

INSPECTION REPORT

THE PARK SCHOOL

Leyfields, Tamworth

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124513

Headteacher: Mr Frank Bartlett

Reporting inspector: Michael McDowell
Rgl Number: 1405

Dates of inspection: 20 - 23 March 2000

Inspection number: 188954

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	4 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Solway Close Tamworth Staffordshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs D Jones
Date of previous inspection:	24 June 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Park School provides education for 130 boys and girls aged between 4 and 16, all of whom have Statements of Special Educational Need because of their moderate learning difficulties or are undergoing statutory assessment. A number of pupils have additional difficulties that are a barrier to learning. These include sensory and physical impairments, emotional and behavioural difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. A small number of pupils, 2 to 3 each year, enter or leave the school at times other than at the start of the autumn term or at the end of the summer term. Pupils are drawn chiefly from less economically advantaged backgrounds. The ethnic composition of the school roll reflects the local population in that there are very few pupils drawn from minority communities. Almost half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above average for schools of this type. The local education authority funds the school to provide teaching and support at a nearby nursery. There are strong links between the school and the nursery at staff, management and governor level. None of the pupils at the nursery, however, is on the roll of the school. The local education authority proposes to alter the nature of the school within the next two years, which has made long term development planning unrealistic.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is very well led and managed; it provides high quality teaching within a very well planned curriculum. This enables pupils who join it with very limited learning and social skills to gain confidence in themselves as learners and achieve as much as they are able. Over time pupils respond very positively to what they are offered and become self-reliant with a strong inclination to learn. They achieve very good standards. A great deal is achieved with the resources available and the school gives excellent value for money.

What the school does well

- The youngest pupils are given a very good start and at all ages and levels of achievement pupils respond to the very good opportunities and teaching provided to reach the targets set for them.
- It makes innovative use of specialist subject teaching at an unusually early stage to successfully challenge the pupils to extend their numeracy, literacy, personal and social skills very well.
- It makes very effective arrangements to teach literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 3 that enable pupils to develop their awareness and enjoyment of literature and books and their confidence in mathematics.
- It provides pupils in Key Stage 4 with a very wide range of opportunities to undertake accredited courses, attend college and prepare for the next stage of education.
- There is excellent provision for the moral and social development of the pupils and very good provision for their spiritual and cultural development.
- Very good leadership and effective management ensure that the work of the school is monitored and that steps are taken when necessary to maintain standards and secure improvement.

What could be improved

- The arrangements for teaching a modern foreign language in Key Stage 3 take insufficient account of the need to ensure that pupils continuously develop their language skills across the key stage.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1996. Improvement has been good. Significantly, achievement in reading and writing has improved and there are more opportunities provided for reading. Better use is made of information technology and resources are now excellent. There are very good arrangements to support speech and language development. Grouping has been reviewed to better meet the needs of girls and accommodation for science, art and design and technology has been improved. There are sufficient support staff. Security has been improved by the provision of an entry-phone, as has the safety of pupils' transport so that it now conforms to requirements. There are sufficient books in the library to support each subject. The school now meets the requirement to offer a modern foreign language in Key Stage 3.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the school.

Progress in:	by age 11	by age 16	Key	
speaking and listening	A	A	very good	A
reading	A	A	good	B
writing	B	B	satisfactory	C
mathematics	B	A	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	A	A	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A		

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

The school has set additional non- statutory targets for the Year 2000. These are based on current achievement and suggest modest increases in performance. **Best progress** is seen in speaking and listening and reading across the age range, in mathematics by age 16 and in personal, social and health education by age 11 and age 16. Pupils make very good progress towards the targets set for them at annual reviews and in their IEPs. They make good progress in information technology.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good; pupils listen to their teachers, concentrate and make wholehearted efforts in their lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good; pupils are attentive and polite. Within lessons they follow the instructions of their teachers and they are helpful, orderly and responsible outside the classrooms.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent; pupils develop a strong sense of community and personal responsibility. They relate very positively to the adults who educate and care for them and show concern and consideration for each other.
Attendance	Good; attendance is above the average for schools of this type.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of carefully planned and well taught lessons and good opportunities to meet friends, to play and to take part in "club" activities arranged at lunchtime by their teachers. They follow the example of the staff in treating one another with great courtesy, concern and respect. Exclusions are very rare. Pupils who enter the school with very few social competencies and with, in many cases, little belief in themselves develop a wide range of social and learning skills. They leave the school with very good records of achievement in a wide range of accredited courses and the confidence to enter the world of further education and the next stage.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 5-11	aged 11-16
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good

