

INSPECTION REPORT

THE ORCHARD SCHOOL

Smethwick

LEA area: Sandwell

Unique reference number: 132232

Headteacher: Helen Atkins

Reporting inspector: Noreen Buckingham
16722

Dates of inspection: 12th -15th May 2003

Inspection number: 249451

Full 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:	2-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Coopers Lane Smethwick
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr William Jinks
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

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16722	Noreen Buckingham	Registered inspector	Art and design Religious education	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
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30243	Anne Heakin	Team inspector	Foundation stage Mathematics	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Orchard School is a community day special school for boys and girls aged between 2 and 11 years who have severe learning difficulties and/or complex physical and learning needs. An increasing number of pupils have autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). 43 pupils have complex physical and learning needs. The school can accommodate 120 pupils and currently there are 102 pupils on roll. Of these 29 children are nursery and reception age eight of whom are nursery age attend part time. There are 66 boys and 33 girls, a ratio of 2 to 1. At the time of the inspection 77 pupils had statements of special educational needs and 22 were undergoing statutory assessments. 45 pupils are eligible for free school meals which is high compared with other schools.

Just under a third of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. 21 pupils are from Asian backgrounds while 8 are from mixed race backgrounds. While twenty eight pupils have English as an additional language and twenty seven are at an early stage of language acquisition this is not significant within the whole spectrum of their severe or complex physical and learning needs.

The school was part of the local education authority reorganisation and opened in September 2000 on two sites which had previously been special schools. It is the only primary school for pupils with severe learning difficulties and/or complex physical and learning needs within the authority.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Orchard School is a rapidly developing school with several good features. The headteacher, senior management team, staff and governors have worked hard since the school opened in September 2000 following major reorganisation of special schools within Sandwell Local Education Authority. Much has been done in terms of staff development, curriculum development and in building positive links with mainstream schools but the school recognises that there is still much to be done to ensure that pupils are offered the best possible quality education. All staff and governors share the headteacher's vision to increase inclusion opportunities for all pupils. Teaching and learning in lessons are good overall, especially for the Under 5s who make consistently good progress. Although costs are very high the nature of many of the pupils means that they require a very high level of adult support and specialist equipment. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The schools' commitment to inclusion and its relationships with a number of mainstream schools are excellent.
- Music is a strength of the school.
- The induction, appraisal and performance management procedures are excellent
- Leadership and management by all those with management responsibilities are good. With the governors, they provide a long term strategic view for the future development of the school.
- Good teaching and learning because learning support practitioners work well in teams with teachers in the classroom. This support is further enhanced by health personnel.
- Pupils' attitudes are very good and their behaviour is good as a result of the very good relationships and positive interactions between adults and pupils.
- The emphasis on the development of speaking and listening skills, which has a very positive effect on pupils ability to communicate.
- The school ensures a safe and secure environment in which pupils are treated sensitively and with

respect.

What could be improved

- The organisation of religious education in Key Stage 1.
- Staff training in child protection
- The governors active involvement in monitoring the work of the school.
- The development and monitoring of the curriculum
- Ensuring that the continued development of assessment procedures are manageable as well as effective.
- The schools' accommodation.

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

This is the schools' first inspection. However since it opened in September 2000 the school has been awarded Investors in People and has developed strong links with a number of mainstream schools which pupils attend for specific activities or regular sessions. Staff from the school also visit mainstream schools to offer advice and support about specific special needs.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by Year R	by Year 6	Key	
Speaking and listening	B	A	very good	A
Reading	B	B	Good	B
Writing	B	C	Satisfactory	C
Mathematics	B	B	Unsatisfactory	D
Personal, social and health education	A	B	Poor	E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A		

The school has not set any whole school targets this academic year. It felt that there was not sufficient reliable data from which to set appropriate targets. Overall pupils make good or very good progress in relation to their individual targets and this reflects the good provision the school makes for literacy, numeracy and personal, health and social education. Children Under 5 make consistently good and sometimes very good progress across all areas of the curriculum. This is because teaching is consistently good, the curriculum is appropriate and all staff give very good support. Pupils achieve well in English and mathematics and satisfactorily in science. Progress in other subjects of the curriculum is variable. It is very good in music because of the very good specialist teaching but only satisfactory in art and design, religious education and design and technology. Pupils with individual behaviour plans also make good progress because of the consistent way behaviour is managed. Those with additional special needs, such as ASD, make good progress and pupils for whom English is

an additional language also make good progress. This is because all pupils are taught within an environment where a range of communication methods are used, adults understand how pupils learn and know them very well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to come to school and work as hard as they can in lessons. They are encouraged to respond in whatever way they can and show a good level of interest especially when the teaching is challenging.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave well both in lessons in school and when they are in other schools. They are generally friendly and play together in small groups at playtimes. Some pupils display challenging behaviour which is associated with their special needs.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Every opportunity is taken, especially with the youngest children, to develop their independence and personal skills, staff are very good role models and treat children and pupils with respect and as a result pupils respond by being very co-operative and develop appropriate skills. Children and pupils learn to make choices, take turns and develop confidence.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The majority of unauthorised absences are due to long holidays in excess of the ten discretionary days. Pupils are generally punctual to lessons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	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 overall is good and peripatetic teachers and learning support practitioners make a significant contribution to this and as a result pupils learn well in lessons. Teaching in English (including literacy), mathematics (including numeracy) and personal, health and social education is good and in science it is satisfactory. Children's and pupils communication skills are very well promoted across the school with signing, symbols, specific communication aids supporting the spoken word. Teachers and learning support practitioners (LSP) work very effectively as teams in classrooms. In the best lessons teachers have high expectations of the pupils, planning meets the individual abilities of all pupils, activities are interesting and resources are well chosen and motivate pupils. When teaching is less effective the planned activities do not meet the needs of all pupils and they lose interest or become disruptive and don't learn. The pace in some of these less successful lessons is slow and is geared to the slowest learner leaving higher attaining pupils with little to do.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is relevant to pupils' abilities. The school has a strong commitment to increase the inclusion opportunities for all pupils and has built excellent relationships with a number of primary schools. Extra curricular activities are good and are developing well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The school has tried very hard to provide appropriate support for the 28 pupils for whom English is an additional language and has used staff expertise and outside agencies to assess their needs. They have appropriate opportunities to develop communication skills sufficiently well. The school has plans to further develop the support for these pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Opportunities for social development are very good. Provision for pupils' moral and cultural development are good and they are given a range of multi-cultural experiences from outside sources. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Pupils are very well cared for and are treated with a high level of respect. Child protection procedures are in place but staff training is out of date. There are very good procedures for monitoring attendance and behaviour. Assessment procedures are detailed and developing well.

The school has built up very good links with parents who have very positive views of the school and the quality of education and care their children receive. Pupils receive good support from other professionals such as physiotherapists, speech and language therapists and community nurses.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides good leadership and management and has a clear vision for the future development of the school. All staff with a management role undertake their responsibilities well but the role of the subject co-ordinator needs further development. All staff have a strong commitment to succeed.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body strongly supports the work of the school and they are committed to its long term aims. Committees are well established but they need to take a more proactive approach in monitoring the work of the school and in assessing the effect of major spending decisions on improving pupils' achievements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. This area of the school's work is developing well and is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievements. Teaching and learning are monitored with targets for development identified. Parents are asked for their views and any issues acted on.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The main resource is staff and they are all well deployed. The school uses the accommodation and resources as well as they can. Specific grants are well targeted and the school improvement plan is well

	linked to available financial resources. The governors are well aware of the principles of best value and apply them appropriately.
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The school is very well staffed with well trained teachers and learning support practitioners who have received a high level of professional training since the school opened which has a positive impact on how they approach their work. Accommodation is poor. The school is situated on two sites neither of which is suitable for the needs of the pupils. Resources in the school are satisfactory overall and are used well. The leadership and management of the school have been influential in enabling it to develop such a strong team ethos and to be in a such a sound position from which to move forward. The support of the governors has been an important element in the schools development.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching in the school is good. • The school is well led and managed. • Parents are well informed about the progress their child makes. • The school works closely with parents. • Parents are comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework pupils receive. • An improvement in behaviour.

The inspectors agree with the parents positive views. Pupils who display challenging behaviours have individual behaviour plans which are sent home and the school has a consistent approach to managing behaviour and records show that there is slow but steady improvement in most pupils' behaviour. Homework packs are available to parents but at the Parents Meeting one or two felt that the same packs were being sent home and pupils were becoming bored. However the school is making every effort to increase these resources.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. All pupils have statements of special educational needs which identify severe learning difficulties or complex physical and learning difficulties. An increasing number have autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and some have associated challenging behaviours. Pupils' attainment on entry is well below what would be expected for their age and it is therefore inappropriate to compare pupils' standards with national averages however, over time pupils are making good progress in relation to their personal targets. This is due largely to the good teaching supported by good teamwork in the classrooms and very good knowledge and understanding all adults have of the individual needs of the pupils. The school meets the needs of all of its pupils well and there is no significant difference between the progress made by boys and girls. Whilst the school has begun to monitor individual progress it does not undertake any detailed analysis of specific information about pupil progress, for example, how different year groups progress or about how well children and pupils from other ethnic groups achieve.

2. There are several reasons for pupils' good achievement. First, the targets on pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) are reviewed each half term. Key Targets are identified as those which are a barrier to individual pupils' learning and may be concerned with behaviour, learning or the development of social skills. Other targets in literacy, numeracy and personal, social and health education are also set and are integrated into many lessons. The school has not set any whole school targets to improve achievement as they have insufficient reliable data but it is planned that they will do so next year. All pupils are working towards Level 1 of the national Curriculum and statutory assessment tasks are not appropriate to any of the pupils. The school uses P scales (nationally agreed assessment scales) to assess pupils' progress.

3. Children in Under 5 make good progress in all areas of learning and this is due to the good and sometimes very good teaching they receive. They receive a very high level of adult attention and understanding so that every opportunity for learning is maximised. The curriculum is well organised around the Early Learning Goals resulting in a broad and balanced curriculum and children are enabled to able to achieve well across the areas and also because all staff know and understand how these pupils learn.

4. Second, all pupils with the most complex physical and learning needs have access to the full National Curriculum and make good progress in line with abilities. They are given a high level of support and the use of communication aids, symbols and signing enables them to participate as much as they can in lessons and enjoy the experiences they are given. Pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve as well as other pupils because of their similar abilities and the range of communications methods used which supports their understanding and learning.

5. Third, where pupils have additional learning needs, for example, pupils whose autism is sufficiently severe to create major barriers to their learning, interaction with others and ability to communicate, the school has adopted a range of approaches to the management of these pupils, based on a careful assessment of each individual and close liaison with families. Some pupils are registered in a mixed ability class but spend as much of their time as is needed in a separate facility in which they receive intensive intervention with their dedicated Learning Support Practitioner. Close liaison with class teachers and monitoring of the amount of time and its impact of pupils ensures that they are not disadvantaged by this

and they achieve well. In addition, the school makes these pupils a priority for specialist additional therapy in art and music, provided by visiting therapists from the Birmingham Centre for Arts Therapies. From this good foundation, there is now clear scope to take work with these pupils to a higher level to promote yet higher achievement. Many of the most severely impaired youngsters are beginning to overcome the barriers they have faced and show real signs of becoming ready to learn.

