.
- Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders achieve as well as others.
- Girls' achievement is as good as boys. The pupils from minority ethnic groups and those with English as an additional language get on as well as others.

Commentary

Although all pupils are considered to have severe learning difficulties when they join the school, by the time they leave, a significant proportion transfer to schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. At the end of last year, six of the 24 pupils who left moved on to schools of that type. The school analyses the changes in the levels pupils are working at on a scale used to measure the attainment of pupils with special educational needs. This shows that, during the year beginning September 2003, the majority of pupils made significant gains in most subjects. This is another very good indicator of pupils' achievement.

Currently, achievement is good in science, information and communication technology (ICT), and religious education. In science, pupils are taught well and the curriculum has very recently been improved and restructured. There have been similar developments in ICT, the most important being the introduction of very high quality specialist teaching. However, most teachers are still getting to grips with very newly acquired resources and so achievement is good overall, with a need to increase the use of ICT in other subjects. Most of the religious education teaching is done through very good quality whole school collective acts of worship, which makes it difficult to fine tune the content to meet individual needs, although teachers do augment this work during lessons across the curriculum. The combination of assemblies and additional activities results in the good achievement in religious education.

Pupils' overall achievement is very good, most significantly in English and PSHE. Their success in these subjects enables pupils to make the most of lessons in all subjects and school life generally. Very good teaching, with all staff contributing to helping pupils to learn, is chiefly responsible for these very high standards. However, other factors – such as the use made of the analysis of assessment data – also play their part. For instance, because assessments indicated that pupils achieve less well in writing, this became the target for a whole school effort, resulting in improved achievement. Nevertheless, pupils do not reach the same levels as in other aspects of English, because they find writing very difficult, owing to their special educational needs. The important point is that, given these difficulties, they are making very good progress.

In the nursery and reception years, the focus of much of the staff's efforts is on developing children's knowledge, skills and understanding in communication, language and literacy and their personal, social and emotional development. These areas of learning, plus children's mathematical development, permeate all activities and routines, throughout each day. Staff are highly skilled and teach these areas very well, resulting in children's very good achievement. In the areas of knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development, children achieve well, rather than very well, because they are still developing their ability to communicate and skills such as

concentrating, following instructions, and mixing with others, in order for them to benefit fully from lessons across the curriculum.

The school's arrangements for educating the pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are very good and take full account of their individual needs. For instance, around one-third of these pupils are able to work alongside pupils whose main barrier to learning is their severe learning difficulties. In this case, staff adapt lessons to their particular learning styles, but essentially they cope with the same curriculum as other pupils. However, the pupils with the most significant autistic spectrum disorders, which are often accompanied by challenging behaviour, are taught in separate classes, with higher staffing levels and the consistent use of methods known to match their very specific needs. As a result, there is clear evidence that the pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are just as successful as other pupils, when their special educational needs are considered.

Teachers are very alert to the needs of all pupils, and take account of their individual circumstances. Consequently, for example, they ensure that the relatively small number of girls are not overlooked during lessons, so they are able to learn at the same rate as the boys. To check that this is so, the school analyses the progress made by different groups of pupils, and makes any necessary adjustments to the curriculum or teaching, if discrepancies are indicated. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are fully involved in all aspects of the school, with cultural differences celebrated by everyone – for example, during religious education lessons, when using resources such as dolls, and listening to stories. The pupils with English as an additional language receive very good additional support from a nursery nurse who works with them each week on their individual language and literacy targets. Liaison with children's families, speech and language therapists, and the local education authority's specialist service, further contributes to ensuring that these pupils are given the help they need in order to achieve as well as others.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has developed very effective measures to manage pupils' behaviour.
- The very good relationships at all levels within the school aid pupils' learning.
- Visits to places outside school help pupils to develop their independence.
- Pupils gain a very good appreciation of other cultures and this helps them to relate well to each other.

Commentary

The school recognises that consistency in behaviour management is very important and a specialist teaching assistant ensures that everyone takes very good account of individual pupils' behaviour plans. All staff are supported by very effective behaviour management techniques – for instance, training in an approved method of restraining pupils whose behaviour is challenging. There is a very good range of rewards throughout the whole school, with tailored additional support for those pupils who require it. For example, those with autistic spectrum disorders may have personal schedules to help them cope with the series of tasks throughout the day, or 'later bags', so they can see that a favourite toy or activity will be available to them shortly. As pupils' behaviour is so very well managed, they develop social skills and an appreciation of right and wrong. There were no exclusions in the last reporting year: The school has a policy of not excluding pupils.

Pupils' attitudes towards each other, towards staff, and their work, are consistently very good. The very good relationships between all in the school promote these characteristics and help to foster pupils' acceptance that school is a place to learn. The resulting peaceful, calm atmosphere helps

pupils to reflect, think and work. Parents feel very strongly that their children enjoy school. Because they have such confidence in the adults who teach and care for them, pupils are prepared to tackle activities that challenge them. For instance, during a physical education lesson, pupils in Years 1 and 2 found it very hard to balance on a narrow beam. As a result of the sensitive support they received, they all approached the activity with a clear determination to succeed.

Pupils enjoy visiting places outside of school as part of the curriculum. For example, they regularly venture out to local supermarkets and places of worship. The visits help them to understand how to behave in places other than school and cope with unfamiliar people and situations – such as using different toilets. Visits also contribute to the school's very good arrangements for pupils' spiritual development. For instance, they are given time to explore the world around them, as when classes spend time in the school's woodland area or in the nearby park. A Year 1 pupil with autistic spectrum disorder and very challenging behaviour showed great interest in collecting autumn leaves, stroking, scrunching and sniffing them. The pupils are encouraged to be receptive to new experiences, because staff prepare them very well. As a result, pupils in Years 1 and 2 moved respectfully and silently round the church they visited, gazing in wonder at the stained glass and altar.