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

The quality of teaching is very good overall. In 63% of lessons teaching was very good. It was good in the remainder. Teachers know their pupils very well and the early move to specialist teaching in Key Stage 2 ensures that in that key stage there is good subject knowledge and that resources are suitable, plentiful and of good quality. Pupils respond very well to the high quality of teaching and to the variety provided by being taught by a number of adults. They learn very well and make gains that are good or better in the key skills of speaking and listening, reading, writing, numeracy and competence in information technology. Teachers, in turn, also benefit because they can judge standards across each year group and the Key Stage. This serves to heighten expectations of what pupils can achieve and to promote progress. Methods are good; there is a variety and freshness to the teaching in literacy, mathematics, science and PSHE. Time is used well and this good use is reinforced by the fact that the pupils' schedule demands that lessons start and finish on time. Planning to accommodate this is notably taut. In Key Stage 3 pupils also receive very good teaching. Again, literacy and mathematics are well taught with pupils' development guided by clear and progressive targets. Pupils in this key stage are set in groups for English and mathematics based largely on attainment. This helps teachers to match their planning very closely to the pupils' attainment and needs. In Key Stage 4 pupils receive some of their teaching at college. Teaching in Key Stage 4 places an appropriate emphasis on enabling pupils to validate their learning by externally accredited awards. The needs of all pupils are met very well and teaching has improved in quality since the last inspection.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is very good and meets the statutory requirements. Both literacy and numeracy are emphasised and pupils benefit from this. The pupils are given very good opportunities to develop skills in IT which they in turn use to enhance their work in other areas. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to learn alongside their peers in local mainstream schools and to undertake courses at a local college.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The excellent programme for personal, social and health education successfully supports pupils' personal development and they achieve the targets set for them. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is very good and that for social and moral development is excellent.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good arrangements are made to monitor and assess pupils' progress and personal development and to set targets that stretch them. Arrangements for child protection and for ensuring health and safety are very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The head teacher, the governing body and those in management roles provide very good leadership. They share a common view about how the school should best develop and they carry out their responsibilities to a very high standard. Those in leadership roles monitor the school's performance and are aware of its relative strengths and weaknesses. Responsibilities are well delegated. These strengths have enabled the school to move forward well since the last inspection and to successfully implement new strategies that have raised achievement. Planning is excellent and carefully thought through and plans are successfully brought to fruition.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governors fulfil their statutory role very well. They maintain close and frequent contact with the school and bring to it a valuable range of experiences and skills that help in maintaining the high standards achieved.

The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has taken steps to ensure that the quality of its curriculum and teaching is monitored and evaluated. It sets challenging targets for individual pupils and now it sets targets for overall achievement at the end of key stages against which it may judge its effectiveness in comparison to its own past performance and the standards achieved in similar schools.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent use is made of the resources available. There is a development plan that guides and prioritises the allocation of resources. The principles of best value are applied.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are high expectations of the pupils. • The school is well managed. • It helps pupils to mature and behave appropriately. • Their children like to come to the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside of lessons is restricted. • There is concern about the inability of the school to attract a permanent teacher.

Inspectors confirm that the positive views of parents are well founded. They judge that the school provides a satisfactory range of activities outside the classroom. They note that the school has been unfortunate in not being able to attract a teacher of the right quality to fill its vacancy to date. This does not mean that it will never succeed in doing so. Meanwhile, pupils continue to receive education that is of very good quality.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The youngest pupils are given a very good start and at all ages and levels of achievement pupils respond to the very good opportunities and teaching provided to reach the targets set for them.