6. Pupils make good progress overall in English and in speaking and listening, progress is very good. Progress is better in reading than it is in writing where progress is satisfactory. A strong emphasis is placed on the development of communication skills and a range of systems other than voice are used to encourage communication. Effective use is made of symbols which enables pupils to join in lessons and make a positive contribution, signing is used extensively as are a range of special communication aids, such as switches, all of which give pupils every encouragement to respond and feel part of the lesson while also supporting the development of reading. In addition pupils enjoy listening to stories and can remember favourite parts. By Year 6 pupils contribute to a song writing activity and identify signs for objects and emotions. Pupils improve their ability to communicate as they move through the school. By Year 2 pupils can anticipate events in a familiar story and sensory stories are used well with pupils with complex learning needs to develop early reading skills. By Year 6 some pupils can recognise and read some words and are beginning to use appropriate strategies to build up simple words. Some higher attaining pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their reading at a quicker rate because the way that Big Books are used does not allow them to explore the language and structure of the stories in more depth. In writing, by Year 2 pupils practice making marks using chalk and felt tip pens and they are encouraged to go onto draw shapes and follow line patterns. By year 6 they are beginning to write letters and copy letters underneath adults examples.

7. Overall pupils make good progress in mathematics. By Year 2 pupils can match symbols to the right number of objects and can count by rote to five consistently. They sort by size and colour and can make repeated patterns. Higher attainers can count on with adult support. Pupils with the most complex learning needs sing number songs and allow adults to count on their fingers to help develop their understanding of number. Number rhymes are used across the curriculum to emphasise number. By Year 6 higher attaining pupils recognise numbers to a hundred and use their fingers to count rather than counters. They can do tens and units independently. Pupils build on prior learning and consolidate what they have learned. They enjoy role-play in the class shop using symbols in exchange for items. Some can work out amounts using one and two pence coins and develop an understanding of time.

8. Pupils make satisfactory progress in science and by Year 2 they have learned about the parts of a plant and what makes them grow and can explain how some toys move. All pupils have begun to develop good investigative skills and enjoy experimenting with different materials. In the multi-sensory room lower attaining pupils track a light source and show a definite reaction when it is switched off. By Year 6 lower attaining pupils can make choices and have handled different materials from trees and plants. Higher attaining pupils are able to make a comparison between different materials and predict what sort of material would be best for an umbrella. They recognise the senses and can name external parts of their bodies.

9. In Information and communications technology (ICT) pupils make satisfactory progress overall but there are areas where they make good progress such as the use of communication aids. ICT is not regularly used across the curriculum and pupils are just becoming familiar with the basic concepts. However by Year 6 the higher attaining pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills and learn about the Internet. Those pupils with the

most complex learning needs use a range of control technology in the sensory room to change their environment and show a basic understanding of cause and effect.

10. Pupils make satisfactory progress in religious education overall. The subject is allocated too little time in Key Stage 1 for pupils to make a secure judgement about the progress they make but in Key Stage 2 they make satisfactory progress overall. They learn about aspects of other religions, important people and journeys.

11. In other subjects of the curriculum pupils generally make satisfactory progress. The exception is in music where they make very good progress. This is due to the very good and excellent teaching they receive and the very good subject knowledge of the teacher. Pupils also make good progress in physical education especially in swimming.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupil's very good attitudes to school are well expressed by a parent's comment that although her daughter was very upset when she started school, by the end of the first week she was upset because there was no school at the weekend. Pupils try hard even when it is difficult for them physically to respond. For example in a registration session half of the pupils needed to make a great effort to press a Big Mac switch to say 'Good morning' in response to their teacher's welcome.

13. Pupils take a lot of trouble with their work, for example in a puppet workshop, pupils picked out items to create and personalise their puppets and one pupil went on to take the opportunity to demonstrate exactly how to use her wooden spoon puppet to mimic speech and movement. Pupils enjoy the activities offered to them, relaxing in the sensory room and responding with joy at the freedom they experience in the hydrotherapy pool. There is no discernible variation between different groups and ages of pupils in their attitude to school, and even pupils who are coming to school suffering medical and physical difficulties, cannot wait to get into their classrooms and start the school day. Pupils' very good attitudes to learning reflect the gains being made in their personal spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

14. Overall the behaviour of pupils across the school is good and there have been no exclusions. A small number of pupils whose behaviour is closely related to their special needs, have a history of challenging behaviour, but this behaviour is no longer as extreme and is indicative of the trust and good relationships that this group has built up with school staff. Pupils behave well in school and lessons, and when outside of the school, for example on inclusion visits. The behaviour of pupils in reception is nearly always very good. Behaviour at lunchtime and break times is good and although a number of pupils prefer to be play on their own, pupils do play together and are generally helpful and friendly to each other.

15. Pupils are generally very keen to take on responsibilities and their personal development is very good. Pupils move increasingly independently around school if they are can. In the morning, pupils vie to have the responsibility of taking the register back to the office and, for example, at the end of an afternoon's dancing activity, pupils were keen to be the ones who helped roll the ball back to their teacher when tidying away. Overall the relationships in the school are very good and most pupils get on very well with each other. In snack times, pupils learn to make choices between items of food or drink. At lunchtime pupils are very sociable with each other and staff and demonstrate that they understand how to behave with each other. Pupils co-operate well with staff in the very necessary routines of being dressed or helped with toileting, and all of these very intimate moments of pupils' lives are enhanced by their very good relationships with staff.

16. Attendance at the school is satisfactory when compared to schools of this type. It is not better than satisfactory because of the unauthorised absences where parents have taken their children away for holidays in term time. Pupils who come to school are usually punctual to school and lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. Teaching overall is good with some very good and excellent teaching especially in music where a peripatetic music teacher teaches all lessons. Sixty one percent of teaching is good or better and a quarter is very good or better, Only a very small amount of teaching, 4 percent is unsatisfactory. Teaching for the Under Fives is consistently good and as a consequence children learn well and make good progress. There are elements of good teaching in the majority of subjects.

18. The consistently good and very good teaching for children in the nursery and reception is because all staff know the children very well and understand how they learn. Appropriate resources are well used in lessons as a means of capturing children's interest and the team work between all the adults means that this is maintained. Very good use is made of praise and encouragement so that children are given positive feedback and know they have done well which in turn means that they keep on doing their best. Alternative means of communication are used so that all children can join in and respond at their own level. Clear records of how well children are achieving means that teachers plan lessons carefully to meet individual abilities.

19. Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent in music when it is taught by a peripatetic music teacher whose subject knowledge is a significant strength in the quality of the teaching. In addition experience of teaching the pupils, and the very good teamwork with the class teachers and learning support practitioners, means that the lessons are very well planned and meet the individual needs and abilities of all the pupils. As a result pupils very much enjoy music and learn very well. They are enthusiastic participants singing and playing instruments with great delight.

20. Good and very good teaching is often characterised by high expectations of pupils, careful planning, a good range of appropriate activities and well chosen resources. For example in a mathematics lesson all adults are clear about the activities which are very focused and pupils respond very well. In another very good English lesson the teamwork between adults is seamless demonstrating very good knowledge and understanding of pupils' individual abilities, and in addition the very good planning meant that everybody knew the focus and content of the lesson. Very good use of workstations and schedules allowed a pupil to get on with his work while LSPs worked with other groups of pupils showing the high level of organisation within the lesson. Also the good reinforcement of key language is evident in many of these lessons which builds on prior learning.

21. Lesson planning indicates clear learning objectives and different targets or tasks for individual pupils. The work in lessons is usually well structured reflecting a good knowledge of pupils' special educational needs and the approaches needed to get them actively involved but specific subject knowledge is not so secure resulting in lessons lacking in imagination. Group work is planned but occasionally when LSPs changed groups this unnecessarily disrupted pupils concentration when only the activity needed to be changed. All staff make good use of a range of communication systems to ensure that all pupils are as fully involved as possible and can understand what is going on. This allows them to respond appropriately.

22. Teachers and learning support practitioners (LSP) work well together in classrooms giving pupils good support which enables them to learn effectively. On occasions LSPs

deliver the lesson to groups of pupils and they do this very well. This is mainly because of the high level of training they have received which has extended their knowledge and understanding of the pupils and how they learn. This occurs in art, literacy and numeracy sessions. LSPs are involved with teachers in planning and this adds further to their awareness of the different abilities of individual children and pupils. Occasionally LSPs succumb to the temptation of doing too much for pupils and not giving them the opportunity to express their own ideas or to learn from their mistakes.

23. The strategies used throughout the school to support pupils with autism are good and pupils learn well. The clear structures and routines include, very good use of signing and symbols, schedules which help remove pupils' anxiety about what will happen next, and clear indications that one part of a lesson has ended and the next is about to begin. In the specially grouped class, a very important element of its success is the quality of knowledge and understanding of each individual pupil that the staff team has developed. Every member of the team is clearly very committed to the pupils, has built up their trust and confidence and provided a safe and secure environment in which some of the striking gains can take place.

24. There are a number of reasons why some teaching or aspects of lessons are not as effective as in most lessons. It is usually because the activities are inappropriate for the task or the focus of the lesson is lost and pupils lose interest. In addition activities which are planned do not meet the wide range of abilities in each class and as a result pupils may have to wait their turn for extended periods, other pupils become frustrated and disruptive and learning for all pupils is limited. In some lessons pupils' behaviour is not well managed resulting in disruption for everybody and in others the pace of the lesson is geared to the slowest learners leaving some pupils with little constructive work to do.

25. The school is developing "homework packs" for pupils which contain a range of materials linked to individual pupils' needs. These are organised by a learning support practitioner who keeps records of which packs have been home so as not to duplicate the packs too often. The contents relate to pupils' IEPs and they are offered to parents who make written comments about their usefulness. The contents of the packs relate to literacy and numeracy development and they allow parents to become partners in their child's learning. Currently about half of the pupils in the school take packs home to work on from Friday until Tuesday. The next step planned is to set up a Toy Library and to develop further the Tac Pac packs.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

26. The school curriculum is good overall and meets statutory requirements. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided for music are very good. The curriculum provision in the subjects of English, mathematics, science, physical education and personal, social and health education is good. Weaknesses in curriculum provision occur in religious education, design technology, history, geography and information and communication technology where learning opportunities are only satisfactory.