Wolverhampton is a very culturally diverse city. The school makes very good use of this to provide its pupils with many valuable experiences of cultures other than their own. For example, a 'Happy Diwali' assembly involved parents, dancers, food and music. Pupils were enthralled at the spectacle of traditional Hindu costumes and dance and thoroughly enjoyed tasting traditional sweets and food. Events such as this mean that pupils are more likely to grow up appreciating and enjoying other cultures, races and religions.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	10	School data	0
National data	8.7	National data	0.5

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

Although overall attendance is slightly lower than average, many of the pupils are very young. They are seldom absent unless they are ill.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

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

Teaching and learning

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The way in which classroom staff work together is outstanding.
- Highly relevant and motivating activities are organised for pupils.
- Assessment procedures contribute very effectively to pupils' achievement.
- Work is very accurately matched to pupils' needs.
- Signs and symbols are used very consistently to help pupils to learn.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 23 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	13	8	1	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Teachers and support staff plan lessons together and then decide who is going to take the lead for particular activities. This joint planning means that all those in the classroom appreciate what is to happen and why, and the lesson's links to other subjects and areas of learning. They also know the pupils and their needs very well and what they already know, understand and can do, because they share the tasks of assessing and recording how well pupils learn. As a result, every member of staff is fully involved at all times, whether leading the proceedings or acting in a supporting capacity. For instance, they are quick to notice if a pupil is achieving a personal target and can be praised and extended still further or is struggling and needs a helping hand or word of encouragement.

Sharing the role of teacher amongst adults results in staff who are enthusiastic. This is infectious and has a motivating effect on pupils. They want to be involved and they try very hard, with a consequent positive impact on their achievement. Very significantly, all staff share similarly high expectations – for example, for pupils to behave well – and have consistent approaches to issues such as how challenging behaviour is managed. This was evident in a lesson for children in the nursery and reception years, all with autistic spectrum disorders. At various times, the activities, which were linked to the theme of birthday parties, began to over-excite particular children. The staff used their knowledge of individuals to intervene at exactly the right moment, calming them down and enabling them to sit, look and listen, demonstrating very good achievement.

Using the school's curriculum framework and their knowledge of pupils' special educational needs, staff design lessons and activities that motivate pupils to learn. In the two classes for pupils with significant autism, the tasks chosen are finely balanced between being sufficiently interesting as to encourage pupils to attempt them, and not overly stimulating, which would leave pupils confused and unable to cope. Most pupils in the remaining classes respond very positively to lessons that are exciting, and this is a characteristic of many of them. For instance, children in the nursery and reception years reacted with enthusiasm to a literacy session featuring an interactive white board, displaying images from the story of 'Anna and her Amazing Multi-coloured Glasses'. They enjoyed joining in as the story was retold, picking up cues from the teacher and recalling words from previous lessons, and practising pre-writing skills by moving their fingers across the screen. This was a very good example of the use of ICT, but teachers do not all make the most of such resources, in order to help pupils to learn.

Pupils are formally assessed on entry to the school, and the information gathered is used to establish very good, detailed individual learning programmes. These set major learning priorities that are then broken down into finer steps. In lessons, each pupil's progress towards these steps is recorded meticulously. As pupils achieve their targets, staff set them new ones and adapt what they teach accordingly, thus making very good use of assessment information to guide what is taught and learned. The school also uses its knowledge of pupils in order to group them into classes. For instance, two higher attaining children in the reception year currently work alongside pupils in Years 1 and 2. This arrangement enables them to tackle more demanding work, which meets their needs very well.

Staff make very effective use of pupils' individual targets in order to enable them to build systematically on what they already know, understand and can do. For example, during a break for a snack and drink, staff in the class for higher attaining pupils in the reception year and Years 1 and 2 expected individual pupils to communicate their wishes in different ways. One pupil with autistic spectrum disorder exchanged pictures to indicate his choice between orange or apple slices. Pupils with severe learning difficulties used symbols, with a couple reinforcing their decision with speech. The higher attaining pupils spoke to the staff, without the support of alternative methods of

communication. As a result, each pupil was provided with a challenging, real-life situation within which to practise and develop their communication skills. Because staff have such high expectations for pupils and are so determined that they will learn and achieve as well as possible, on very rare occasions they set tasks that are too hard for particular pupils. However, staff usually pick this up very quickly and make any necessary adjustments, so all pupils are able to experience success.

A very noticeable strength of the teaching is the skilful way in which staff use signs and symbols to enable all pupils to understand what is happening and involve them fully in all aspects of the lesson. Very often, for example, staff supporting the teacher will sign in unison, making sure that particular pupils are taking note. For instance, when pupils in Years 1 and 2 were learning about how ice changes to water, the staff used signs and body language very effectively to make sure that all the pupils understood that the material they were about to touch was called ice and that it would be very cold. As a result, although not all the pupils were keen to handle it, they were not disturbed by the experience and so the lesson moved on smoothly. Mostly, staff remember to limit the vocabulary they use in the classes for pupils with significant autistic spectrum disorders. However, very occasionally, they use too many words or speak too quickly. The pupils then find it hard to deal with all this information, and learning is not quite as effective.

The curriculum

The quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils are **very good**. A **very good** range of activities enriches their learning. The accommodation and resources are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The newly developed curriculum is exciting and carefully structured.
- Resources and accommodation are supporting the curriculum very well.
- The very good arrangements for extending pupils' learning beyond the school promote their personal development very effectively.
- The curriculum is adapted very well to meet the needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders.

Commentary

Whole school curriculum developments are enhancing the learning opportunities for all pupils. The recent and ongoing revision of the curriculum for Foundation Stage and Year 1 and 2 pupils is ensuring that the individual needs of all pupils, including those with autistic spectrum disorders and English as an additional language, are met very effectively. The school's framework, within which staff plan the activities pupils will take part in, provides the basic structure needed to enable pupils to develop skills, knowledge and understanding, within themes and topics. In turn, these ensure that pupils have varied experiences as they move up through the school and plenty of opportunities to make links between different subjects and areas. Detailed plans for the entire rolling programme of work have yet to be all completed, as staff are sharing ideas about how to improve learning experiences even more, as they evaluate the success of each unit of work.

Pupils enjoy lessons and learn more effectively because they are supported by very good quality equipment and highly skilled and experienced staff. Pupils are helped very successfully to take part in lessons and activities, by very high levels of support, provided by a co-ordinated and enthusiastic team. Staff all work in a focused and collaborative way. Pupils are given very good role models – for instance, because it is made so clear that everyone involved in their education and care is considered equally important. Accommodation is very attractive and every space is used very well. Rooms, cloakrooms, the hall and corridors and all outside areas are spotless and inviting. Every effort is made to create a learning environment, which is visually stimulating and provides pupils with feelings of security, so they can learn very well.

The school has developed an effective policy for taking the curriculum outside and a teacher is delegated to take responsibility for this initiative. As a result, pupils experience a broader range of activities. They play and learn on very high quality equipment, savour the serenity of the sensory garden, and enjoy structured activities, supervised by very well informed staff. The pond and woodland area provide environments that contrast vividly with the noise and bustle of the nearby city centre. On visits and trips beyond the school gate, it is a pleasure to witness the sheer delight of pupils as they gaze at the lights streaming from stained glass windows in a local church. There are many other planned activities to support the outside curriculum and enhance pupils' personal development and achievement in all subjects.

The provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders is very good because it enables them to access the same curriculum as other pupils. This is achieved very well by tackling the barriers presented by their language and communication difficulties and their obsessive and rigid behaviours. Very good use is made of sign language, symbols, pictures and word cards, to indicate expectations, provide simple explanations, and prompt pupils to respond. A consistent timetable is provided, with visual reminders, which very successfully reduces anxieties about what happens next. Pupils who find it particularly difficult to learn in groups are provided with a very good, highly structured individual programme based upon a well known approach to teaching pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Very good strategies to overcome behavioural difficulties, set out in individual behaviour plans, help to keep pupils focused on learning. Daily exercise sessions each morning very successfully relax pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and prepare them for their lessons.

Care, guidance and support

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very high quality guidance and support is based on accurate assessments of pupils' needs.
- Very good relationships and robust procedures mean that pupils are looked after very well.
- Whenever possible, the school involves pupils very well in its development.
- The very effective induction procedures mean that pupils settle into their school life smoothly.

Commentary

The school, health professionals and parents regularly review pupils' education and behaviour plans to ensure they accurately define pupils' needs. As a result, all staff are very well aware of the circumstances of individuals and at all times offer appropriate help in accordance with their plans. The school gathers a wide range of evidence including academic assessments, photographs and videos, to ensure that the decisions made about pupils' education are appropriate. For instance, pupils' achievement and personal development are considered very carefully when decisions are made about which school will meet their needs best when they leave Broadmeadow.

Procedures to ensure pupils are safe are very thorough. The school regularly carries out surveys of its premises to ensure that all risks are identified and measures are put in place to ensure these are minimised. Risks inherent in visits to other places are assessed in a similarly comprehensive fashion. Pupils trust the staff and share any concerns readily with them. Staff know the pupils very well and quickly recognise when they need help. Child protection is given very high priority and all staff receive training in the school's procedures.

Pupils' views are valued. The school seeks to involve them in its development to ensure that school is a stimulating, happy and caring place. For example, when plans for a sensory garden were drawn up, they were displayed within the school for pupils to see and their reactions gauged. Representatives from suppliers visited with catalogues and samples and staff carefully selected

items that the pupils took pleasure in, for inclusion in the garden. The resulting garden is a tremendous success.

Parents strongly approve of the arrangements for their children to settle in. The school ensures that parents are fully informed and supported before, during and after their children start school. Initially, the headteacher will meet them, usually on their own, following a referral from an external body. After meeting the child concerned on a subsequent occasion, an individual induction plan is devised to suit the needs of the child and family. The school works closely with parents to ensure that pupils begin to benefit from all it offers, as soon as they start school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **very good** links with parents and other schools. Its links with the community are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Daily communication with parents means that pupils continue to learn while they are not at school.
- Parents are very well supported through training and events arranged by staff.
- The local community is very supportive of the school.
- The school helps a number of mainstream schools to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs.
- Links with other schools enhance the curriculum very well.

Commentary

Parents value their contacts with the school. Teachers communicate with parents, and parents communicate with teachers, through the daily exchange of a home-school diary sheet. This is a very strong feature of the very good quality information provided to parents. The sheet from teachers includes information about what the pupil has done during the day and how parents can help. It includes a section for the pupil to complete about their day. For example, they can mark to indicate what size of dinner they have eaten and whether they have been happy or sad. The sheet that parents complete daily with their children similarly informs teachers about their home life – for instance, whether pupils have slept well. This crossover of information means that pupils experience consistency throughout their day, with parents being enabled to continue their children's learning at home.

The school's 'Family Friendly Project' places a lot of importance on family involvement in pupils' learning. The school is responsive to suggestions made by parents and organises events and training to support them. For example, comprehensive courses in signing have been provided, so that parents can communicate with their children in the same manner as teachers at the school. The school assesses the effectiveness of training by seeking parental views after the course. This mechanism also identifies other needs, such as periodic coffee mornings for parents to support each other and hear speakers on specific topics. The project is of very great benefit to pupils, because it equips the adults they spend significant amounts of time with to be able to help them in their development.

The school's work is very well recognised by the local community. Recently, it won a minibus as a result of a newspaper competition in which schools were required to collect tokens. The school enlisted the support of the community and collected over 12 million! Pupils and staff are a regular sight when visiting places such as supermarkets and churches and their presence in the community is welcomed.

The school supports four mainstream nursery schools very well by the provision of a full time nursery nurse in each school. They are ably co-ordinated by a specialist teaching assistant based at Broadmeadow, and together they support pupils with severe learning difficulties and autistic

spectrum disorders, and their families. The skills and assessment techniques that the staff bring to the other schools are of great help to them. For example, strategies such as personal schedules, designed to help pupils with autistic spectrum disorders to learn, also benefit other pupils or groups.

Broadmeadow has very positive relationships with a number of local schools. Currently, twenty of the pupils, from all year groups, visit the mainstream nursery and primary school that share its campus. They go in small groups, accompanied by nursery nurses, and very much enjoy working and playing alongside different pupils. This is very beneficial to their personal development. All pupils benefit when those from other schools visit Broadmeadow – for example, to perform in assembly or for work experience. The links with special and mainstream schools in Wolverhampton and beyond also provide opportunities for staff to develop and share their knowledge and expertise.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is led and managed **very well**. Leadership and management are both **very good** and governance is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head teacher's very strong leadership is reflected in the very good achievements of all pupils.
- Very efficient use is made of the skills and expertise of all staff.
- The school's plans for development are firmly based on very careful evaluation of its performance.
- The governors are well informed and work hard to help the school meet the needs of all pupils.

Commentary

The leadership of the headteacher is very effective. In the year since her appointment, she has gained the commitment of all staff to achieving her very high aspirations for the school's future. They share a very clear understanding of what is happening in the school, what needs to be done to improve it further, and how their work contributes to the pupils' success. This clarity of purpose has brought about a very good improvement to the school's effectiveness since the previous inspection, along with a similarly very good rise in the level of pupils' achievements. The recently appointed deputy headteacher is already having an impact on the school's performance. For example, with the headteacher, she has led the drive to develop the curriculum. There has been a good improvement in the work of subject leaders since the previous inspection. The leadership of all subjects is at least good and that of many is very good. Subjects are now reviewed in detail once every three years, at which time lessons are observed and the quality of teaching evaluated. The resulting very clear action plans also make very good use of information about pupils' achievements to identify areas where improvement is needed.