1. When they enter the school in the reception and Key Stage 1 class, the pupils generally have very limited social skills and many are not well equipped to become successful learners. Some who have previously attended the community nursery are better placed to take advantage of the very good teaching that they receive.
2. Shortly after they begin to attend all pupils are accurately assessed and their capabilities recorded using suitable nationally referenced scales such as "Equals". Targets are set for each pupil in response to this in literacy, numeracy and personal development.
3. Across the programme planned at Key Stage 1 there is an appropriate emphasis on the development of communication, literacy and numeracy skills and in all activities the importance of these is acknowledged and planned for. Thus, for example, in a lesson in design and technology (food) pupils are introduced to the activity of making a sandwich by good use of questioning which develops observational skills and encourages the pupils to reply. Questions such as "What can you see?" and "What are we going to make?" prompt pupils to infer what the task will be and to articulate an answer before it is explained. Throughout the lessons language is used to expand pupils' vocabularies and to reinforce and develop reasoning and numeracy. Such questions as "If we cut it in half, how many pieces will we have?" are accurately answered. Further, when four pieces are obtained, each of these is accurately identified as a "quarter" by class members.
4. Pupils in Key Stage 1 quickly learn what is expected of them. They answer questions about their news confidently and with imagination "fired" by the some of the work they have done in school. For example, one pupil gives an account of her weekend that bears a strong resemblance to the adventures of the "Three Little Pigs", a recently featured class story, in that she believes she encountered a wolf when walking across the fields with her granny!
5. Pupils' incidental knowledge has evidently developed over the key stage. They are aware, for example, of the hygiene considerations that are involved in preparing and eating food. When asked why they should wash their hands they unhesitatingly reply "Because of germs!"
6. Specific difficulties with the use of language as well as delayed and immature speech are particularly well addressed. When they have become established in the class pupils with needs of varying degrees of complexity all begin to make very good progress and to make up lost ground. While there remains a wide range of attainment, achievement across this range is high. Pupils articulate, clearly, the points they wish to make. They have taken in and use the rules for turn-taking in conversation. They compose and ask sensible, relevant questions and they recognise that speech is often amplified by gesture, for example, that rubbing the eyes with the hands signifies "tired", and they can sustain effort for periods of 25 minutes or more.
7. The high quality of the teaching in Key Stage 1 is reflected in the character of the classroom and the planning that underpins the lessons. The classroom is very well prepared to reflect the successes of pupils and stimulate and inform them. Pupils are strongly encouraged to develop their independence. This is well illustrated in the way in which the timetable is displayed both simply in writing and also as iconic computer graphics, so that they can make use of it even if they cannot read. Resources, also, are clearly labelled to make them accessible.
8. Given their low starting point and their many specific and individual learning difficulties, pupils achieve very well over the key stage; principally because teaching is of very high quality and the curriculum that is followed is very well suited to individual and general needs.
9. Across the age range the teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve. They demonstrate this in their planning, which is detailed and founded on very good knowledge of the requirements of the subject. They also know the pupils' strengths and weaknesses as learners. Lessons are well structured, initial explanations are very clear and time available is used very well. Classroom support assistants make a major contribution; they are confident

and very familiar with the routines of lessons and with the individual learning requirements of their pupils. These strengths enable pupils to respond well, to use their imagination, to think and to learn effectively in an environment that is predictable and known to them but which, nevertheless, challenges them to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. They are, in lessons in many subjects, enabled to reflect on what others think, to put forward their own ideas in a "safe" environment and to test them out, practically, in a variety of ways. Learning by doing is greatly encouraged. For example, in a science lesson in Key Stage 2 pupils guess or "predict" how a "model" of a rocket, an inflated balloon, will travel when the air is suddenly released. They remember past learning and develop a solution to controlling the balloon's direction. Then they try it out and are delighted when their idea is successful.