27. The school has worked hard to develop a very effective strategy for curriculum development. When the school opened, interim subject policies and schemes of work were quickly adopted. Subsequent curriculum development has been very well paced and has concentrated on very appropriate subject priorities. For example, in the school's first year of operation curriculum development included work in the core curriculum areas of literacy, speaking and listening, numeracy, science and personal, social and health education. The school has continued to develop the curriculum at a brisk pace, maintaining very clear and

appropriate priorities and ensuring that the process is manageable and realistic for those staff involved.

28. There is a satisfactory allocation of teaching time to each subject and the curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of all pupils with the exception of religious education in Key Stage 1 where too little time has been allocated. The older pupils at the Holly Lane site benefit appropriately from a slightly longer school day, as they have no afternoon break. There is appropriate flexibility in timetabling to meet pupil's individual needs. For example, access to the school pool provides very good hydrotherapy opportunities for pupils with additional physical disabilities. These opportunities are well monitored by the deputy headteacher to ensure pupils do not miss learning opportunities available to other pupils.

29. Curriculum planning is good overall. The quality of medium term plans is very good and is a strength of curriculum planning within the school. Subject co-ordinators provide class teachers with termly plans that contain a detailed range of possible learning outcomes linked directly to the 'P' levels in subject documents from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). Further monitoring of long-term plans is required to ensure that learning experiences are not repeated as pupils move up through the school.

30. The school has quickly developed and established good strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills based on the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. This has contributed to the good progress pupils make but in some lessons plenary sessions could be better organised, especially in numeracy.

31. In spite of a lack of after-school activities due to transport constraints, the school's provision for extra-curricular activities is good overall. The provision of residential experiences is very well organised, with younger pupils staying away for shorter periods. A number of pupils at the Holly Lane site are part of an orchestra that practises at lunchtimes and performs in school assemblies. In addition, mid-day supervisory staff on both sites organise a very good range of sports and games activities. The school also organises a range of cultural and recreational visits away from the school site. Parents offer very good support to the school by bringing their children into school early to access the school pool. The school will also be operating a summer holiday play scheme on the school site, with funding received from the National Opportunities Fund (NOF).

32. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education(PHSE) is good and targets on pupils' IEPs are carefully monitored and updated when necessary. A detailed scheme of work has been established which covers all the necessary topics except that no firm decision has been taken yet about sex and drugs education. Care is taken however, that issues relating to these topics are dealt with as and when appropriate. For the youngest children PHSE independence and choice are promoted at every opportunity and each activity is well used to engage pupils so that calling the register is used as a social activity on which they all notice each other and learn to take turns. Only in Key Stage 2 are pupils timetabled for discrete PHSE lessons and in Key Stage 1 the view is that these skills are emphasised throughout the curriculum. Personal and social skills are reinforced through the good relationships in lessons and the high quality of care pupils receive. All adults are very good role models for the pupils.

33. The contribution of the wider community to the work of the school is very good. The school has developed links with a large range of organisations in a comparatively short period of time. Very good use is made of local churches and other faith centres to promote pupils' cultural development. The use of a local pool provides a more challenging setting to teach swimming to older Key Stage 2 pupils. The school also promotes the use of the school buildings for community use. A group of adults with learning difficulties regularly use the

school pool and students from other local schools and college undertake work experience at the school. The most significant of these links is with the local Creative Partnership that brings artists, musicians, storytellers and dancers into the school to work with and teach pupils. During the inspection Year 6 pupils were seen making very good progress in a Bhangra Dance workshop and thoroughly enjoying themselves. Such lessons make a highly significant contribution to pupils' cultural development.

34. Excellent relationships exist between the school and other institutions, they make a highly significant contribution to pupils learning and are a strength of the school. The school prepares pupils very well for the next stage of their education and an excellent range of inclusion opportunities are provided at a large number of local primary schools. The headteacher is extremely committed to the principles of inclusion and staff at all levels have worked very hard to secure and develop these links. A deputy head has particular responsibility for inclusion and outreach development and has an experienced learning support practitioner to support this work. Not only do pupils from the school integrate in to mainstream schools but the school gives support and practical advice to schools where particular pupils with special needs are located. The school is the only special school to be part of Sandwell Inclusion Network (SIN), a group which is committed to further developing inclusion opportunities. It is also part of the ISIS (Inclusive Sandwell Inclusive Schools) project which involves a small number of schools aiming to develop a kite mark for inclusion.

35. The curriculum for pupils with additional special needs is good overall. The school makes good use of the expertise of visiting specialist teachers for the hearing and visually impaired and it has worked hard to ensure that the curriculum for pupils with ASD and those with challenging behaviours is appropriate to their needs. For pupils with ASD, inclusion is planned for in certain lessons where the content or approach is likely to enable the pupil to participate in a group. Good examples of this were seen in music lessons where some of these pupils sustained concentration for the entire session and clearly took a lively part in the activities. Another approach has been the creation since September of one specialist class for pupils who had found inclusion in a mixed class impossible to sustain. It is clear from the evidence seen about the pupils' previous levels of stress and anxiety, violent or self-harming behaviour, that they have all made very significant progress with their key difficulties.

36. There are 26 pupils on the school roll for whom English is an additional language. The school tries hard to ensure that none of these pupils suffers any significant disadvantage and their rate of progress is not significantly different from other pupils. Within the staff team there are speakers of Punjabi, Urdu and to a lesser extent, Bengali. Pupils whose home language is not represented at school have had mother tongue assessments, paid for from the school's own resources. Many parents and carers from ethnic minority groups are second generation English speakers and parents themselves have helped the school investigate some individual problems effectively.

37. Considered as a whole, the opportunities offered to pupils by the school for their spiritual moral, social and cultural development are good. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual development across the school are satisfactory. School and class assemblies and circle time offer pupils the chance to choose their 'thought for the day' or celebrate their 'good work'. Spiritual opportunities are not planned for in the curriculum but the school is sensitive and receptive to the beliefs of the families of pupils, while at the same time effectively promoting the Christian faith. Many opportunities are enjoyed spontaneously by pupils, as for example in a numeracy lesson when reception pupils relished the smells and colours of the fresh vegetables they were 'buying' in their role-play session. Most pupils have access to the sensory rooms in school, where they can experience a range of feelings and sensations in their immediate environment. Pupils are encouraged to know that they have done something

well, and are thrilled to go home with a stamp on their hand or a sticker in their Well Done books to celebrate a success.

38. Opportunities for moral and social development in the school are both very good and this is reflected in their good behaviour. Some pupils can buy or choose their own snacks. At lunchtime, pupils choose to play with bikes, scooters, ball games, jigsaws or join the music club. In most classes lists of jobs and responsibilities are prominently displayed, both in words and schedules, and this promotes their personal development. Pupils are also encouraged to help each other and improve their own independence skills for example by feeding themselves at lunchtime. Lunchtime supervisors reward good behaviour amongst pupils with their own stickers and certificates and both principal lunchtime supervisors have recently attended Huff Puff courses to promote social and moral opportunities in lunchtime activities and this has a positive impact on pupils' general behaviour. The school has had a policy of residential visits to improve pupils' social skills and a good range of inclusive opportunities for many pupils in mainstream schools and within the school itself. Pupils are encouraged to make a positive contribution to charitable causes and have raised money for national charities through fund raising events such as Comic Relief and the Shoebox appeal. Staff provide very good role models for pupils and relationships between pupils and staff are also very good.

39. The school's provision for pupils' cultural development is good, especially where there are opportunities for the involvement of the Black Country Creative Partnership in school. Pupils revelled in the colours, tastes, sights and sounds of an Afro-Caribbean carnival during Inclusion week and the faiths of ethnic minorities in the community are celebrated and revered in assemblies, curriculum and visits out of school. Pupils experience the richness and diversity in the day-to-day life of our society. For example Year 5 pupils enjoyed trying on jewellery that would be worn at a Sikh wedding and contrasting the richness of special clothes worn at Christian and Sikh weddings.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

40. Procedures for making sure that pupils are well cared for and safe are very good. The school has very good health and safety procedures, and their implementation around the school, and when pupils are out of the school on visits or activities, is very carefully monitored. At both sites, when pupils arrive in the mornings and leave the school in the afternoon staff are on duty to watch the transport arrangements and make sure pupils are safe. Risk assessments are reviewed to make sure they are in line with up to date guidance on health and safety procedures, and there are daily inspections of the school buildings. The school is conscious that the physical limitations of many of its pupils require that its emergency evacuation procedures are very well organised for pupils and staff.

41. Health authority professionals; the community children's nurse, physiotherapist and speech and language therapists are based in the school to support pupils' needs, for example, the physiotherapist works closely with the school's swimming instructor on each pupils hydrotherapy programme. Many staff have completed emergency first aid training and undertaken training in competent medical interventions for specific tasks so that pupils' needs can be met appropriately. In addition, individual care plans for particular pupils, drawn up by school nurses, are carefully monitored. The arrangements for recording the dispensation of medication for pupils are precise and secure. When pupils go out of school for an educational activity or trip, the school has made very good arrangements to ensure that the appropriate medical information is included amongst school information. Therapists work alongside staff in classrooms as well as in the treatment and therapy areas which supports the strong sense of teamwork in looking after the needs of the whole child. Pupils' personal development is guided well through the personal, social and health education

programme which offers pupils good advice as they move up through the school and provides a distinct ethos to each school site. Pupils are well supported as they make the transition to secondary school and also as they move school sites as they progress from Year 2 to Year 3. Where possible pupils are encouraged to take as much responsibility for themselves as possible and to follow their individual personal targets. For example when standing up from her chair, a reception pupil was encouraged to try several times until she could stand without the assistance of her teacher.

42. The school's procedures for ensuring that child protection arrangements meet with the requirements of the local area child protection committee are satisfactory. The school nurses at both sites have very detailed knowledge of all child protection procedures and are very vigilant to ensure the safety of pupils. The headteacher, who is the designated person, has been trained in child protection procedures, but the remainder of the school's staff have not received any recent training although they are all very aware of the school's procedures for referral if they have any concerns at all about a pupil. The school insists that anyone who works or helps in the school, including parents, undertakes a security check.

43. There are very good procedures for monitoring pupils' attendance and for seeking ways to improve attendance in school. Each day, the families or carers of pupils who are not in school are contacted to explain the reason for the absences and regular contact may be maintained until the pupil returns to school. The school works closely with the education welfare service to refer pupils and their families where there are causes for concern and the school tries hard to persuade families not to take their children away from school during the school term. Transport escorts provide an invaluable range of information on pupil absences and each day pass on messages to the school's deputy if for example no reply was made to their call at a pupil's house. There are signing in and signing out procedures for pupils and groups of pupils. The school does not reward any improved or exceptional attendance at school, but the importance of attendance is regularly promoted with parents through newsletters and individual phone calls and home visits. To try and improve the governors have set targets.