A range of whole-school responsibilities are shared among support staff as well as teachers. For instance, several nursery nurses have taken on the role of specialist teaching assistant, with responsibility for important aspects of the school – such as behaviour management or the outreach service. This initiative is proving very effective and is an important element in the school's contribution to achieving a reasonable work/life balance for all staff. Staff are motivated to work hard and succeed because they clearly understand what is expected of them, are given time out of the classroom to plan their classroom and development tasks, and receive very good recognition from the headteacher for their efforts. This shared sense of purpose results in the excellent teamwork that is such a strength of the school.

Very good training opportunities, tailored to individually identified requirements, help to make the staff very effective in their work. The training not only helps them to carry out their ongoing tasks, but also provides the skills necessary for the success of new developments, such as, for example, the current introduction of interactive white boards. There are excellent procedures to help new

members of staff to settle in quickly and reach full effectiveness. These include discussions with key staff, specifically arranged training events, and a very high quality school handbook.

The school has very clear plans for its future development, derived from a very detailed and highly structured analysis of the quality of each aspect of its work. Very high quality assessment data contributes to this as do the views of the staff, governors, parents and other professionals connected with the school. The resulting school development plan is challenging, but very realistic about what can be achieved and afforded financially, and its targets include the issues identified by the inspection team. The evaluation of its performance, carried out by the school before the inspection, was very accurate in the assessment of its strengths and weaknesses, although erred on the side of caution when overall judgements were made.

The governing body provides good support and carries out all of its statutory duties well. Although several are very recent appointments, most governors have a good knowledge of the quality of the school's work through their regular visits, during which they follow up specific items arising from the formal reports received at their meetings. They regularly take part in training offered by the local education authority and this helps them to meet their role as 'critical friend'. Governors are fully involved in establishing the school's plans for improvement and have strong views about how they want it to develop. The finance committee has a good understanding of the school's budget and makes sure that the funds available are spent wisely.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	703865	Balance from previous year	96848
Total expenditure	613822	Balance carried forward to the next	90043*
Expenditure per pupil	14971		

* This balance included significant sums set aside to pay for high cost items (including a minibus) that had not been invoiced at the end of the financial year.

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

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Most of the children in the nursery and reception years are taught in one of two classes, but five of them are in other classes, alongside pupils in Years 1 and 2. The teachers who lead the National Curriculum subjects that contribute to a particular area of learning are responsible for ensuring that the Foundation Stage curriculum is taught, managed and developed.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Three lessons were seen. Daily routines and observations of lessons in other areas of learning also contributed to the judgements made.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have very relevant individual targets, based on careful assessment of their particular needs.
- Throughout the day, staff create very many opportunities for children's development and learning.
- Very positive relationships with adults make significant contributions to children's education.

Commentary

The very good teaching that children receive begins when their priority needs are established, on entry to the school. As a result, staff appreciate what children already know, understand, and can do, and together they plan the next small steps in learning. For instance, great emphasis is placed on enabling children to be as independent as possible, and so they frequently have targets related to skills associated with dressing, feeding, or using the toilet. Again, those with challenging behaviour, including many of the children with autistic spectrum disorders, have individual behaviour plans which set out very clearly exactly how staff should respond to particular behaviour – for example, if children attempt to bite. Because their targets and the methods used to help them achieve these are known to all staff, expectations are consistent and children are not asked to do things that are beyond them or given help when it is not needed. This means that children achieve very well in their personal development.

A comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education is in place, ensuring that children acquire a broad range of learning. For instance, religious education and spiritual development are catered for during whole school and class assemblies and lessons across all areas of learning. As a consequence, children are made aware of themselves as individual, special people, and learn that children from other faiths and cultures have different ways of worshipping and celebrating. Running alongside and within lessons is a huge range of relevant activities and daily routines, all of which contribute to children's learning and achievement. For example, staff are very skilled at helping children to learn how to play together, thus supporting their social development. On other occasions, children are encouraged to play freely and staff take the opportunity to assess how well they are developing. Most children choose to play on their own, but they will nearly all play alongside others and a smaller number will share activities, even if only fleetingly.

Although a number of children with autistic spectrum disorders are still developing the ability to focus on tasks and follow instructions, most are very interested in their work and play, behave very well and are confident and sociable. They quickly get to know the adults who work with them, responding to the very good care they receive and the clear routines and structure of their days. Very strong links with children's families help to reinforce what they have learned at school and contribute to children's feelings of security – staff regularly refer to family members or home life. This area is led and managed very well, with a number of developments in hand – for example, an agreed approach to toilet training. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Three lessons were observed.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons and topics are planned very carefully.
- Throughout the day, children are encouraged to communicate.
- Stories are often used as the starting point for activities in other areas of learning.
- Modern technology is not used routinely to support children's achievement.

Commentary

Children achieve very well, because they are taught very well and are provided with lots of high quality learning opportunities. This represents a very good improvement since the previous inspection. The plans for what each class is to learn are structured carefully, so new challenges are introduced at a pace commensurate with the children's needs. For instance, during lessons about the 'Three Little Pigs', children with severe learning difficulties were asked to remember 'what happened next'. With their following story, 'Goldilocks', they moved on to think about what took place before a particular event. At the same time, staff vary the tasks they set, according to the needs of individual children. A lesson about 'Spot's Birthday Party', for children with autistic spectrum disorders was matched very well to what they had already learned. This was possible because staff are so well informed and appreciate exactly what each child is trying to achieve next – for example, pointing at the words in the story with eyes or fingers. Learning resources – in this case, objects such as a banana, toy lion and dog, and gift-wrapped presents – are used very effectively to help children understand and to maintain their interest.

Many of the children have significant speech and language problems, and the staff work very hard and effectively to find alternate ways for them to communicate or improve the clarity of their speech. For instance, a picture exchange system is used regularly by children with autistic spectrum disorders, enabling them to make choices or indicate their needs. Staff consistently accompany their spoken language with signs and although children seldom respond in a similar way, their understanding is enhanced by these visual prompts. Children become very familiar with the songs that form part of many activities and lessons. Their early speech is quite often as a result of this – for instance, saying 'Yes' during the class 'Good morning' song. Their confidence in staff encourages children to try out their voices, because they know they will be praised for their efforts. Very occasionally, adults do not restrict their vocabulary sufficiently and may talk too quickly, so children find it harder to understand instructions or key information. This is especially so in classes for children with autistic spectrum disorders.