10. Again, at a much later stage in their education, pupils in Key Stage 4, in their work-related learning, are enabled to improve by the open nature of relationships within the group. This is also helped by the very good relationship that they have with their teacher. In one practical lesson, for example, they show sufficient confidence to express their doubts and misunderstandings when they learn the techniques of wall papering. These are discussed with the teacher and resolved so that they then approach the task with confidence.
11. Clear targets are set for the pupils in their academic, personal and social learning and these inform not just the content of lessons but the style of teaching. Examples of these for the youngest pupils might be "Retell a simple story in your own words" or "Write within half-inch parallel guide lines". For pupils with more profound difficulties a target might be "Use a single word to express personal need". Where required, steps toward a learning target may be very small because the teachers know that the pupils need to experience success in order to remain confident and motivated to succeed. This good understanding by teachers of what is required to promote achievement among a group of learners who have in many cases been unsuccessful and discouraged is reflected in the fact that in each key stage pupils make very good progress towards the targets that are set for them.

It makes innovative use of specialist subject teaching at an unusually early stage to successfully challenge the pupils to extend their numeracy, literacy and personal and social skills very well.

12. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' learning has maintained the momentum gained in Key Stage 1 and achievement is very good in reading, speaking and listening, science and personal and social education. It is good in mathematics and information technology. The school has put in place unusual, but effective, arrangements for teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, as well as in personal, social and health education and information technology. In each of these a specialist teacher plans and offers the subject to every one of the classes in the key stage and pupils move from their class bases to specialist rooms to receive their lessons. In most schools pupils do not receive such specialist teaching in this key stage and specialist facilities to support literacy, mathematics and information technology are not generally found.
13. The advantages of this organisation are apparent in the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers benefit because they can judge standards within their subjects across each year group and key stage. Over time they come to know the individual learning characteristics of each of their pupils. They plan across the key stage within their subject and this enables them to make certain that there is continuity in what is set and that the pupils are given increasingly challenging work in ways that cause progression in an appropriate way. They are in a strong position to monitor pupils' gains and to set targets that are specific and measurable. This serves to heighten expectations of what pupils can achieve and to promote progress. Methods are good; there is a variety and freshness to the teaching. Time is used well because lessons are planned singly and because the pupils' schedule demands that lessons start and finish on time. This method of lesson organisation makes for possible economies in the provision of resources. The abundant IT resources are well used and an IT support teacher is available to extend pupils' learning and to give them opportunities to record their work in interesting ways.

14. Teachers know their subjects very well and show a sense of purpose and confidence in lessons. For example, in a good mathematics lesson for Year 4 pupils, “heavier than” and “lighter than” are tested using non-standard measures and simple apparatus. Within the session pupils use their previously acquired learning to predict, to estimate and to count as they seek to adjust to equilibrium a scale that is used to test the comparative weight of two apples. The teacher judges the level of difficulty well and pupils find this challenging, especially the recording of their results. However, by making full use of time and having suitable resources the teacher ensures that by the end of the session pupils use comparative language, such as the words “heavier” and “lighter”, accurately and their understanding has moved forward.
15. Again, in Year 6, pupils develop their understanding of data handling. It is clear that being able to concentrate on her subject enables the mathematics teacher to prepare her lesson more fully and to focus on intended learning outcomes more clearly than would be the case if teaching across the full subject range were required. As a result, pupils confidently tally the results of a survey into choice for favourite crisp flavour, the “research” phase, which they greatly enjoy.
16. The well resourced classroom where English and literacy lessons for the key stage take place reflects the clear understanding of the subject that the teacher of literacy brings to her work. Literacy sessions are well planned and the National Literacy Strategy is skilfully adapted to meet the needs of the pupils. Pupils in Years 3 and 4, for example, enter the room with a clear understanding and eager anticipation of the form their literacy lesson will take. They are familiar with the resources available and the shape of the lessons they receive. They sit in an orderly manner on the mat before the “Big Book” and participate readily with their teacher in reading the story of “Goldilocks and the Three Bears”. After the book session pupils work individually or in groups on a range of activities related to reading, writing and spelling. Information and communication technology resources support these activities well and an outstanding feature is the high quality of support given to individual pupils and small groups by classroom support assistants. The confidence with which the pupils use the resources in the literacy room and their purposive approach to learning ensures that they extract full benefit from their literacy sessions.
17. The timetable makes the unusual demand on pupils in Key Stage 2 that they move from teacher to teacher. However, they respond positively to this and to the variety provided by being taught by a number of adults rather than by a single class teacher.