44. Overall the school's strategies for monitoring behaviour and for example, making sure that pupils are not bullied, are very good. The school has identified, through risk assessments, the need for specialised and positive training in handling and restraint and behaviour management. All behavioural incidents are recorded in detail so that it can analyse the reasons and outcomes of any trouble in or out of school. Pastoral support for monitoring and promoting discipline and behaviour in the school is very good. All staff are trained in Team Teach procedures which focus on positive behaviour management techniques and this has a positive effect on pupils behaviour. All incidents are recorded and monitored and this can lead to adaptations in, for example, a pupil's behaviour management plan as well as their individual education plan. Whole staff meeting discuss the necessary behaviour management approaches for each pupil and in some instances where there are pupils with specific behavioural and communication difficulties, behaviour plans are on the wall for any visiting staff or helpers to see. The school's behavioural management plan does not include a specific Anti-bullying policy.

45. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are satisfactory. The school has only been open for two years and during that time a number of staff have retrained to become competent to work with pupils who have complex physical and learning difficulties. This retraining involves gaining a more in depth understanding of the importance of detailed and specific assessment procedures. The assessment co-ordinator allowed time for this process and has since introduced a formal assessment procedure for the school. This is not fully embedded but provides a useful structure for further developments including a more sophisticated computerised system.

46. When children arrive at the school they are assessed and individual educational plans (IEP) are written to include key targets and curricular targets. The writing of targets involves all adults who work with each pupil so informed decisions are made and everyone is aware of the priorities for each pupil. The IEPs are reviewed each term but are used as working documents so whenever a pupils achieves a target it is updated. This information is discussed at the annual review held for each pupil and used to inform further planning for the pupil. Teachers' records are very detailed and throughout the school record keeping is given appropriate emphasis. Each pupil has a Record of Achievement, which is a photographic record of experiences but which does not give any indication of the context in which the work was done or the skills acquired.

47. Continuous assessment by teachers and LSPs is good. Staff are observant and the LSPs are fully aware of the achievements and targets for the pupils they are working with. The detailed and accurate record keeping means that teachers can make realistic predictions and link the specific targets with curriculum planning. Recording procedures are linked to P scales and in addition, lesson evaluations are also maintained but comments are often subjective and not of much use because they do not say how the pupils have learned or what skills they are developing.

48. Assessment is best in English, mathematics, music, personal and social education and the swimming aspect of physical education. Assessment in other subjects is inconsistent and insufficiently used across the school. This reflects the emphasis the school has placed on developing curriculum and assessment in a phased process. The school is very conscious of the importance of assessment and there is a definite strategy for developing the systems completely. The co-ordinator is aware the systems have potential to become cumbersome and is confident that the developments over time will produce a useful and efficient procedure.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49. Parents' views of the school are very good and most judge that their children are making progress in a wide variety of ways. They appreciate the range of information they receive from the school including the home/school diary, copies of the school timetable or well done book, and, if appropriate, a copy of their child's behaviour management plan. The majority of parents feel that concerns are dealt with promptly, that they trust the staff in school and feel confident in coming into school or phoning up if they want to discuss any issues.

50. The school works hard to keep up a close contact with parents and has a policy for Family Involvement which works well in that parents feel very positive about school. Phone calls play an important role in home/school contacts and are often used in place of a letter home; however the home/school book is the favoured method for enabling a successful dialogue between parents and staff. A significant number of parents come into school regularly, and the school encourages this through social events and parent workshops. Parents appreciate that they can make appointments for their children with the orthoptist during lunchtime so that no time is wasted from lessons. During the inspection a successful puppet workshop attracted a large number of parents and grandparents to both watch a puppet show with their children, and to make puppets in the classroom for a puppet display. The school is keen to work from an informed basis with parents and has undertaken a Parent Best Value review to look at partnership with parents in more detail. For example in recognising that there are weaknesses in its written information for parents from ethnic minorities the school makes good use of translation services and bi-lingual staff to communicate key information to these parents. The school finds out from parents what they

want to learn in order to work with their children at home, and has run Makaton courses and a PECs workshop where parents can make symbol books that meet the specific needs of their children at home and so support what their child is doing in the classroom.

51. The Parent Teacher Association has successfully organised several family and fund raising events. Parents also support events organised by the school and come to coffee mornings at the fortnightly parent support group meetings.

52. Regular newsletters are sent out to parents, and parents find these helpful and interesting. A prominent parent information board in school keeps parents up to date with school events and other matters that may interest or benefit them. There is good attendance at annual reviews but the written reports are very detailed and often the language is not easily understood which makes it difficult for families from minority ethnic backgrounds to fully understand what is being said. The daily routine of escorts reporting messages from home to the school office is a good link between home and school and also ensures that letters and messages get to the right people.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53. Leadership and management of the school are good because the headteacher has a very clear vision for the future development of the school and with the support of the staff, governors and parents, is steadily working towards achieving it. The school's commitment to becoming an inclusive school, within the broadest interpretation, runs through all that it does. Since the school opened following the reorganisation of special education within Sandwell the headteacher has worked very hard to build a highly motivated staff with a strong team ethos. This has involved some considerable changes in teaching practice for some staff but good quality training pitched very well at developing staff skills and extending their understanding, has been effective in driving the process of change and moving the school forward. All staff work very well together

54. Other staff with management responsibilities undertake their roles well and they make a significant contribution to day to day running of the school, made more difficult by being on two sites. Curriculum co-ordinators are beginning to develop their role. They look at subject plans and topic evaluations but they need to do this more rigorously and begin to observe how well their subject is taught in order to ensure that pupils are learning effectively and that they are building on prior learning and not repeating similar activities under different topics. In addition co-ordinators need to assess the quality of written evaluations from staff some of which are very subjective and not helpful in giving pointers for curriculum improvement or ways which could improve pupils' achievements. The headteacher and deputy heads have a programme for monitoring teaching and setting targets for improvement which is helpful to staff and proving effective. They also monitor teachers' record files and a whole school evaluation of how effective all these systems are would be helpful in assessing their validity and usefulness. Parents views are also sought via a questionnaire about the work of the school on an annual basis and a good return gives the school ideas about how to improve the way they work with parents. As yet the school does not analyse the pupil data it is collating in terms of age, gender or race and this would help them set dynamic targets for improvement. It would also be another tool in assessing the effectiveness of different subjects of the curriculum across the school.

55. The school improvement plan (SIP) covers three years and appropriately indicates how the school intends to develop. Relevant targets have been identified within a reasonable time scale and the decision to apply for Investors in People proved to be a shrewd one. It provided a range of processes and targets to meet for accreditation that acted as a focus for

the early development of the policies and procedures needed to secure a positive climate and an ethos of staff as learners. The school achieved it successfully within a year of opening which was a very considerable achievement.

56. The governors fulfil their role appropriately and strongly support the development of the school. They share the vision for the future development of the school and are committed to the philosophy for further inclusion. Governors' support for the school in its work to develop staff is strong, and the chair of the staffing committee is very clear about the next priorities for the governors' own work to develop in this area. The governors' focus in the early years has been the recruitment and retention of the staff and resolution of personnel matters to provide a stable staff team. They now seek to develop a more active role in monitoring the impact of the investment in staff development as part of their broader monitoring role for the school. Active and focused monitoring of the work of the school is underdeveloped and although initially each governor was linked to a specific subject, changes in the membership of the governors has meant that this role has not been as well developed as it should.

57. The financial planning and monitoring of the budget are very good. The school buys financial expertise from a commercial company and the quality of monitoring and reporting are very good and represent good value for money. The day to day administration in the school offices is very efficient. The financial secretary is extremely efficient and new technology is used very well to support efficiency and a range of school practices. The headteacher and governors are rigorous in ensuring that they seek good value when spending but do not fully assess the effectiveness of their spending decisions on raising standards. The school income is high and the cost per pupil is well over the current national average for schools of this kind but the high proportion of pupils with very complex physical and learning needs and the high level of support they need, including specialist resources account for this. In addition, the developing inclusion programme needs additional staff to make it work which the school has to budget for. The school gives good value for money.

58. The training, support and professional development of all staff at the school is excellent and contributes to pupils' achievements because of their better knowledge and understanding of the particular needs of the pupils. The school is well resourced to meet the pupils' needs in terms of the number of teaching and learning support practitioners and has a very good complement of experienced, qualified and highly skilled learning support practitioners. When the school was established two years ago, many staff did not have experience of working with pupils whose physical, learning and medical support needs are so great. Several had limited experience of dealing with pupils whose autism very severely impairs their capacity to learn in a group situation and whose behaviour can be unpredictable and, on occasion, violent. Governors were clear at the outset that a significant proportion of the school's budget should be used to support staff training and development. This commitment has been protected in subsequent budget allocations. This decision has clearly been very effective in moving the staff team forward to a position where they are confident in teaching across the age and ability range of the pupils.

59. A key part of the success of this school improvement priority is the excellent induction, ongoing staff development support and excellent performance management procedures. These are firmly embedded in the school's work, and discussions with large groups of learning support practitioners in both sites confirmed that all staff value greatly the approach taken by the Headteacher and her leadership team very highly. Staff feel personally valued, that they are part of a real team despite the split site. The inclusive principles which characterise the school are very evident in the approach to support and development of staff. Everyone takes part.

60. Teachers who lead subject development working parties feel well supported to do so. The performance development interviews are all carefully analysed to identify the personal and professional development priorities for staff. These interviews are held with every member of staff throughout the school and staff feel these have strongly developed their positive attitudes towards their work and the school. This analysis leads to a wide and varied programme of training and development work that continually strives to develop the specialist expertise the school needs and many staff are supported on higher education courses. The recently appointed staff development co-ordinator is very well supported by the headteacher and deputy headteacher and has a clear view of the further development of the school and its staff.

61. The accommodation provided by the two school buildings is poor which limits the range of learning opportunities. The headteacher and staff have worked hard to develop an attractive and welcoming environment in buildings which are cramped and lack the full range of appropriate facilities needed for this group of pupils. Whilst classrooms are generally satisfactory in size, access to toilet facilities and the need for large pieces of equipment to be stored in learning areas restricts the opportunities to develop activities in a number of areas of the curriculum. Facilities for physical education are unsatisfactory overall as the halls are used for dining and there is little proper storage which means that equipment is accumulated around the edges of them. The hydrotherapy pool is a valued and well-used facility for pupils to develop a range of water skills which are taught by well-qualified staff. There is insufficient outdoor space for physical education and indoor areas are limited by the lack of storage space in other parts of the school. There are no designated areas for music, design technology or art. Libraries on both sites, whilst well kept are too small to provide learning areas for pupils. Accommodation for children under 5 is poor often restricting movement but staff have been successful in making the best use of the space they have.