The school has recently started to use stories to link the work done in different areas of learning. For example, in one class for children with severe learning difficulties, the children are currently sharing the story of 'Anna and her Amazing Multi-coloured Glasses'. The objects used when the story is read, such as a doll and pairs of pretend spectacles, appear during other activities throughout the week – when helping children to become more aware of their bodies, for instance. This reinforcement helps children to make connections between the things they learn about and increases their understanding of the stories themselves and the other areas of learning. The new approach to planning is one outcome of the very good leadership and management of this aspect of the curriculum.

At various times of the week, most children have quite intensive sessions using computers to support their communication, language and literacy. For instance, one class of children with severe learning difficulties practised early writing skills as they moved their hands across the screen of an interactive white board, changing its colour to illustrate Anna's amazing glasses. However, the school appreciates the need to provide more opportunities for children to use technology to communicate, read and write.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

One lesson was observed.

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Songs, rhymes and daily routines make a very good contribution to children's achievement.
- Staff use children's individual targets very effectively.
- The needs of higher attaining children are met very well.

Commentary

Children achieve very well, in line with the quality of education they receive. Mathematical skills and vocabulary form a regular and natural part of children's daily life. For instance, when children with severe autistic spectrum disorders and challenging behaviour were making sandwiches for teddy's tea, the pieces of bread were counted out – 'One, two' – for each child. The relevance of mathematics is emphasised further during mathematics lessons, when children are encouraged to apply what they have learned. For example, children with severe learning difficulties went out in groups to look for circles around the school, reinforcing their awareness of the shape and its name.

Within all these interesting activities, staff make very good use of their knowledge of individual children. For instance, the children with severe autistic spectrum disorders and challenging behaviour take part regularly in tightly structured sessions during which they each follow individual programmes, including tasks such as threading beads, sorting objects, and matching shapes, colours or objects. All children have mathematics targets within their individual education plans and staff ensure that they have plenty of opportunities to work towards achieving these. For example, after a whole-class introduction to the topic of shapes – circles in particular – children with severe learning difficulties worked on individual tasks, which included higher attaining children drawing shapes on the interactive white board.

Two higher attaining children in the reception year are placed in a class made up predominantly of pupils in Years 1 and 2. As a result, they are catered for very well, because they are challenged to think hard and are kept busy, working alongside pupils with broadly similar needs and achievements. For instance, during one lesson, children counted to ten and recognised numerals up to 17. In other classes, staff similarly extend the children who are working at higher levels. As part of a communication, language and literacy lesson, a child with autistic spectrum disorder achieved very well as he successfully fitted candles into toy cakes, matching the correct number of candles to the numerals on the cakes. This area of learning is led and managed very well, resulting in a highly effective curriculum with very good learning resources. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Three lessons were seen.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have regular opportunities to use their senses to explore and investigate.
- Visits and the outside environment are used very effectively.
- Computers are not used regularly enough during lessons.

Commentary

Children achieve well, because they are taught well and take part in plenty of activities to help them understand the world in which they live. For instance, during one lesson, children with autistic spectrum disorders learned about objects and pursuits associated with parties, helping them to understand the idea of 'special times'. They played with balloons, danced and ate cake. The teacher used symbols, photographs, objects and songs to prepare children for each new experience,

allowing them time to process this information. The activities were carefully chosen – for example, the wrappings and objects used for ‘pass the parcel’ helped children to understand that some things are shiny. Children with severe learning difficulties take part in structured and free play, using toys in the home play room, for instance, to explore the use of household objects as they pretend to cook, iron clothes, or wheel dolls in prams.

When they first join the school, children learn about the different parts of the building and grounds. They are then taken out to explore their immediate locality – for instance, the nearby park. They experience different weather conditions and the sort of clothes that are suitable for each and they feel the texture of leaves and bark. Visits further afield enable children to find out about the use of buildings such as a church and a temple, and come into contact with different people and animals – for instance, when they go to a farm. The effective use of visits is a particular improvement since the previous inspection – improvement has been good overall.

Children have weekly lessons in ICT, taught by the subject leader. Additionally, they visit the sensory room and garden, learning that they can control their environment by using switches. They operate electronic toys and equipment, such as a CD player, and use a touch screen to interact with computer programs. However, staff do not make full use of the available resources – for example, the interactive white boards, in order to help children learn. Because the area is well led and managed by the teachers concerned, this area for development has been identified and a suitable action plan is in place.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

One lesson was observed.

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Interesting and varied lessons and activities encourage children to get involved and try hard.
- Children with the most severe autistic spectrum disorders and behaviour problems have regular swimming lessons and daily exercise.
- Higher attaining children are not always challenged to do more.

Commentary

Children achieve well in learning to control their bodies and how to perform actions such as stretching, jumping and running, because the quality of teaching is good. Music and rhymes are used effectively to motivate children and the repetition involved helps them to develop their skills. For instance, children with severe learning difficulties responded enthusiastically to the staff singing ‘Wind the bobbin’. They were all able to perform at least a few of the actions unaided. Similarly good attention is paid to helping children develop fine motor skills, such as threading beads, stacking bricks and gripping and using tools. The large school hall provides plenty of scope for children to exercise freely and the outside environment offers alternative activities – for example, games, races and the use of wheeled toys.

The small number of children with severe autistic spectrum disorders and challenging behaviour have additional programmes. For instance, each morning, the hall is set out with apparatus. Children exercise on this and with the soft play equipment, guided by staff who use symbols cards and clear verbal prompts. These activities noticeably reduce children’s anxiety levels, helping them to cope better with the day ahead. Again, children take part in weekly swimming sessions at another school, with clear evidence of them gaining confidence and enjoying the experience.

In the movement lesson observed – for children with severe learning difficulties – staff skilfully adjusted the degree of support they provided, whether encouragement or helping children to move their limbs. As a result, all the children were successful in pointing their toes, stretching their fingers

or rolling over. However, the most physically able children were not asked to tackle any harder tasks and this limited their achievement. The area is well led and managed and there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. However, like most other subject leaders, the teacher responsible for physical education has not yet had chance to observe lessons in the Foundation Stage, in order to share good practice.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

One session of individual music support was observed. Judgements were not made about this area of learning.