It makes very effective arrangements to teach literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 3 that enable pupils to develop their awareness and enjoyment of literature and books and their confidence in mathematics.

18. Not all pupils in Key Stage 3 have attended the school from age five or age seven. In some classes, pupils from a local mainstream secondary school are part of the group. Pupils who come late to the school or who visit only for certain lessons have not had the benefit of the systematic teaching of literacy and numeracy that the school provides. There is, therefore, a range of achievement in Key Stage 3 that reflects pupils’ previous learning opportunities and experiences.
19. Throughout Key Stage 3 pupils are grouped for literacy and mathematics according to their prior attainment, which is tested by their teachers. Pupils receive the benefit of lessons which take full account of their capabilities as learners and which challenge them to move forward as much as they are able. Good specialist teaching is provided. This focuses both on the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills and, in English lessons, on the use of books and the enjoyment of literature. Targets are set which are specific and which point to outcomes that can readily be assessed.
20. Pupils are given very good opportunities to extend their experience and their use of books. Library sessions are scheduled that encourage and require pupils to make choices of reading matter. At all levels of attainment pupils are required to review what they have read and share this with their fellow pupils. Enjoyment of story is greatly encouraged by the serial reading of children’s literature to class groups by the teacher. Where pupils’ literacy skills are more developed the required texts of the National Curriculum for the key stage are studied. To make these more accessible good use is made of video and the text is read aloud by the teacher. Lower attaining pupils in Year 7 are entirely captivated by their teacher’s reading of “The boy

who walked on water". At intervals throughout her expressive reading the teacher involves them in dialogue about the story; they can relate what they hear to their own feelings, experiences and relationships. Year 9 pupils think very hard about John Steinbeck's story "Of Mice and Men" and come to understand the rich texture of his idiosyncratic vocabulary. They convey understanding even where words fail them; one pupil, for example, accurately acts out "drag-footed" because alternative language is not immediately at his command. They understand that the feelings of the old ranch-hand whose old and sickly dog is put down by his friend include an element of fear and realisation that he too is coming to the end of his useful life. This shows a high level of empathy.

21. In numeracy lessons there is a strong emphasis on mental mathematics and on the importance of pupils' making use of their own methods to find solutions. The higher attaining pupils make accurate calculations with ready facility. Those in Year 9 can quickly and accurately solve in their heads the answers to questions such as "which number is 4 less than 25?", "name any multiple of 5" or "give examples of 4 coins that together make 73 pence". Pupils are confident and are willing to "have a go" at answering the questions. Good materials help pupils to extend and build on their knowledge and skill. The well-prepared programme suits their needs.

It provides pupils in Key Stage 4 with a very wide range of opportunities to undertake accredited courses, attend college and prepare for the next stage of education.

22. At Key Stage 4 pupils have their work accredited by a range of conferring bodies. Courses are undertaken that lead, for some, to the General Certificate of Secondary Education and, for the great majority, Certificates of Educational Achievement, the literacy and numeracy certificates of the Associated Examination Board, the silver and bronze awards of the Youth Award Scheme and the City and Guilds Diploma in Vocational Education. The school indicates in its additional targets that this level of success will be maintained.
23. In Year 11 pupils spend one full day each week at a local college. They also have work experience placements. The base for Year 11 pupils is an annexe in the house formerly for the use of the caretaker. This has been well adapted to the needs of the older pupils. It lends itself readily to the development of a practical work related curriculum and its separation from the rest of the school buildings helps in promoting a sense of independence in the pupils and preparedness for the next step of moving into work or on to further education and training.

There is excellent provision for the social and moral development of its pupils and very good provision for their spiritual and cultural development.

