

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGHBURY SCHOOL

Rastrick

LEA area: Calderdale

Unique reference number: 107591

Headteacher: Miss P J Sellers

Lead inspector: Alastair Younger

Dates of inspection: 25th - 27th April 2005

Inspection number: 269574

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	2 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	40
School address:	Lower Edge Road Rastrick Brighouse West Yorkshire
Postcode:	HD6 3LD
Telephone number:	01484 716319
Fax number:	01484 721893
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Beryl Fishwick
Date of previous inspection:	5/6/2000

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Highbury is a special community school for boys and girls aged 2 –11. It has several involvements in local and national initiatives and gained the School Achievement Award in 2002. There are 26 boys and 14 girls on roll, a ratio often found in such schools. Ten pupils are under the age of 5. Two pupils come from homes where English is not the main language spoken and are at an early stage of learning the language. All pupils have statements of special educational need, mainly because of their severe or profound learning difficulties, but many pupils have complex and diverse needs, including sensory impairment and autistic spectrum disorders. One pupil is in public care and 15 are entitled to free school meals, though pupils come from varying social backgrounds. Thirteen pupils are involved in activities in other schools and several mainstream pupils attend Highbury for some of their numeracy and literacy lessons.

The school is similar to the one previously inspected but there is a growing number of pupils under the age of five.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23587	Alastair Younger	Lead inspector	Mathematics, art, history, geography.
9837	Roy Walsh	Lay inspector	
10678	Margaret Paull	Team inspector	The foundation stage, science, information and communication technology, music, religious education.
32055	Glan Davies	Team inspector	English, design and technology, physical education, personal, social, health and citizenship education, special educational needs, English as an additional language.

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International
Upperton House
The Avenue
Eastbourne
BN21 3YB

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school, which gives good value for money. Pupils achieve well because they are well taught and are enthusiastic learners. Their learning covers a good range of subjects and the school pays very good attention to their personal development. The school is very well led by the headteacher and management and governance are good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teachers have very high expectations; their planning for lessons is excellent, paying very close attention to the needs of individuals
- Pupils enjoy their learning; most behave very well and show a very keen interest in benefiting from all that the school has to offer
- The headteacher has a very clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and works very effectively with her staff and governors to bring about improvement
- The interpretation of facts to support school self evaluation and demonstrate pupil progress is underdeveloped
- Very strong relationships between pupils and adults and close attention to pupils welfare contribute to the very good care, guidance and support of all pupils
- Strong links with mainstream schools open up many valuable learning opportunities for pupils