Children have weekly music lessons, taught by the subject leader. Plans and records show that children take part in a wide range of musical activities – singing, listening to music and playing instruments. Those children with severe autistic spectrum disorders have individual sessions, carefully matched to their particular needs, that encourage them to look, listen and become involved with making sounds and music. In all the classes, songs and music feature in lessons throughout the week, helping children to learn and enjoy their work. They have opportunities to be creative with a variety of media and to develop the skills needed for painting, printing and collage, for example.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1

ENGLISH

Three lessons were observed.

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff make very effective use of a variety of methods to help pupils to communicate.
- Very good assessment information is used to match work very accurately to the pupils' individual needs and provide very focused support.
- The use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning is under-developed.
- The subject leader provides very good leadership and is developing the subject very well.

Commentary

All pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve very well in English, even though the majority of them experience significant language and communication difficulties. This is because of the detailed understanding staff have of each pupil's stage of language development, and their very good use of signing, symbols, and picture and word cards, to engage pupils in communication and help them understand their lessons in all subjects. This creates a very supportive environment that overcomes the individual obstacles faced by pupils and enables all, including those who have autistic spectrum disorders and those whose home language is not English, to achieve very well. Speech and language therapists and the nursery nurse with particular responsibility for the achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups make important contributions to setting pupils' targets and helping them to learn. Since the previous inspection, there has been a very good improvement in pupils' achievements in all aspects of English. The most improvement has taken place in reading and writing, with the result that pupils now achieve very well in speaking and listening, reading and writing.

The quality of teaching is very good. This represents a very good improvement since the previous inspection. The teaching staff use very comprehensive assessment procedures to identify individual learning needs. They then make very good use of this information to match appropriate activities and teaching methods to what each pupil needs to learn next. For example, pupils in Year 1 with

significant autistic spectrum disorders have regular sessions where their tasks contribute to their individual targets. As a result, one pupil successfully matched letters that spell his name and then selected pictures of objects that correspond to the words on other cards. In lessons, the pupils benefit from the excellent teamwork that is a feature of the school. The staff are highly skilled at enabling pupils to understand difficult ideas, by controlling their own use of language and consistently supplementing the spoken word with sign language, symbols and pictures. They also use similar techniques very successfully to enable pupils with autistic spectrum disorders to take part fully in lessons by helping them to understand what is expected of them and rewarding their successes.

There is satisfactory use of ICT in English lessons. Pupils are beginning to gain benefit from the use of interactive white boards in those lessons where the staff have good ICT skills. For instance, in one lesson, taught by the ICT subject leader, higher attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2 were very well motivated to listen and attend carefully to a story. They took turns to press a button on the screen, in order to look for Bella Mermaid's lost necklace, and later practised writing the letter 'd' on the board. Potentially, the boards are very good resources for the majority of pupils, who learn best through visual presentations. Very good plans are in hand to provide training for all staff in the near future.

Very good leadership by the teacher responsible has brought about the very good improvement in the provision for English since the previous inspection. The curriculum, which was satisfactory, has been improved so that it caters very well for the learning needs of all pupils. The accurate identification of these needs has been aided by the similarly very good improvement to the assessment procedures. The three-yearly cycle of subject reviews has resulted in a very good action plan for the future development of English, based on a very accurate assessment of what needs to be done. The subject leader has not yet had opportunities to visit lessons taught by colleagues, in order to share good practice.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

Very good priority is given to the development of pupils' language and communication skills in other subject lessons. Signs, symbols and pictures are all used to aid communication and teaching staff carefully select language that pupils can understand when they explain new ideas or give instructions. There is very good consistency in the use of these communication aids in different classes and subjects. The resulting increased confidence in their use of language has a very good effect upon pupils' achievements in all subjects.

MATHEMATICS

Two lessons were observed.

Provision for mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are planned very carefully to meet pupils' individual needs.
- Staff competence and subject knowledge is very good and teamwork is very effective in raising pupils' achievement.
- Assessment is very effective and shows precisely what pupils need to do to improve.
- Mathematics is very well led and managed.

Commentary

Pupils are achieving very well in Years 1 and 2, because they are taught very well. Teachers know the pupils very well and follow carefully adapted programmes which are devised to match the very specific needs of all pupils, including those with autistic spectrum disorders, from minority ethnic groups or with English as an additional language. Lessons are very carefully structured and organised. For example, there are 'brain gym' exercises to start a very good lesson for higher

attaining Year 1 and 2 pupils. These involve pupils holding up their fingers as they count to ten, along with a recorded song, getting them ready to think about numbers. The sensory garden is then used to further improve their counting, as pupils look for 17 toy ducks hidden in the bushes. The very wide range of activities planned in lessons ensures that all pupils take a full part, are challenged and get optimum pleasure as they learn and make progress.

Pupils' very good achievement is supported very well by the careful and sensitive staffing arrangements. Whole school teams, including teachers and nursery nurses, teach them very well. Staff relate very well to each other and are very good role models for the pupils – for example, joining in number songs with enthusiasm. There is very effective use made of praise and encouragement during lessons and high standards are expected of pupils' behaviour, so they can all concentrate on their work. Staff are given excellent opportunities to train and acquire new skills. Their competence and confidence transfer into lessons and because of this, all pupils achieve very well, even when their needs are very complex and challenging.

Pupils have very specific targets set in mathematics and their progress towards these is regularly reviewed and evaluated. This means that pupils' changing needs are identified and met and their knowledge, skills and understanding show very good progress over time. As a result of all staff being involved in assessing pupils' learning, there is consistent use made of targets for each pupil. This ensures that the next stage in learning is relevant and appropriate.

A highly skilled teacher leads and manages the subject very effectively. Her enthusiasm for mathematics has contributed to the very good improvement made since the previous inspection. Observations of teaching and learning have taken place and the outcomes used to devise an action plan to help pupils achieve even more.

Mathematics across the curriculum

Pupils are given very good opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills in a range of settings. For example, they count the number of post boxes and bus stops during a walk to a local church. When they listen and perform in music, they count or nod to the number of beats and measure the long and short sounds when using the sound beam. Staff encourage pupils to look for different shapes in and around school, and registration is used as an opportunity for counting and recognising numbers.

SCIENCE

Two lessons were observed.

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders.
- Staff plan interesting and challenging activities.
- Occasionally, not enough time is allowed for lower attaining pupils to learn by exploring materials.