62. Resources are satisfactory overall but there is too much variation between subjects. In music resources are excellent and for children under 5 they are very good. History and geography resources are unsatisfactory and those for information and communication technology and design technology are poor.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

63. In order to build on what the school has achieved so far, the headteacher, staff and governors should now:

- (1) Review the time allocated to religious education in Key Stage1 so that the planned curriculum can be taught and pupils can build on prior learning in Key Stage 2.
- (2) Ensure that all staff is given up to date training in child protection procedures.
- (3) Further develop governors involvement in actively monitoring the work of the school by making focused visits, for example, to monitor specific targets from the SIP and giving a written report to the full governing body and in monitoring the effect of specific spending decisions on pupils' achievements.
- (4) Continue to develop the curriculum so that all subjects have relevant schemes of work based on the National Curriculum and which meet the needs of all pupils: continue to develop the role of the subject co-ordinator to more rigorously monitor what is being taught, when it is taught and how it is taught so that there is visible continuity and progression between units within the topics.
- (5) Ensure that assessment procedures are manageable and do not involve too many different formats recording similar information; ensure that assessment information is effective in that it can clearly demonstrate pupils' progress and areas for development.
- (6) Work with the LEA to improve the accommodation for pupils so that it meets pupils' needs more effectively without limiting the curriculum and pupils' care needs.

In addition to the key issues above, the governors should include the following minor issue as part of the action plan;

- Continue to develop pupils' ICT skills and use them more consistently across the curriculum.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	67
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	14	24	23	3	0	0
Percentage	4	21	36	34	4	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	99
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	45

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	28

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	10.07	School data	0.65

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	47	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	8	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: YN – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6
Average class size	8

Education support staff: YN – Y6

Total number of education support staff	42
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1264

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	1752969
Total expenditure	1597821
Expenditure per pupil	18579
Balance brought forward from previous year	155820
Balance carried forward to next year	69722

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	99
Number of questionnaires returned	35

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	23	3	0	3
My child is making good progress in school.	69	26	3	3	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	57	37	0	3	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	40	3	0	6
The teaching is good.	83	14	3	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	80	20	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	86	14	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	26	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	80	20	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	80	17	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	69	11	6	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	71	17	6	0	0

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

64. The provision for children in the nursery and reception classes is good. The strengths include the predominantly very good teaching for nursery-aged children and the very effective teamwork between teachers and the well-informed Learning Support Practitioners. This results in high quality provision for children. Adults constantly talk with children to reinforce spoken language; they react immediately to children so that every little bit of new learning is maximised. Care is taken to ensure that children from homes where English is an additional language are well supported in their learning.

65. Children come into the school with an increasingly diverse range of learning difficulties, and the rapidly increasing number of children admitted, combined with the introduction of the Foundation Stage Curriculum for children under five has presented the school with an organisational issue which has been addressed successfully. The curriculum is broad and balanced offering good learning opportunities for all children. The school is sensibly prioritising development work and the curriculum focus for the Foundation Stage has been directed to communication and mathematical development. Teachers have adapted their planning for the new curriculum however there are some instances where it is unimaginative showing a lack of confidence especially in teaching the reception aged children which leads to missed learning opportunities. The school places a very strong emphasis on inclusion, wherever possible giving children new experiences in other schools, welcoming visiting schools to join organised activities or providing opportunities for children to take part in planned activities in other classes. The overall good teaching with many strengths means that children experience a challenging curriculum that is varied and appropriate for their needs.

66. During school hours children receive additional support from physiotherapists and speech therapists and learning support practitioners reinforce the therapy exercises within the classroom when appropriate. The high level of staffing is effective because it allows children's physical needs to be managed without disruption to their learning. The accommodation is poor and the rooms have insufficient storage space for the large equipment and mobility aids used by the children, to the extent that classrooms can be very cluttered and adults work in confined spaces. Space is limited and when the music teacher was encouraging children to listen carefully, other staff had to use the room as an access route causing distraction to the lesson. Adults are resourceful and do their absolute best to overcome the accommodation issues which they have not allowed to become a barrier to children's learning. Staff make the best use of the very good range of toys and learning resources. The home-school diaries are an important link with parents so that teachers, LSPs, therapists and parents provide can maintain a consistent approach to children's care and education.

Personal, social and emotional development

67. Children achieve very well and this reflects the quality of teaching in this area. All adults foster children's personal and social skills at every opportunity. Children begin to develop an understanding of the daily routines especially the 'greetings' at the start of the day. In these sessions children learn the names of the rest of the class and develop an understanding of turn-taking as each child is greeted by the teacher and responds to their own names verbally, using electronic switches or signing. These sessions make a delightful start to the day and ensure all children are settled and ready to learn. Children with significant difficulties begin to take an interest in what is happening around them.

68. Throughout lessons children are encouraged to think by making choices or decisions about the toys they use or songs to be sung. Snack-time is also used to encourage interactions such 'thumbs up', smiles and verbal responses. Adults praise children reassuring them so they understand they have been successful in 'good looking', 'good sitting' or good listening. Good use is made of lunchtime not only to provide food for the children but also to establish relationships between adults and children who require support with eating. A high level of support is required for so many children who are not independent eaters although where possible children are encouraged to eat independently and to interact with adults. After lunch outside play is well organised and good use is made of the sensory play area and the wheeled toys to amuse and stimulate the children. Throughout the day children's hygiene needs and these are dealt with sensitively and children always treated with affection and dignity, thus contributing to their social development well. Positive attitudes are constantly reinforced and throughout the department adults model turn taking, listening and responding to children and this helps children to learn how to be kind to each other.

Communication, language and literacy

69. A great deal of emphasis is rightly placed on improving children's ability to communicate and children achieve very well. An appropriate range of communication methods are used so children can develop speech or become confident in signing or using symbols or pictures as an effective method of communication. Adults promote the appropriate use of objects of reference as a basis for children to understand the need to communicate. For example they take plastic dinner plates to the dining room to exchange for a meal, children's photographs are used as part of the daily registration process and to help children recognise themselves as members of a group. For many children, the prime focus is to encourage them to engage in looking at whoever is talking to them and making a response. Throughout lessons adults instigate rhymes and repetitive songs as a method of improving children's listening skills and encouraging them to join in. The high level of staffing means that when children make a positive response or choice, there is always an adult to praise and encourage further responses. Higher attaining children are beginning to recognise the 's' sound at the beginning of snake and the 'm' at the beginning of mouse. Nursery children developed their attention span, gained an understanding of story and enjoyed themselves immensely when they were involved in their sensory story based on *The Fairground*. Teacher's very good imaginative planning and preparation results in children participating in the experience in very practical ways. More able children recognise their favourite Tellytubbie characters as the dolls are presented to them and very good use is made of the teacher-made books for children to understand that written symbols have a meaning. Children learn to anticipate the next event in a familiar text and develop their language from single words to a short sentence. They learn to make choices by using pictures or symbols and some are learning to make marks on paper as a pre-writing skill and to develop pencil skills. Good links with speech therapists support the classroom activities and encourage children to develop their communication skills.

Mathematical development

70. Children are given good opportunities to develop early mathematical skills with teaching and learning good overall. This is done predominantly through songs, or through activities such as tabletop puzzles. Children learn the routines of the classroom and so start to develop an idea of order. Teachers clearly indicate the start and finish of activities, thus reinforcing the idea of routines and time. In one class two nursery aged children had great fun learning positional language as with their teacher they sat *in* the box, *on* the blanket and *under* the table. Teachers make good use of toys to make songs such as *Five Currant Buns* and *Six Speckled Frogs* more relevant. Children become aware of number as with adult support they count on their fingers. With varying levels of support they learn to build towers of up to seven bricks and complete five-piece puzzles. Older and higher attaining children can count

to five, match identical shapes such as circles, triangles and squares, and are learning the names of these shapes. They post the shapes into shape boxes and are also able to match objects to pictures. Appropriate use is made of available computer programs so children can use the touch screen facility to make patterns.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

71. Children are given good worthwhile opportunities to explore and investigate; as a result they achieve well in this area of learning. Good teaching encourages children to observe their environment for example by looking at the weather and choosing the symbol for the daily weather chart. In one very good lesson nursery children made excellent responses as they prepared a surprise party for *Molly Dolly*. Balloons were blown up, texture explored and amusement expressed when the balloon 'escaped'. Children explored the texture of jelly in messy play, watching the wobble and tasting the jelly. The game of *Pass the Parcel* was used effectively to encourage children to guess from the shape what might be in the parcel and the candles on the birthday cake were counted. A feeling of anticipation was evident in the children as they sang *Happy Birthday* before sharing *Molly Dolly's* birthday cake. The careful planning and total involvement of all staff made this lesson so successful. Photographs and records show that children have benefit from visitors to the school and from visits to for example Lichfield Cathedral and the Black Country Museum. Birthdays are celebrated as are a range of significant festivals including Eid, Diwali, the Chinese New Year and Red Nose Day. Photographs show children planting flowers, experiencing the taste of treacle and coleslaw and investigating the power of air leaving a balloon when the class made Jet Balloon Rockets during their topic on Toys. In the topic on New Beginnings, children watched as a real baby was bathed and then used classroom dolls to practice bathing their own baby. Before lunch children sing their *Thank You* song and quiet thinking times are created by teachers, the closing of window blinds and lighting a candle contributing to the peaceful atmosphere. As a result of physical or verbal prompts from adults children learn to activate switches, toys and computer touch screens.

Physical development

72. Children gain in confidence in their physical skills and learning these is promoted effectively through good teaching and by support from the physiotherapy team. Throughout the day teachers and LSPs are aware of the children's wide range of physical needs. Detailed physiotherapy plans mean that children benefit from their regular sessions with the physiotherapists to improve muscle tone and flexibility. Children's targets include learning to eat and drink and walk independently and good use is made of the hydrotherapy pool to support movement and relaxation. There is a structured programme of achievement awards ranging from children learning to accept being in the water with an adult, gaining confidence in water play to swimming independently. All children have swimming targets and respond well to the calm atmosphere, the caring support of the adults and they make good progress. LSPs are also involved in delivering Tac Pac which is a sensory activity planned to stimulate children's responses and interest. In one session children were massaged with oil in calm relaxing atmosphere and for other children adults use the light and sound room very effectively to create sensory experiences with feathers, chains and mood music. Children become aware of their own bodies and show their enjoyment with smiles and squeaks for attention. In class children press switches or pull strings to activate toys, learn to drop or throw beanbag toys as part of counting activities and practise threading games. They are encouraged to take part and copy an adult's movements in action songs such as *Wind the Bobbin Up*. Fine motor skills are developed through activities such as cutting and sticking and playing with construction toys. In a very good session where two children were learning to sit on, under or in classroom objects the teacher further increased children's physical skills by encouraging them to focus the camera and press the button to take photos of each other. All

staff are conscientious in encouraging as much physical independence as possible and at the same time maintaining a safe, caring and secure learning environment for the children.