There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. As a result of improved teaching, pupils' achievement is better. Improvements recommended by the previous inspection have been made and the school is keenly pursuing a programme of self-improvement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is good. It is very good for pupils in the nursery and reception classes, where pupils make very good progress towards meeting their early learning goals. In the rest of the school, pupils are meeting a high proportion of their learning targets and doing even better in meeting those for their personal development. The needs of pupils vary enormously but the attention that teachers pay to ensuring that targets are very well matched to individuals ensures that all pupils are set tasks which challenge them but are realistically achievable. In Years 1 to 6, achievement is good in English, mathematics, science, religious education and personal, social, health and citizenship education. It is satisfactory in information and communication technology.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very well promoted. Attendance is satisfactory. Most pupils attend very well enabling them to participate in as many learning opportunities as possible but a small minority are giving the school cause for concern over their erratic attendance, which is not always satisfactorily explained to the school. Behaviour, in and out of lessons, is very good and teachers manage infrequent misbehaviour very well. As a result, pupils can relax and enjoy their learning. Pupils' attitudes towards learning and joining in with activities are very positive. Pupils are keen to accept responsibility and respond very well to teachers' efforts to help them become more independent learners.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good. In the nursery and reception classes teaching is very good. Good teaching is spread evenly throughout the rest of the school. The difference is largely accounted for by slightly better use of time and the nursery and reception teachers' very good understanding of the areas of learning for these children. In Years 1 to 6, there is very little difference in the quality of teaching in different subjects. English, mathematics and science are all well taught. This encourages pupils to try their hardest and work hard and as a result they learn well. Teachers' planning of lessons is exceptionally good. It reflects their very high expectations and their attention to meeting the needs of each individual by varying work subtly. Support assistants offer teachers and pupils very effective help. Their roles are very clearly defined by teachers and the assistants bring considerable skill to the care, teaching and support of pupils. The curriculum is good, balancing the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal, social, health and citizenship education well. Although there are a few trips away from the school, and occasional visitors, not enough activities take pupils out of the classroom to introduce them to new learning opportunities in the locality. Great strides have been taken in improving the accommodation, which is now very good. Very good quality resources greatly help teachers to vary learning opportunities to meet the specific needs of individuals. Pupils are very well cared for in a safe environment. Relationships between pupils and adults are a very positive feature of the school and staff pay good attention to pupils' views. Links with parents are good, with parents receiving very good information about school news and organisation. Information about their children's progress is less well conveyed. Strong links with other schools have brought many benefits to pupils, many of whom spend time in mainstream school activities. In a very good initiative, a few mainstream pupils visit Highbury to receive specialist help in improving their numeracy and literacy skills.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is very good and governance and management are good. Governors ensure that statutory requirements are met and are staunch supporters of the school. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school, mainly because of the good information they receive from the headteacher. The headteacher has a very clear understanding of how she wants the school to develop and her main priority, to improve teaching and learning has been very successful. As a result, teachers are growing in confidence and skill. The time is now ripe for teachers to be given more control of the subjects they lead, as they have shown themselves well capable of developing their areas of responsibility. At a time when school self-evaluation is becoming ever more important the evaluation of performance remains relatively unsophisticated. The very good quality information about pupils' progress that the school has gathered is underused in helping the school to fine-tune its drive for improvement and self evaluation and to give parents more precise information about their children's progress.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents express considerable attachment to the school, expressing the view that it has greatly benefited their children. A few feel that the school could make more effort to take their views into account. All of those pupils we spoke to during the inspection had nothing but good to say about the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Devise better ways of interpreting and presenting facts about pupils' achievement and progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is good overall. It is very good in the Foundation Stage.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good system of target setting, against which pupils' achievement is measured.
- Pupils are achieving well in all the most important subjects, except information and communication technology, where achievement is satisfactory. In the Foundation Stage, pupils are achieving very well.
- The school does not have easily accessible evidence to show how different groups are Performing.

Commentary

1. Pupils are meeting with a good degree of success in meeting their individual literacy and numeracy targets. They are meeting with even greater success in meeting their personal development targets. All these targets are set and reviewed midway through each term. They run for a full term so that each set of targets covers a time span of two half-terms separated by a school holiday. This is a good system as it provides good cover for any regression over holidays. All targets are negotiated with parents well in advance of reviews, allowing them to make suggestions and confirm that they agree that the targets are realistic and suitably challenging.

2. First hand evidence, gathered during the inspection, confirms the school's view that pupils are achieving well. Achievement is good in English, mathematics, science and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). It is satisfactory in information and communication technology and good in all of the other subjects where enough information could be gathered to back up the judgement. Pupils in the Foundation Stage are achieving very well as they progress towards their early learning goals. The reliance on first hand evidence is necessary because although the school keeps a close check on individual achievement it does not sufficiently analyse results to demonstrate the relative achievements of different groups of pupils. As a result, there is no easily accessible information about the relative performance of boys or girls or pupils of differing ethnicity. However, analysis of a small sample of individual records suggests that there is no significant difference.

3. Achievement has improved since the previous inspection. This is closely linked to better teaching and learning and an improved curriculum. It means that not only are pupils achieving more but they are also making gains over a wider range of subjects. In schools such as this it is notoriously difficult to judge trends over time. This is because the school population is always changing. The school feels that the attainment of pupils on entry has been falling over the past few years as more and more pupils with complex difficulties are admitted. This certainly seems to be the case but testing of pupils on entry has been slow to be implemented so no hard evidence is available. Nevertheless, it is clear that many pupils are entering the school at a very early level of personal development and learning. On national scales these pupils are at level p1. A few pupils with the most profound and multiple learning difficulties are unlikely to progress much beyond this but a significant number of pupils make rapid progress through the eight p levels to the point where a few are assessed as performing at the early levels of the national curriculum, more or less at the level of pupils in Years 1 and 2 at mainstream primary schools. This represents a good standard of achievement. There is no evidence to suggest that pupils for whom English is an additional language are achieving any differently from the rest of the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils' attendance and punctuality is satisfactory. The school takes positive action to promote attendance.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Nearly all pupils are keen to attend; they work and play with enthusiasm.
- The school works very effectively to promote high standards of behaviour and social development.
- There are many good examples of activities that promote pupils cultural and multicultural development.
- All staff uphold the consistent, positive approach to school routines and behaviour management.