24. The school places great emphasis on encouraging pupils, from the earliest age, to take some responsibility for their own learning and the management of their own needs. With the youngest pupils this takes the form of ensuring that the programme for the day is prominently and accessibly displayed, using symbols instead of words where necessary, and that all resources are clearly labelled and stored within pupils' reach. At an early stage, in Key Stage 2, pupils learn to move from classroom to classroom for their lessons. This process is carefully organised and the pupils speedily come to know and respond to the routine.
25. These arrangements within the classroom are complemented by those made for serving lunch. Only the youngest pupils sit with adults and have their meal served to them; this is appropriate because at this stage the social conventions of eating with a group are not yet firmly established. From Year 3 upwards, however, pupils are expected to select their own food from the choice available and to sit sociably with their friends to eat it. They learn what is expected very well and the dining hall at lunch time is quiet, cheerful and orderly. Pupils clear their own dishes without fuss and move out to play or to take part in a club activity very sensibly.
26. Some younger pupils who have been learning in their personal, social and health education (PHSE) lessons about sharing make arrangements to share their toys with others; one innovative youngster offers to share his time equally among his friends.
27. Throughout the school there is a consistent approach to promoting independence and service to others. For example, when pupils withdraw a book from the library they, themselves, fill in the withdrawal record. Older pupils, in Year 11, combine the opportunity to gain work experience

with helping in the nursery with which the school has strong links. Structure is given to such community work by the Youth Award Scheme.

28. A major influence on the excellent social development is the attitude and demeanour of the staff, who, through their courtesy, humour and consistency, ensure that pupils are daily given very good examples of how people might best relate to each other. In addition, termly, for each pupil, a clear target for social and personal development is set. These targets are known to all staff and more importantly to the pupils and over time they serve to promote personal confidence and competence and a good understanding of what it means to be part of a group.
29. While social learning is initially focused on the society of the classroom and the school, involvement in the "outside world" is also encouraged. For example, through English Heritage pupils have adopted a monument; more importantly, they are aware of the plight of others less fortunate and take part in fund-raising for the flood victims of Mozambique. The results of the school's hard work in helping to develop both social awareness and social competence can be seen in the ready manner in which, for example, all pupils share in the pleasure of those who are publicly rewarded for work and success at assemblies.
30. The behaviour of pupils in the classrooms and around the school is excellent. This is not to say that on occasions individuals do not show temperament or behave inappropriately but that these are manifestations of well understood emotional and behavioural difficulties which the staff have learned to anticipate and to quickly defuse. Pupils are able to discuss their own behaviour and that of others. Whether they are talking about real life and their experiences at school or about moral dilemmas they encounter in their school work, they have clear views of what is right and what is wrong and give cogent reasons for these. Thus they disapprove of the small amount of aggressive behaviour and bullying that they know occurs and, as well, reflect sensibly on the moral choices made by characters they encounter in the literature and stories they read and hear in the classroom. Pupils in Year 3 and 4, for example, are critical of Goldilocks' behaviour in the home of the Three Bears but pupils in Year 9 understand that in the story "Of Mice and Men" the shooting of an old and sick dog could be an act of mercy.
31. The arrangements for spiritual and cultural development are very good and are strongly founded within a very well constructed programme for religious education, strong elements of aesthetic education linked to literature, art and music and opportunities for quiet reflection in assemblies.

Very good leadership and effective management ensure that the work of the school is monitored and that steps are taken when necessary to maintain standards and secure improvement.