Creative development

73. Children are given good opportunities to work creatively in different media and with adult support they experiment with paint, chalk and pencil. Imaginative teaching enables children to use remote control cars, pull alongs and dolls to create track patterns in pools of paint within their topic of *Tracks and Trails*. The school has very good links with the local Creative Partnership, and children enjoyed using a range of junk materials to make puppets with shredded paper hair. Other children had great fun as they explored the texture of 'gloop' (a mixture of foam and paint) making patterns and shapes and examining their gloop-covered faces in the mirror. A further link with the Creative Partnership was successful as children from a local school enjoyed a puppet show and joined in the subsequent puppet workshop creating wooden spoon puppets and enjoying imaginative play. Parents were welcomed to the whole session and within this happy creative atmosphere were able to participate in their children's learning. Throughout the day teachers instigate singing to support teaching number and early literacy skills. Teachers use songs well to let children know the start and finish of sessions which helps their understanding of time. Additionally children have very good quality music lessons from a visiting teacher and these lessons are typified by a lively pace with a variety of activities so children can sing familiar songs, recognise there can be fast and slow music and make their own rhythms with favourite instruments. Children's responses are very good as they share their instruments, copy the lead given by the adults, concentrate and participate with enjoyment.

74. Assessment by teachers in the Foundation Stage is good. They set very specific targets based on Individual Educational Plans and in the areas of learning. The targets in mathematical development, personal and social development and communication skills are carefully considered. The very good teamwork between teachers and LSPs means that everyone has a very good knowledge of children's existing skills and work consistently throughout the day to support children in achieving their learning and behavioural targets. Ongoing records are kept meticulously so that staff can review children's progress and move on to the next target. This means that teaching is focused and challenging and as a result children achieve well. The existing system is detailed with continued assessment throughout the day, and all adults have a very good understanding of the skills the children already have and the next steps in their progression. Planning is carefully based on individual children's individual skills and needs.

ENGLISH

75. Pupils make good progress on English. Progress in speaking and listening and in reading is better than in writing. Overall teaching across the school is good. In some lessons it is very good or better.

76. In speaking and listening, pupils of all ages make very good progress because of the high emphasis it is given and also because of the range of methods used so that all pupils are involved. Teachers and support staff place a strong emphasis on communication skills and use a range of alternative and augmentative communication systems. Effective use of symbols enables pupils to make positive contributions to lessons and other activities. Where teaching is good or better signing is used to support pupils' developing communication skills but this is not used consistently across the school. Teachers make good use of a range of special communication aids such as switches. Pupils in Year 1 listen attentively to the story of *The Owl Babies* and some join in familiar phrases from the story. In Year 2 pupils enjoy listening to and joining in the story of *the Gingerbread Man* using voices and signing. Some

pupils can build a short sentence to identify what another is wearing in dressing up game. By the time pupils reach Year 6 they make very good contributions to a song writing activity, actively participating in the writing of the lyrics and in identifying and clarifying signs for objects and emotions. They listen carefully to the one another and to the adults leading the group. As pupils move through the school they become more confident and effective communicators. This is in response to the wide range of opportunities provided for them in lessons and in other school activities.

77. In reading pupils make good progress overall. Signing and the use of symbols are used well to support the development of reading. This is particularly so in good lessons where Big Books are used. Big Books are further developed through the addition of symbols to the text, which supports pupils' developing reading skills. Teachers read the stories well, enthusiastically and with expression providing good models for pupils. In Year 2 pupils can anticipate the next event in a familiar story and join in enthusiastically with the repeated phrases. In a group activity they match picture to objects in the class vegetable shop. Sensory stories are used well to enable pupils with significant difficulties to develop early reading skills. By Year 6 some pupils can read a number of words and can begin to build words using single sounds. Although pupils across the school make good progress in reading the progress of some higher attaining pupils is insufficient because although pupils are given opportunities to read and respond to a range of texts but the use of Big Books is not sufficiently well developed to provide pupils with opportunities to explore language structure and vocabulary.

78. In writing pupils make satisfactory progress. Younger pupils prepare for writing through mark making activities using chalk and felt tip pens. Pupils at early stage of writing are encouraged to draw shapes and flowing lines. Older pupils practice pencil control by drawing between two lines and colouring pictures. By Year 6 some pupils are beginning to form letters and to write under an adults words.

79. Teaching in English is good overall but is inconsistent ranging from satisfactory in some lessons to excellent in others. In very good lessons work is clearly planned to challenge all pupils. Teachers are enthusiastic and communicate this to the pupils who in turn show interest and involvement in the lesson. For example in one very good lesson where pupils were identifying what had changed one group of pupils identified the item changed whilst another was expected to sign or choose the correct symbol. In one excellent lesson the teaching team ensured all pupils contributed by the provision of sensitive and well-focused support. This enabled the group to work together to refine the lyrics of a song written earlier. All pupils were involved in the activity and concentrated well throughout. The resulting work was recognised as successful by both staff and pupils. Literacy work is planned to follow the structure on the Literacy Hour and where teaching is good or better the lesson begins with a clear introduction and concludes with a review of what has been done. Where teaching is less than effective activities are planned in too little detail and are not sufficiently challenging to ensure pupils remain interested. Learning support practitioners are very well informed and know the pupils well. They provide effective support in lessons and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning.

80. The good curriculum for English contributes well to pupils' progress. The school is working hard to continue to develop the subject in response to the needs of the pupils. Teaching staff, working closely with other professional colleagues particularly speech and language therapists pay particular attention to the development of speaking and listening skills. Co-ordination is good and significant work has been undertaken to develop this area including training for staff in a variety of communication strategies such as signing and the use of symbols. The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is well used across the school and adds significantly to the development of pupils' communication skills. The use

of signing and other strategies including the use of ICT is less consistent. All other aspects of the English curriculum are currently being managed by a temporary co-ordinator. The subject is appropriately monitored according to the school's policy. Assessment procedures are in place but its use is developing in line with teaching expertise. Speech and Language therapists make a significant contribution to this process. There are currently a number of different assessment approaches relating to communication strategies in addition to the use of a nationally recognised method of measuring progress. This results in a large quantity of information on pupil's progress and the co-ordinator is rightly reviewing its use in the light of a system currently under discussion for use across the school.

MATHEMATICS

81. Pupils overall achieve well in this subject. This is because priority has been given to implementing and developing the mathematics curriculum and because teachers' planning is tightly focused on pupils' individual mathematical targets. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented and teachers plan their lessons carefully to meet pupils' individual needs. Good progress has been made in implementing the strategy however there is still room for development in planning plenary sessions

82. By the end of Year 2 more able pupils can reliably count in rote to five and match number symbols to the correct group of objects. They can sort objects by size and colour and learn to make repeat patterns for example red, blue, red. With adult support and using teddies the more able pupils learn to count on. Pupils who have more complex learning difficulties are introduced to number and colour with adults singing songs and rhymes to familiarise pupils with numerals. These children allow adults to count on their fingers to help gain an understanding number. Pupils continue to build on their earlier skills and by Year 6 more able pupils recognise numbers up to a hundred, can add up using their fingers rather than counters and can do unaided tens and units addition. These pupils know the difference between addition and subtraction and can work out amounts using one and two pence coins. In gaining an understanding of time more able pupils can draw both 'hands' on a clock face to show 'o'clock. During an inclusion programme one pupil was able to work on simple fractions, odd and even numbers and simple grid work. Pupils enjoy role-play in the class shop learning to exchange symbols for items. Pupils who have most complex learning difficulties require a high level of individual support and learn to hold and squeeze a toy to produce a sound and respond to the sounds generated by the computer.

83. Teaching is good overall. In Key Stage 1 it is consistently good and in Key Stage 2 ranges from satisfactory to very good. The very good teaching seen in the ASD group was characterised by high, firm expectations of behaviour and was very tightly structured. The staffing level meant that each pupil was able to work individually with an adult throughout the lesson, the organisation required pupils to move to different adults depending on the targeted activity. The lesson required a high level of preparation in ensuring all the resources were available for the range of mathematical activities so that the lesson pace was maintained and pupils were able to achieve very well. Where teaching is good, teachers have good subject knowledge; the lessons are well planned and imaginative with appropriate mathematical activities for all pupils. However in some classes the higher attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged, the plenary session is underdeveloped and there is some slippage of time when pupils are not learning. Teachers use information technology to support learning in mathematics, however there is a need to develop this aspect of the curriculum with additional computer software. Adults use praise appropriately to reassure and motivate pupils. All lessons benefit from the good quality teamwork between teachers and well-informed LSPs.

84. The curriculum in mathematics is broad, balanced and relevant based on the National Curriculum. Staff have worked hard and successfully to plan their scheme of work to combine the national documents with the 'P' level assessment criteria used in schools for

pupils who have significant learning difficulties. Teachers are able to track pupils' progress against the 'P' levels. The ongoing assessment made by teachers while they work with pupils is good and properly informs their planning for the next stage in pupils' learning. A good start has been made in collecting and collating information concerning the levels pupils are working at but it is not yet used to monitor progress over time. Resources for the subject are good and used well to encourage pupils' learning. The co-ordinator has a clear vision of future developments in the subject, manages the subject well and has a good grasp of the strengths and areas for development within mathematics.

SCIENCE

85. Pupils' achievement in science is satisfactory. The school has a good curriculum structure that has now been in place for just over a year and assessment procedures are satisfactory. The curriculum co-ordinator has a clear vision for the future development of the subject and provides very good leadership. Whilst the quality of teaching and learning observed during the inspection was satisfactory overall, there remains a significant weakness in teachers' choice of appropriate activities.

86. By the end of Year 2, lower attaining pupils are able to use their senses to explore materials. They can track a torch in the school's multi-sensory room and show a clear reaction when the torch is turned off. Well-kept teacher records for the past six months indicate that one pupil prefers calmer music to loud changeable music, and has made good progress in his scientific understanding. Higher attaining pupils are able to explain how toys move and plants grow. Higher attaining pupils can name the basic external parts of plants indicating with enthusiasm leaves and roots. Pupils of all abilities have begun to develop good investigative skills and will experiment with a range of materials, particularly where they find the activities exciting, stimulating and accessible.

87. By the end of Year 6, lower attaining pupils have experienced handling different materials from trees and plants. They are able to indicate simple likes and dislikes and can make simple choices. One pupil was able to choose, by eye pointing to a symbol, which substance she would like an LSP to use in an experiment. Higher attaining pupils can compare materials and, in a linked activity with design technology, could predict which cloth would make the best umbrella. Pupils can name external parts of their bodies, recognises their senses and functions.