Commentary

4. Pupils are happy to attend. They are enthusiastic about celebrating their own and others' achievements and join in eagerly with activities such as singing, eagerly demonstrating and sharing their enjoyment vocally. Pupils are attentive, eager to answer questions and settle quickly to their work. In the best lessons they are very productive and work well individually, in pairs and in groups, with very good examples observed during English and physical education lessons. As a result of teachers' imaginative topics and activities, pupils become enthused and engrossed in their work.

5. All staff collaborate well to uphold the consistent, positive approach to school routines and behaviour management and as a result, pupils' behaviour throughout the day is very good. Clear, consistent day-to-day classroom routines help pupils to succeed. Good use of praise to highlight self-disciplined attitudes and behaviour in the playground and classroom contribute well to developing the high levels of responsible, social skills and attitudes displayed by pupils. There has been an improvement since the previous inspection

6. Pupils gain a clear understanding of their own and other people's lives, beliefs and feelings, for instance through lively assemblies, when good efforts and deeds are highlighted. Very good provision for cultural development is well demonstrated in the main corridor where the whole school have been involved in making a model and painting of the celebration of the Chinese New Year as well as the celebration of the Hindu festival of 'HOLI'. This sort of activity helps to give pupils the knowledge to develop a greater understanding of different values and lifestyles. Pupils are consulted and given choice, for instance whenever there are new furnishing or play apparatus to be purchased for the school. They are involved in many ways in the running of the school. This experience enables them to learn about how to live and work together amicably in the school and wider community. Very high standards from the time of the previous inspection have been maintained.

7. The rate of pupils' attendance was below the national average in the school year 2002/2003. The figures for the current year show a big improvement and are more in line with national averages for similar schools. What is standing in the way of further improvement is the frequent, unexplained absence of a very small number of pupils. The problem is greater than at the time of the previous inspection. The latest figures, however, together with improved absence monitoring systems are evidence of recent success in the school's effectiveness to improve attendance. There have been no exclusions over the past few years as the school has been determined to manage any problems and ensure the continuity of learning for all its pupils.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	10.3	School data	0.7
National data	N/A	National data	N/A

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good and assessment is satisfactory. In the Foundation Stage, teaching and learning are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning for lessons is exemplary.
- The encouragement given to pupils helps them to work hard.
- Teachers have very high expectations.
- The assessment of individuals is good but it is not sufficiently used to monitor the progress of different groups of pupils and thus inform the modification of longer term planning.

Commentary

8. There has been good improvement in teaching since the previous inspection. Teaching is characterised by an exceptionally high standard of lesson planning. Individual outcomes, closely related to pupils' personal targets, are clearly identified and planned for. Very good attention is paid to classroom organisation and behaviour management, with close reference to the individual behaviour plans of those pupils who experience most difficulty in the classroom. The deployment of support assistants is also carefully planned to ensure that they know exactly what their duties are. In this way, all the groundwork is in place, the classroom team is well briefed and the staff can concentrate fully on helping pupils to learn. This attention to detail ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities to participate in lessons and to achieve as much success as possible. The one, minor weakness in planning is that it does not sufficiently account for the timing of lessons. Several lessons were characterised by a speedy pace for the first two thirds of the lesson, followed by a gradual slowing down to the end. This is partly because of the length of lessons, which at an hour, is stretching pupils powers of concentration and the limits of teachers' inventiveness. This is not the case in the Foundation Stage, where the best use is made of all learning time and a rapid succession of related activities keeps pupils stimulated throughout. This is the main reason why teaching and learning are slightly stronger in that stage than in the rest of the school.

9. Constant encouragement is given to pupils. Their efforts and achievements are picked up quickly by staff, and success is lavishly praised. Pupils who are struggling are offered extra support to help them through their difficulties. In an English lesson for a mixed group of pupils in Years 3,4,5 and 6, the teacher made very good use of a 'smartboard' to help join in with the reading and discussion of the story 'Mrs Honey's Hat'; at every stage, pupils were encouraged to join in whenever they could. Pupils with the greatest difficulty were provided with communication aids such as 'Big Mac' or 'Techtalk' so that they could be fully included. Their responses got very positive, immediate feedback, encouraging them to persevere and recognising their achievements. This is one of the reasons why pupils work so hard and learn well.

10. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils working their hardest. They encourage this by setting challenging, but achievable targets for pupils. Pupils understand that they have to work hard to achieve success and that they will receive all the support they need. A few pupils want a bit more support but teachers are very good at recognising the difference between wanting and needing. This ensures that pupils are expected to work as independently as possible, thus promoting their personal development very well.