32. The school is very well led; the head teacher has been in post for 23 years and has developed over time a comprehensive understanding of how best to manage and lead. He enthuses his staff with a clear vision – that of a school that is "special" in that it focuses on each individual pupil and concerns itself with the whole child yet promotes the highest possible standards of achievement through careful curriculum planning and very good teaching. Whenever possible new initiatives have been considered, adapted and pressed into service to great benefit, as in the case of the literacy strategy, for example, which now successfully informs the teaching of reading and writing especially in Key Stages 1 and 2.
33. Those who have management responsibility are dedicated and perform their roles well. A tribute to the leadership is that few staff have considered leaving the school, which, under local review, could well change beyond recognition in the near future. The head takes a lead in monitoring the school performance and comparisons are made from available data with similar schools. He personally evaluates teachers' short and longer term plans. He is to be seen about the school quietly ensuring that pupils are in their lessons and that movement about the school is orderly.
34. Following the previous inspection a good action plan was put in place to deal with the key issues that it raised. The school took this very seriously and used the opportunity to bring about notable improvements. Prominent among these were the development of information technology, which is now very well resourced, the arrangements to promote reading and interest in books and the strategy to meet the needs of pupils who require speech and language therapy. In the previous inspection the school was held to be failing to ensure that pupils who had need of speech and language therapy written into their Statements of Special

Educational Needs received it. It now makes very good support available for pupils with expressive language delay from within its own resources. In an imaginative use of resources the school has met the cost of providing training to two welfare assistants who are now qualified language support assistants and able to undertake, with the direction of professional speech and language therapists, as necessary, much of the routine work in refining the expressive and receptive language skills of pupils who are delayed in their language development. The trained learning support assistants work hard and with a high degree of success to develop the use and understanding of prepositional language such as “over”, “under” or “on top of” and to develop listening skills and increase the length of time for which the pupil can pay attention.

35. Strategic planning is excellent; plans that are made are always implemented and their outcomes evaluated. There is good delegation and communication is also excellent.
36. The governors play a full part and their range of relevant expertise is extensive. An excellent budgetary planning framework is in place. Excellent strategic planning has enabled the school to accumulate funds for the necessary improvements highlighted in the last report and to maintain and improve standards despite levels of funding that are low in comparison to similar schools elsewhere. Attention to “best value” principles is good and the school always strives to get value for money.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The arrangements for teaching a modern foreign language in Key Stage 3 take insufficient account of the need to ensure that pupils develop their language skills across the key stage.

37. The school barely meets the requirement of the National Curriculum to teach a modern foreign language to pupils in Key Stage 3. While the requirement to do this in Key Stage 4 is to be removed from the regulations from the autumn term, it remains currently in force. However, pupils in Key Stage 4 at The Park School have this requirement disapplied and they concentrate instead on the work-related curriculum. French is taught intensively to pupils in Key Stage 3 over three weeks of the summer term. Such an annual “French Week” or “French Month”, especially if accompanied by practical opportunities to use learned skills, as in a visit to France or through Internet links, is a good way to focus interest on the language but cannot in itself provide sufficient opportunity to learn it.
38. This arrangement does not do justice to the need to ensure that, as pupils’ knowledge, skills and understanding of language in general increase year-on-year, as they move through the key stage, their encounters with the French language become more challenging and build securely on past learning. Pupils forget much of what they learn in the 12 month interval between French sessions and for pupils with acknowledged difficulties in learning this method of scheduling their learning does not fully meet their needs.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

39. This is a very good school with many strengths and few weaknesses. In order to continue to provide education of very good quality and promote high standards of achievement the governing body and the senior management should:
 - Ensure that arrangements for teaching a modern foreign language in Key Stage 3 take sufficient account of the needs of pupils and of the necessity to develop their language skills continuously across the key stage.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	35
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	15

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	63	37	0	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No. of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	130
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	58

English as an additional language	No. of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No. of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.1

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	1.3

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	129
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	9.6
Average class size	10.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: YR – Y11

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	335

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
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	£
Total income	657,405
Total expenditure	653,377
Expenditure per pupil	4667
Balance brought forward from previous year	23,030
Balance carried forward to next year	27,059

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	130
Number of questionnaires returned	79

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	72	23	4	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	63	30	5	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	44	6	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	44	10	0	0
The teaching is good.	82	15	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	65	24	11	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	77	18	1	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	24	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	66	27	4	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	80	19	0	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	76	20	3	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	35	14	3	5

Other issues raised by parents

Parents expressed concern about impending changes to the nature of the school and the negative impact of this on the school's ability to recruit staff.