88. Teaching in science ranges from good to unsatisfactory but is satisfactory overall. Pupils' learning follows the same pattern. Where teaching is better there is a very good match of activity to the abilities of the pupils, pupils are managed well and lessons progress at a brisk pace to maintain the attention of the pupils. A very good example of this was with a Year 2 class. Here the teacher introduced a lesson on changing materials by allowing pupils to investigate the frozen "ice-pops" used in the previous lesson. The lesson quickly moved on to observing the effect of heating on chocolate. Support staff had been very well prepared and ensured that pupils of all abilities accessed the activity. As a result pupils showed high levels of concentration and learnt well. A consistent feature of lessons that are less well taught is the unsatisfactory match of activity to the needs of the pupils. This was evident in a Year 5 lesson where nine pupils had to wait a long time for their opportunity use one of the two available bowls to mix materials in water. This led to disruptive behaviour and learning for the majority of pupils was less than it should have been

89. The leadership of the subject is very good and the curriculum co-ordinator has worked exceptionally hard to create a very detailed curriculum document to support the subject. With the support of an allocated LSP "buddy" she has also developed a good range of resources. These are very well organised, linked to individual medium term curriculum

plans and are greatly appreciated by colleagues. Satisfactory assessment and recording procedures are in place and the quality of information provided to parents at pupils' annual reviews is good. The subject co-ordinator has rightly recognised the need for further development of assessment to include the up-to-date "P" scales from QCA and to ensure that the subject conforms to the grading of achievement structure adopted in other subjects. Evidence from pupil records indicates learning experiences for some pupils are repetitive and further monitoring of long-term planning is required. Accommodation for teaching science is satisfactory, although the lack of vinyl floored areas in some classrooms restricts opportunities for pupils to undertake potentially messy experiments. The subject co-ordinator has recognised the need for ICT to be used to support and extend pupils learning.

ART AND DESIGN

90. Pupil's achievements in art and design are satisfactory. By the age of seven pupils have had experience of using a range materials and techniques to make collages, random 3 dimensional shapes and they use their hands, leaves, sponges and blocks to make a variety of print patterns. They also explore how the texture of paint changes when other ingredients are mixed with it. Pupils are given the opportunity to work with clay to make a hand print. They explore handling the material and are introduced to a variety of tools to use to make different effects. This is an enjoyable experience for them and they are pleased with their work. Another group explored the different textures of a range of materials to make a "feely" picture and they chose the ones they liked best. Language skills are reinforced when talking about the different qualities of the materials, for example, smooth, shiny, crinkly and rough. By the age of eleven pupils produce pictures in the style of Picasso, Van Gogh and Monet and increase their knowledge and understanding of different techniques. Some learn about tie and dye and how to tie objects into their material using elastic bands. They need a high level of adult support to do this but concentrate well and know what the next step will be. The end effect of producing circular patterns on the material is reinforced by creating circle patterns using paint. Others continue making collages using pasta, shiny paper and material choosing their own materials. Another group enjoy the tactile aspect of making papier mache handling the mixture with enthusiasm. Over time pupils gradually are able to build on skills using paint, paper and a range of other materials using different techniques.

91. Teaching is satisfactory across the school and pupils experience a wide range of art activities. The work in most lessons shows a good knowledge of pupils' special needs and the approaches needed to enable them to be actively involved. Teachers give praise and encouragement to keep pupils on task and interested. Most pupils work productively with help and show pleasure in their work. Teachers use art to encourage pupils to work co-actively and also to demonstrate a reaction to both new and more familiar activities. All pupils have the opportunity to experience the activities planned for in each lesson but the few more able pupils are not always given the guidance to extend their ideas or develop skills at a faster rate. Alternative activities are available for pupils completing the main task. Sometimes pupils are given too much help, often so that a more acceptable piece of work is produced.

92. The co-ordination of art and design is developing well in line with the school's procedures and although the co-ordinator is not an art specialist the task of developing the subject has been done with a high level of professionalism. The strength is in the development of an appropriate policy and in planning what should be taught to different year groups. However this is still at an embryonic stage and it is planned to be put into practice during the next academic year. Currently teachers' plans and evaluations are monitored but assessment is also at an early stage which makes it difficult to acquire a secure and full picture about how well pupils are achieving. Pupils are assessed against P levels using an appropriate code to specify the level of independence in completing the task. Resources are satisfactory and the school uses outside agencies, such as the Creative Partnership, Bostin

Arts and Art Noise, very well to extend pupil experiences. An art therapist has recently been employed and works with pupils with ASD. An evaluation is being carried out to consider the effectiveness of her work on the behaviour and achievements of the pupils she works with.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

93. There is not enough evidence to judge the achievement and progress or teaching securely across the school as a whole. Many teachers lack confidence in how best to adapt the subject for the pupils with complex needs, particularly the designing element of the subject and how to plan activities which let pupils use a range of tools, equipment and materials. This is because the school has prioritised the development of subjects and work is about to start on design and technology this term

94. This lack of confidence also shows in teachers' reports on progress in the subject for Annual Reviews which tend to describe projects and pupils' enjoyment rather than explain what they are learning and understand. By Year 2, more able pupils are beginning to make choices of the vegetables they want to include in order to design a salad, selecting the correct pictures and identifying their chosen vegetables ones to put on the plate. They use the play area to find real vegetables in the vegetable shop and look forward to eating their salad at lunchtime. Pupils with more complex difficulties apply some shapes and glitter to folded card to make a fan. Records show that higher attaining pupils can make clear choices for an animal design and less able pupils can, with help, place the four legs correctly on their animals.

95. In Year 6, records show that higher attaining pupils can follow instructions when using a cooker and are aware of the danger associated with using heat to cook. Year 5 pupils knead bread dough into a roll and choose between 2 kinds of seed topping, using their name cards to identify the position of their roll in the tray before baking. In Year 6, they bind sticks together for a kite and choose paint to apply to fabric to make a kite. Pupils with autism use a large construction kit to build a den. Some pupils are able to fit the rods and joints together independently and others can communicate what they want staff to do for them. The construction itself is big enough for pupils to enter and enjoy.

96. The main strengths are good general teaching skills, including managing pupils' behaviour, choosing activities that they can participate in and supporting their communication and choice making. The principal weakness is the lack of subject knowledge about how pupils can be challenged to design something individually that they could use or explore how things work. Some activities are indistinguishable from art and design work. Where teaching is less than satisfactory, lack of experience in working with the very specific difficulties the pupils' experience limits pupils' engagement and achievement. Pupils who can communicate verbally are given a switch instead and insufficient time is given for them to make a response. A group painting activity requires the pupils to wait for their turn, which these pupils find hard and as a result they lose concentration and focus. Training in the key communication, signing skills and classroom organisation will help. Not all teachers understand how pupils with complex physical and learning needs can develop designing and making skills, using a range of tools and materials.

97. The newly appointed co-ordinator is keen to develop the subject and is well supported in this work by the senior management team. Learning outcomes have been developed and the priority for development now is an understanding of how the key skills can be built up over time and providing a range of practical projects which can be used in class.

HUMANITIES

98. The school's provision for humanities is satisfactory. Pupils across the school make satisfactory progress in history and in geography. The two subjects are taught alternately over half a term. Only three lessons were observed during the inspection and other evidence was drawn from teachers planning, work and reports in pupil's files and other subject documents.

99. In history pupils in Year 1 are looking at toys old and new. They compare the fur and arms of old and new teddy bears. Handling the toys helps pupils to decide which is old and which is new and to begin to develop an understanding of the passing of time. In Year 2 pupils have explored the topic 'Me as I am now'. In one lesson Year 5 looked at the things that happened during the 1960s. They talked about space rockets and moon landings and a group researched the area of space travel and recorded what they had discovered. Another group used the Internet to find out about the World Cup in 1966. Year 6 pupils have learned about Ancient Greece. In geography younger pupils have explored the school grounds and used objects of reference to identify and recall where they have visited. Older pupils are learning about transport. In a Year 4 lesson some pupils visited the local railway station and recorded the number of trains they saw. On the journey back to school they surveyed lorries on the road. The group that remained in school made sailing boats which they made move through the water by blowing on the sail. With the learning support practitioners they made hovercrafts using balloons. All the pupils watched carefully whilst the balloons were blown up and concentrated well when the vehicles began to move around the water.

100. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Where teaching is less effective lessons are not clearly planned to develop important concepts at an appropriate level. In good lessons the adults are enthusiastic and clear about what it is pupils are to learn. In all lessons learning support practitioners provide effective support which contributes to pupils' learning.

101. Management of the subject is currently being overseen by a temporary co-ordinator. Planning is at an early stage of development and further work is written into the school development plan for 2003/2004. There is a policy in place and an interim curriculum which details the topics to be covered by each year group during each term. Assessment procedures are in place but these are not yet detailed sufficiently to track pupils' progress and little evidence has yet been collected to establish a standard for each level of assessment. Resources are unsatisfactory and an audit of what is available would clearly identify the gaps.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

102. Achievement for pupils in the subject is satisfactory overall, but there are strong and weak areas of this work at present. Achievement for pupils in one key aspect of information and communications technology is good. This good work and progress is seen when pupils use communications technology such as switches to express themselves. In conjunction with signing and the use of symbols, information and communications technology makes a strong contribution to pupils' learning and personal development. In other elements of the subject – those concerned with using the computer to perform a range of actions, produce text and search for information – pupils are not yet achieving as well as they could. There is still much to do to make sure that teachers feel confident about how to teach the pupils the skills they need and use the computer in class to enrich their teaching of other subjects of the curriculum. During the inspection, computers were used rarely in subject work.

103. By year 6, most pupils are becoming familiar with the computer and the majority of pupils who are physically able to, can turn it on, open and close programs and manipulate a mouse. The most able pupils, who are also readers, can identify and use appropriate software programs for leisure use and to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. They recall information about the Internet and select the correct icon to launch the web browser,

taking great pleasure from their first experience of finding what they want on the web. After listening to the teacher's explanation of the Internet, one pupil exclaims "It's got the whole *world* on it!" – an observation confirmed with their first successful use of the search engine to find the 'Tweenies'! For the pupils with the most complex physical and learning difficulties, the staff's confident and consistent use of switches enriches their experience of school and of learning. They use switches to respond in greeting sessions and to indicate their participation and understanding at other times. They also use them to operate equipment and electronic toys and through this patient work many develop and show an understanding of cause and effect. They also use the switches to control the environment in the sensory room, which gives them great pleasure.

104. Information and communications technology has only just been added to timetables as a special subject, and only some classes had lessons during the inspection. Two whole class lessons and two sessions of small group work with pupils with at each end of the wide ability range in the school were seen. The most effective teaching showed meticulous planning for a group with extremely diverse needs, and excellent use of the higher staff numbers in the class to make sure that every pupil is closely supported. A good range of activities and organisation enables all pupils to maintain their concentration and focus. The most able pupils take photographs of the school's work choosing their subjects effectively and then with support print the images. In both the class sessions the teachers select learning targets for each child and precision teach to meet these.

105. For some of the youngest pupils with complex physical and learning needs, a session with two pupils offers time for the teacher to focus on the effectiveness of their switch use and further her understanding of how to help them make progress. The same degree of teacher attention with two of the highest achievers in years 5 and 6 is well used to explore use of the Internet and e-mail. Part of the success of this session is the quality of explanation, questioning and checking and consolidating pupils' knowledge and understanding. Followed up by practical experimentation and a good review of the lesson at the end, this focused work with pupils of similar ability is effective. Records and annual reviews show that all pupils are working with information and communications technology and making some progress during their time in school. Because teachers' own confidence and subject knowledge still needs to develop, the school is not yet providing a strongly structured programme that will build up pupils' skills systematically. This is a major and appropriate school improvement target for the coming year.