11. Teachers use skilled questioning to establish what pupils have understood in each lesson. They also closely monitor pupils' progress in relation to individual targets. This enables them to respond quickly to pupils' needs and to explain clearly to individuals the precise nature of their successes and how they could improve further. Assessment in English and mathematics is good as it is in physical education, design and technology and PSHCE. Therapists offer great support in the precise assessment of pupils' additional needs. The assessment of pupils on entry to the school, to quickly establish what each child already knows, understands and can do is a relative weakness because it does not happen quickly enough and is not instrumental in building up an instant snapshot of each child, from which future progress can be accurately measured. The other weakness of assessment is that whilst the assessment of individual progress is good in Years 1 to 6, the school is not yet using the good information being gathered by teachers to monitor the progress of different groups of pupils. This means that the school lacks the detailed information that it needs to fine-tune teaching programmes and schemes of work to ensure that any differences are addressed.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 27 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	11	12	2	0	0	0

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is good. There are satisfactory opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation and resources are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has now achieved a well-balanced curriculum.
- Curriculum planning is very good, although co-ordination is underdeveloped in some areas.
- The accommodation is very good, but parts of it are underused.

Commentary

12. The school has worked effectively on its curriculum since the last inspection. Curriculum development has been particularly effective in personal and social development, where it has had a very positive impact on all other subjects. Pupils now enjoy a wider range of curricular opportunities in school, for instance through the strengthening of history and geography provision; this is an improvement since the last inspection. There are a few trips out and visitors are occasionally invited in but opportunities are sometimes missed to enrich the curriculum more.

13. Curriculum planning for literacy and numeracy is very good and well established. Very strong links between the different areas of learning in the Foundation Stage classes make children's experiences meaningful and contribute to their higher achievement. Further development of the subject leader role throughout the school is required, to enhance and strengthen development and monitoring of the curriculum. This includes planning for transition between the foundation stage and other classes, which at present is given insufficient attention. This contrasts with the very good preparation of pupils for transferring to other schools, which is greatly enhanced by the promotion of

opportunities for them to attend occasional lessons in those schools and by bringing in pupils from those schools to share certain lessons at Highbury.

14. One of the reasons why pupils enjoy their time in school is because they can all move around it with ease, helped by the very good facilities and resources available. Considerable improvements have been made to the accommodation, greatly helped by generous private funding. New accommodation has relieved pressure on storage facilities and provided a wide range of therapists with specialist accommodation, which is well used to improve opportunities for pupils. Opportunities for using all resources, such as the very good soft play room, are only loosely planned and these facilities are occasionally underused. The new library is another example of a very spacious and good quality resource being underdeveloped and underused at the present time. Governors and managers are fully aware of this and plans are in hand to improve the situation.

Care, guidance and support

The standard of pastoral care provided is very good. Provision for support and guidance based on monitoring is also very good. The school values the views of its pupils and the levels of trust and respect between pupils and staff are excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very friendly and caring environment encourages pupils to do their best.
- Excellent relationships exist between staff and pupils.
- Very good personal support and academic guidance is offered to pupils and pupils' views are keenly listened to.
- Very good arrangements are in place to welcome new pupils.

Commentary

15. There is a very good awareness of the complex needs of pupils and the arrangements for child protection and health and safety are good. Child protection is co-ordinated by experienced and well-trained personnel and update training is provided for staff. Health and safety practice is rigorous and risk assessments are in place for lessons and out-of-school visits. Accident and safety incidents and consequent actions are well recorded. Pupils have been provided with road safety awareness and teachers are keen to stress safe ways of working in subjects such as physical education and food technology. There is good provision for first aid and all staff have undergone some training in this area. Parents value and appreciate the very good care their children receive.

16. Pupils' relationships with teachers and other staff are excellent and, as a result, pupils find it easy to discuss any worries or problems with staff. Monitoring of personal development is based on the very good personal knowledge the teachers and support assistants have of individual pupils. Individual Education Plans contain clear targets for progress in areas of the curriculum that apply to the individual as well as personal development targets. These targets are shared with parents and reviewed on a termly basis to ensure they are current. Targets are also shared with pupils and progress towards them is recorded in annual reports, which are distributed to parents at the end of the summer term. Detailed care plans are in place for the more vulnerable pupils and provide valuable information on individual needs to staff.