Commentary

There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, because the curriculum has improved significantly. It now follows on from the work pupils do in the Foundation Stage and is firmly rooted in the requirements of the National Curriculum. This means that, whatever their special educational needs, pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are developed systematically and they are prepared very well for moving on to the next stage in their education. The pupils with severe autistic spectrum disorders and challenging behaviour have learning opportunities that are carefully planned to help them understand more about the world around them. They are very

sensitively introduced to new experiences – for instance, coming into contact with pets. As a result, one pupil looked very steadily at a tortoise, before reaching out and gently squeezing its foot. Science is well led and managed. A suitable action plan has been produced, which clearly indicates current priorities, in line with the school's development plan. For instance, learning resources are being reorganised, to make it easier for staff to use them efficiently to support particular topics.

Pupils are taught well by teachers and nursery nurses and they achieve well as a consequence. The staff ensure that pupils learn through practical activities, providing them with ample opportunities to make discoveries and experience at first hand how, for instance, materials behave in different circumstances. This means that pupils remember better and develop a natural curiosity about the world. During the lesson observed, a nursery nurse led pupils in Years 1 and 2 through a series of tasks related to ice. Although all the pupils have severe learning difficulties, two are also autistic and one has English as an additional language. By repeating key words and consistently using signs and symbols, staff reinforced pupils' understanding of properties such as 'hot' and 'cold'. Very careful attention was paid to preparing pupils to take part in an investigation – for instance, using a hairdryer to demonstrate that heat causes ice to melt. Pupils then applied what they had learned, as they predicted whether a hot water bottle or a pack of frozen peas would cause ice to melt. The lesson was effective, because pupils were focused and interested all the time and they learned well through the good science teaching.

Teachers do not always adjust lessons sufficiently to meet the needs of pupils who learn at faster or slower rates. For instance, in the lesson described above, a few pupils showed that they were keen to investigate the resources – such as ice cubes – for longer. Although the lesson provided opportunities for them to use their senses to explore, they needed more time for this than did the higher achieving pupils, who began the lesson with more in the way of previous learning. Similarly, when pupils in Year 1 with severe autistic spectrum disorders made sandwiches for teddy's birthday, the tasks were the same for all, although staff did expect different pupils to be more – or less – independent. All this means that, occasionally, individual pupils do not learn as effectively as they could.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Two lessons were seen.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good subject leadership is enabling pupils to benefit from the introduction of new technology.
- Pupils achieve well in specialist ICT lessons because they get individual support.
- New resources are used very well by the subject leader.
- The use of ICT as an aid to learning in other subjects needs developing further.

Commentary

Very good leadership by the co-ordinator, and strategic decisions made by senior staff, have brought about good improvement since the previous inspection. There is a detailed and relevant subject action plan that sets out a clear intention to develop the use of ICT to aid pupils' learning in all subjects. The school demonstrates a very strong commitment to the increasing use of interactive white boards in every class, and the resources are already in place. The subject leader has planned this project very well, and is ensuring its success by providing very good training opportunities so that all staff can upgrade their existing skills. She offers a very good role model by teaching ICT to each class, illustrating to other staff what can be achieved. Very good resources have been very recently established by the school's careful use of additional grants. The school is very keen to help pupils continue learning ICT skills at home, through a support programme for parents.

Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection, mainly as a result of very good individual teaching of computer skills by the subject leader. This enables all pupils to achieve at their own level, so there are no significant differences in achievement. Pupils also achieve a very good understanding of the effects caused by using simple switches – for example, to operate lights and sounds in the sensory room and garden, and a range of sound and vision recording and playback devices. The use of simple switching devices designed specifically to help pupils to communicate is satisfactory.

In lessons taught by the subject leader, teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are characterised by very good planning that ensures a good match between the task set and the needs of individual pupils. This creates an appropriate level of challenge and enables pupils to build very well on what they have learned previously. Very good use is made of the interactive white boards in these lessons, providing very clear and stimulating visual images and allowing pupils to practise skills and record their own work – such as examples of their writing. However, the teaching of ICT by the pupils' own classroom staff is variable, but no more than satisfactory overall. That is why achievement is good and not very good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

There is satisfactory use of ICT to help pupils learn in other subjects of the curriculum. This is no better, because few of the teaching staff have the good level of ICT skills required to take full advantage of the very recently introduced technology. In a small minority of lessons, the use of ICT is very good and demonstrates, in particular, the usefulness of the interactive white board as a teaching tool. Otherwise, the ICT resources used are often limited to conventional audio-visual equipment. Computers do not routinely form an integral part of lesson planning. The subject leader and senior managers are fully aware of this and there are very good plans in place to provide staff with the necessary skills.

HUMANITIES

One lesson was seen in geography and one in history. Judgements about provision were not made in these subjects.

The **geography** lesson observed involved higher attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2 walking to visit a church. Because they were prepared very well for this activity, by the use of slides and photographs, pupils noticed different features – for example, types of buildings and street furniture – during the journey. This helped them to become more aware of the built environment. The school's minibuses are used frequently to take pupils further afield, so they experience contrasting locations, such as a canal or a farm. Pupils regularly visit different shops and are very familiar with the route to and layout of the nearby park. Pupils in the early stages of learning about the world around them are helped to explore the school building and grounds, making them more confident and aware.

Staff adapt the **history** curriculum imaginatively to suit pupils' special educational needs. For instance, in the class for those with significant autistic spectrum disorders, regular references to timetables and schedules help pupils to understand that events happen in succession. Birthday celebrations reinforce their awareness of the passing of time and people growing older. Higher attaining pupils are encouraged to compare objects from the past – such as toys – with modern ones, and the toys they enjoyed as babies with those that they play with now. Activities such as these raise their awareness of the more distant past.

Religious education

One lesson was observed.

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Whole school collective acts of worship make the greatest contribution to religious education.
- Teachers are quick to identify opportunities to reinforce learning through other subjects.
- Community links are developing well but more religious artefacts are needed.

Commentary

There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, because the subject is now led and managed well. As a result, the curriculum has improved and pupils' achievement is good, as is the quality of teaching. Much of the curriculum, which reflects the guidance set out in the local agreed syllabus, is taught during weekly whole school assemblies. These are planned by the headteacher, who is the subject leader, with a very clear emphasis on providing opportunities for pupils to learn through taking part in relevant activities. The assembly observed, on the theme of Diwali, was designed to stimulate all of pupils' senses and enable them to make very good progress in their awareness of how Hindus celebrate this particular festival. The previous week, the more challenging concept of 'remembrance' had been tackled, interpreted so as to make it accessible to these young children. Pupils discover how people of different faiths worship and what they believe, but they also learn about the messages offered by religion. As a result, the subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

To extend and support pupils' achievement and to match the content precisely to their individual needs – in a way that assemblies cannot – elements of religious education are also taught by classroom staff. For instance, during a history lesson, higher attaining pupils with severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders learned more about Diwali and how it is celebrated. In geography, another group of pupils with severe learning difficulties visited a church, finding out about its architecture, purpose and importance to Christians.