106. Considerable investment has been made in equipment but some significant deficits remain. The computers on each site are not fully networked and so teachers and pupils do not have access to a sufficiently wide range of software or to e-mail communications internally and externally. A much broader range of communications and control devices is needed to support pupils with the most complex physical and learning needs, many of whose physical limitations are still not easily overcome with the equipment available. The strength of communications using simple technological aids throughout the school, and the many examples observed of effective individual pupil communications suggests that a good foundation is in place for the progress needed in the subject.

MUSIC

107. Music is a strength of the school. During the inspection, all the pupils achieved very well in lessons, and there were many examples of excellent individual achievement and personal progress. The provision the school makes for the subject is excellent, and includes music therapy and a recently formed school orchestra. A specialist teacher from the Youth Music Service leads the lessons and the class teachers and learning support practitioners

work closely with her to help all the pupils give of their best. The curriculum has been developed by a school working party, draws closely on the National Curriculum, but with considerable refinement to ensure that the complex needs of pupils are fully met within lessons. The range of activities pupils experience over time is broad, imaginative and draws on music from many traditions and cultures. Everyone greatly enjoys these lessons and the participation of pupils across the range of ability and learning need is very evident. The range of tuned and untuned instruments available for pupils to experiment with is excellent.

108. By Year 2, most of the pupils are familiar with the structure of their music work and understand that the introductory and closing pieces of music require them to sit quietly and listen. They have developed an understanding of tempo, that songs have verses and they can respond at the appropriate time. In songs they have been learning they can anticipate the next verse and the most able pupils sing or sign the words with gusto. They play a range of untuned instruments independently or with support and in activities involving movement show that they are able to keep time and produce action and mime that matches the words of the verse. One of the more able pupils sings a song using signing and dance to enhance her performance and another can confidently identify the correct pictures of percussion instruments played from behind a screen.

109. Pupils with very complex needs often also show anticipation of favourite moments in activities, use switches to respond to greeting songs and show pleasure in the sounds they make when supported to play an instrument. One such pupil, who needs individual intensive intervention for much of the school day, is able to remain with the group for the whole 45 minute lesson, takes a full part, watches others closely and smiles with pleasure when it is his turn to play. Another, who has severe co-ordination difficulties, shows extraordinary concentration and effort to successfully strike the tambour 4 times.

110. By Year 6, the majority of pupils' understanding has developed strongly. The most able pupils have a good understanding of group music-making as well as individual participation, and those who can read make a very good contribution to a group lesson involving animals in the jungle by helping staff read out verses before each chorus. They sing consistently in tune, can provide accurate percussion accompaniments and count in the beats at the start of a song or performance by the orchestra. Across the ability range in years 3 to 6 pupils' confidence and understanding grows each year. Pupils with complex and severe autism face many barriers to learning and interaction. Some of the exceptional personal gains they make are seen strikingly in music lessons. A pupil who dislikes noise at all times has learned how to take part with others and, held safely by his learning support practitioner, he is able to mime an action song involving tigers, bursting into laughter and delight when 'attacked' by another tiger from behind. During the quiet reflection at the end of a lesson, another pupil in this group spontaneously gets up and switches the classroom light off.

111. A number of pupils with very complex physical disabilities and autism receive music therapy, provided by the school from its own resources. A pupil with autism is always keen to start his session and extended musical exchanges between him and the therapist using a range of electronic sounds on the keyboard builds into a long 'discussion'. He responds, sometimes in kind, to different kinds of sounds – riffs, chords and bangs, and the communication is sustained and engaging. With close support from his learning support practitioner, he is helped towards learning how to pluck at a guitar rather than grab. Back in his class lesson, when he is the last to have his turn to play an instrument his impatience is palpable, but he responds to her direction, waits his turn and then plays the xylophone with unbridled energy and joy. The whole class celebrates his achievement spontaneously.

112. The quality of the teaching is always very good and often excellent. The specialist teacher is aware of the needs of the pupils and plans activities that match the needs of each group. The very close liaison with class teachers and the learning support practitioner team in each group is central to this success. Her knowledge of the curriculum has been shared with staff in the working group to create the scheme of work with which all staff are familiar. The methods are chosen very well to promote pupils' musical development and address the particular difficulties they face to enable them to fully participate. The pace of each session is crisp and lively, and communications equipment is used effectively to make sure that every pupil can respond to the greeting call at the start of every lesson. One pupil finds speaking loudly difficult in the class setting and by experimenting with a dictating machine to record her call and his sung response she achieves a breakthrough with him. When he hears his voice amplified he giggles along with the group. Later, everyone realises that he is singing at full volume, and then speaking the poems loudly enough to be heard alongside the others. All pupils who need them use switches to play the sung response and time is always given to gain a response. Progress is assessed and recorded for every lesson, and the use of this information to build the next target makes a major contribution to the gains pupils make over time.

113. The management of the subject is very effective. The school co-ordinator supports the subject well, liaising with staff at both sites, ordering resources and providing leadership for the newly formed orchestra. One of the key elements of the subject's success in the school is the effective partnership between staff at all levels focused at all times on the pupils' achievement and progress. The only limitation to what can be offered is the accommodation available to the school. Lack of space in classrooms limits the scope and range of physical activity that can be developed in the musical stories and movement songs. The lack of a specialist area means that the teacher is limited in what she can use to what can be carried from room to room, and as a result there is a ceiling placed on the further development of more able pupils. The teaching by class groups only also prevents some additional work being targeted to meet specific needs and the school could consider reviewing ways of grouping flexibly at times to promote this.

114. The school's aims and commitment to inclusion is lived out in every session of music, provided by the specialist teacher and, more recently, the music therapist. The recognised impact of music upon pupils with complex needs is actively exploited, with every opportunity being taken to find ways for individual pupils to overcome the many barriers to learning that they face. For pupils across the wide range of ability and need, music offers a route by which they can find moments of genuine joy, shared with others. For those with the most severe physical and interaction difficulties, it is providing an arena in which they can, for a period, experience respite from the difficulties they face making sense of the world around them

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

115. Pupils' achievement in physical education is good overall, especially in relation to swimming and hydrotherapy. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and provision for swimming is a considerable strength of the subject. Weaknesses remain in the current curriculum although the school is very well placed to improve this. Accommodation for teaching physical education, particularly on the Coopers Lane site is unsatisfactory.

116. By the end of Year 2, higher attaining pupils can bounce balls in a hoop, follow instructions and perform single actions such as rolling a ball, running or rocking from side to side. In response to clear instructions, the most able pupils are beginning to link movements in a single sequence. Lower attaining pupils can follow simple instructions with the physical

support and prompting of an LSP. Pupils with additional physical disabilities follow detailed motor programmes in addition to taking part in physical education lessons.

117. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils are able to take part in team games, supporting their own side appropriately. They can handle a variety of games equipment safely and follow the simple rules of games. Pupils have gained in confidence and are able to follow basic steps in a dance. In swimming the most able pupils can swim 5 metres without any assistance or aids. Less able pupils can climb, lie and roll, following the instructions of a teacher or LSP. A more able pupil who is able to control his powered wheelchair by a joystick guided his chair through a slalom course and was able to move quickly to an empty mat as part of a warm-up routine.

118. Teaching and learning ranges from good to unsatisfactory and is good overall. A strength of teaching is the contribution made by specialist teachers of swimming, the attached physiotherapists and a visiting dance specialist. Where teaching is best expectations of pupils are high, activities are planned that match the needs of the pupils and sufficient time is given for pupils to practice and extend their skills. As a result pupils' learning is good. Where teaching is unsatisfactory there is a poor match of activity to the needs of the pupils and too little time is made available for pupils to undertake the planned activities. A consistently strong feature of all lessons is the attention paid to the development of pupils' self-care skills. Pupils always change for physical education lessons and they take a pride in the "kit" provided by the school. Pupils' attitudes to physical education are good. They behave well and show great enjoyment for their lessons. Where teaching is best pupils listen carefully, co-operate with their teachers and each other, show very high levels of attention and make good progress.

119. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The curriculum co-ordinator has led a small working party over the past year that has revised the school's interim policy document, curriculum plans and assessment procedures. This very good work is now ready for implementation. The subject is also very well supported by a full-time swimming instructor. She has adapted a number of national accreditation schemes to provide the school with a very good assessment and accreditation scheme.

120. Accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory. The very poor hall on the Coopers Lane site is also a corridor. During one thirty-minute lesson, pupils from Year 1 were interrupted twenty-one times by other staff and pupils moving across the hall. The hall at the Holly Lane site is unsatisfactory for teaching physical education due to the storage of tables and through access to the library. Outside sports facilities on both sites are also unsatisfactory. The school pool provides very good accommodation for teaching swimming and undertaking hydrotherapy. However, limited access for pupils from the Holly Lane site and restricted changing facilities are significant weaknesses.

121. Resources for physical education are satisfactory and better for teaching swimming. Resources at the Holly Lane site are good, offering a range of equipment that is well stored, labelled and maintained. Resources for physical education at the Coopers Lane site are poor, with very limited storage facilities in the school hall.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

122. Pupils' achievement in religious education is satisfactory in Key stage 2 but there is insufficient information to make a secure judgement about achievements in Key Stage 1 because religious education is only taught for half a day a week every half term. This does not give enough time for the planned topics to be taught nor does it allow pupils to build on and consolidate prior learning because of the time interval and also the isolation of the topics. However evidence from pupils' files show that major Christian festivals, Easter and Christmas, are celebrated along with important festivals from some other faiths, such as the festival of Diwali. By Year 11 pupils have learned about important people such as Mother Theresa and have some understanding about different journeys they make and other people make, such as Haj in the Muslim faith and one pupil knew about the journey to Lourdes. Learning about different customs and traditions the contrast in clothing for Christian and Sikh weddings not only emphasised the religious aspect but supported pupils' cultural development and understanding. Some pupils have visited a local church for role play of a baptism when learning about this sacrament..

123. The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory but with some good features especially when visitors join pupils to talk about specific religious symbolism such as special clothes for a Sikh wedding. The artefacts brought in to demonstrate the differences between a Christian wedding and a Sikh wedding really enabled pupils to consolidate their understanding and learning. They handled the clothes and jewellery with great care and enjoyed trying them on. Sometimes however, the religious focus of the lesson is lost as role-play activities go on for too long without any reinforcement of the lesson objective or emphasis on the key vocabulary.

124. Co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory and a scheme of work is being developed in line with Sandwell Agreed Syllabus. Evidence in files suggest that there is insufficient breadth to what pupils are being taught and a more rigorous monitoring system is needed to ensure that the full curriculum is taught and that topics are not repeated. Pupil's progress is assessed against P level descriptors but not consistently. Resources are good for artefacts for the major faiths but a more wider selection appropriate to the abilities of the pupils would be helpful.