Relationships with the local community enable pupils to visit the places of worship of several religions. Again, parents who belong to different faiths contribute by, for example, bringing in food, costumes and religious objects, enriching pupils' experiences and making lessons more memorable. The school has a satisfactory range of books, but learning resources remain limited and have been identified as an area for development in the subject action plan.

TECHNOLOGY

No lessons of design and technology were seen. Judgements have not been made about this subject.

Pupils have regular opportunities to take part in **design and technology** activities, often linked to their work in other subjects and the class topic. For example, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders made simple percussion instruments to accompany firework music during the week of November 5th. Pupils use a variety of materials – for example, building with construction kits. Activities using food feature regularly and pupils have plenty of opportunities to learn different ways of combining ingredients, and useful skills such as cutting and stirring.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

No lessons were seen in art and design. Judgements have not been made about this subject.

The very high value placed on **art and design** is immediately apparent upon walking around the school. Pupils' art work is exhibited with pride on virtually every available wall surface. This is related, for example, to seasonal topics such as autumn colours, to class reading books, and to festivals, such as Diwali. As well as paintings, there are examples of collage work using natural materials and models made of salt dough. The curriculum for art is adapted to complement the school's programme of topics and seasonal activities.

Music

One lesson was observed.

Provision for music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The music curriculum provides all pupils with very rich and relevant experiences.
- Lessons are very well planned, making very good use of learning resources.
- Appreciation of music from other cultures is central to the curriculum.

Commentary

There is now a very exciting and stimulating music curriculum, which covers all aspects of the National Curriculum requirements. Music is a very central feature in the school, and since September, the subject leader has taken the lead in the main music lesson for each class. This specialist teaching is used to calm and inspire pupils and other staff continue this good practice in their classrooms. Music is used to enable pupils to develop the use of all their senses, as they perform, listen, watch and join in a range of very good quality lessons and assemblies.

Teaching is very well structured, to make sure that every pupil is challenged to perform better. Recent investment in sound beam technology is providing exciting stimulation for pupils with more complex needs, encouraging them to perform, interpret and compose very well. Resources are regularly maintained and updated. They are easily accessible to all staff and are used frequently and to very good effect. Lessons are providing very good musical experiences for all pupils. Music is considered an important means of raising pupils' overall achievement – for example, by providing structured opportunities for each pupil to improve their communication skills. Since the previous inspection, there has been very good progress in music, owing to very good leadership and management by the subject leader and strategic decisions by senior staff.

Pupils who are very challenging show less tension and more confidence as they perform, sing or sign in response to a wide range of music and dance. For example, their own rich cultures are celebrated through Indian music in a lesson on Diwali, leading up to a whole school assembly. This leads to a musical extravaganza as pupils move and dance with an amazing troupe of dancers from a local school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Two lessons were observed

Provision for physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good because activities are very well matched to the needs of the pupils.
- The curriculum ensures that all pupils take part in a very good range of physical activities.

Commentary

Teaching and learning are very good because very detailed assessment information is used to match activities to the pupils' individual needs. Pupils enjoy taking part in activities that present just the right level of challenge and there is a very good emphasis on expecting them to carry out activities as independently as possible. Lessons in the hall meet the needs of all pupils by providing a stimulating circuit of activities that pupils can approach in different ways. For example, during one lesson, higher attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2 developed their ability to crawl, slide, climb and

balance. The activities were varied and very well chosen so as to enable each pupil to achieve success, but also required them to really push themselves. The subject co-ordinator provides good leadership by training staff and offering specific advice on lesson preparation. She has ensured that the good provision reported previously has been maintained.

There is a good curriculum for physical education that provides detailed, highly structured individual learning objectives as well as a balanced range of activities. The range of experiences available to the pupils is widened through the provision of very good outdoor equipment, including an adventure playground. Indoors, the school hall, which doubles as a gymnasium, is very well equipped, though storage space is inadequate. Very good facilities at another local special school are used for swimming lessons for a small group of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and challenging behaviour. Physical education is also used very well as part of the daily programme for these pupils and others who also have autistic spectrum disorders. This is very successful in calming their levels of anxiety, relaxing them after their journey to school, and also improving their fitness levels. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders in other classes benefit from staff's use of symbols to help them understand what is required of them – for example, jumping or hopping.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

One lesson was observed and a wide variety of activities such as snack time and registration contributed to the judgements made.

Provision in PSHE is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Throughout the day, activities, routines and lessons support pupils' achievement.
- Teaching is very relevant and well planned, based on the individual needs of every pupil.
- The subject is moving forward very quickly.

Commentary

From the beginning of their school day, there are planned opportunities for pupils to interact with each other and become more independent. For instance, during snack time, pupils are expected to make choices, help to count out drinks, take turns, and be well mannered – eating one item before choosing another. Again, they are required to do as much as possible to get themselves ready to go out or to take part in physical education lessons, learning to take responsibility for themselves and their belongings. Every situation that pupils meet throughout their day is challenging them to improve their confidence and care for themselves and others and also to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. For example, collaboration between teachers and nurses has resulted in pupils now having fruit, milk and water at snack time, rather than the biscuits and squash that were previously available. The outdoor curriculum is also providing many varied activities which are improving pupils' personal and social skills very well.

Teachers plan very well to provide opportunities to improve pupils' achievement. This attention to detail and caring approach towards every pupil inspires them to try harder with each new skill. As a result, even the pupils with the most significant needs are fully involved in all activities. All pupils have individual targets for PSHE, which may relate to practical skills, such as dressing or washing, or ones that help them become more socially aware – for example, sharing or taking turns. Visits out of school are seized by staff as opportunities to support pupils' personal and social development. For instance, those with the most significant autistic spectrum disorders are helped to cope with eating in unfamiliar places or tolerating the noise of an electric hand dryer.

The subject is led and managed very well, by a recently appointed teacher. In addition to oversight of the taught aspects of the curriculum, she is also leading the school's approach to important issues such as toilet training. However, although checks are made on teachers' planning and pupils' achievement, there have not yet been opportunities for the subject leader to visit classrooms to observe teaching and learning. It is not possible to make a judgement about improvement in PSHE as it was not reported at the time of the previous inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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

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