17. All pupils are keen to get involved with the life of the school, its routines and activities. They gladly offer their help and willingly carry out tasks for the benefit of the school community. Older pupils have helped develop the school rules, designed the 'Golden Book', a celebratory record of pupils' achievements, and contributed to debates on the school uniform. The school is setting up a school council to formalise the gathering of pupils' views.

18. Induction arrangements for new pupils are comprehensive. Young children and their parents are invited into school for visits before starting in the Early Years classes. This introduces them to other pupils and allows the staff to assess their individual needs. A small number of children join

the school at other times, and these are welcomed into the 'school family' and provided with support to help them settle quickly and effectively into school routines.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's has a good and successful partnership with parents and the community; this contributes well to pupils' learning. Links with other schools are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents receive very good information about school news and organisation; precise information about their children's progress is less well conveyed.
- Parents strongly support the school's work.
- Links with parents and the community have provided substantial funds for extra resources.
- There are very well developed links with a number of other local schools.

Commentary

19. The school has created a good partnership with parents. A well attended pre-inspection meeting with parents and a questionnaire that many completed showed that most parents have very positive views of the school. Questionnaires, home-school diaries, formal evenings and informal chats are all used to canvass parents' views. The headteacher analyses the results of these consultations and responds to any concerns. Annual reports on pupils' progress have improved since the last inspection. They contain specific targets for future improvement and provide parents with a summary of their children's achievements but lack precision in explaining to parents the occasionally very small, but important, steps their children are progressing by. Parents receive a very good, termly newsletter detailing school activities. Several parents provide invaluable help by supervising outside visits and swimming lessons. This assistance is very much appreciated by the school and contributes to all pupils' achievement.

20. The school's links with the community are good. Pupils occasionally visit local stores to enhance lessons and to improve their independence and confidence. There are good links with the parish church, and the vicar frequently attends and helps lead assemblies. The school also benefits from community help from volunteers who regularly work in school. The 'Friends of Highbury' and the local community have recently raised substantial amounts of money to enhance the new school extension. The 'Friends of Highbury' have now launched an appeal to enhance the planned new playground extension for older pupils. This tremendous effort has been recognised with an award to the school from the HRH Duke of York Community Initiative.

Very well developed links exist with other local schools. A group of pupils from Highbury also attend PE lessons at local mainstream schools, whilst some mainstream pupils attend literacy and numeracy lessons at Highbury. These very positive initiatives allow pupils from Highbury to share learning experiences and to socialise with their mainstream peers. In addition the school offers valuable work experience to selected pupils from the local secondary school. Highbury is also a member of the Brooksbank Sports partnership and pupils take part in the West Yorkshire 'Disport' athletics meeting each year.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership by the head teacher is very good. The leadership of other key staff is good. Management and governance of the school are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the school is marked by clarity and vision.
- The governors work well with the staff to determine the direction of the school.

- Self evaluation and monitoring are being used increasingly well to identify future needs but analysis of pupils' progress is underdeveloped.
- Good financial management has ensured many gains for the school.

Commentary

21. The head teacher has a sustained passion for supporting her school, its pupils, parents, and staff. She is well organised, and her style demonstrates very good working relationships to guide the systems and procedures of the school. She is very clear about her plans, and these are based on her very good working knowledge of the school. She has shaped the teaching, learning and personal development to a consistently good or very good standard, and is very clear about the direction of the school and what needs to be done next in the list of priorities. All staff are dedicated to their work, and keen to do their best for the pupils.

22. The head leads a good team of senior managers, governors, and local authority support, all of whom work as closely as they can with the staff to strengthen the direction of the school. Governors meet regularly through a range of effective committees, and are keen to help the school through their role as 'critical friends'. They are strengthening their knowledge of the school through governor meetings with subject co-ordinators and sharing written evaluations of findings with the whole governing body.

23. The head has emphasised the desirability of further development of subject leaders' roles, especially in their monitoring and evaluation role. Staff welcome this initiative, are well capable of implementing it, and look forward to being given the time to make it work.

24. Clear and focussed management has resulted in the school becoming well known in the wider community, and the school has managed rapid expansion of its resources to accommodate the changing needs of pupils attending. Systems for checking teaching, learning, planning and reviewing are becoming increasingly robust, and teachers are currently working with confidence toward even more accurate recording systems for pupils' work. The school's self evaluation is good, there was a good match between it and the findings of the inspection. A weakness, however, is the school's analysis of pupils' progress. At the moment, although it has access to accurate assessment details, the school is not using these to check the relative progress of different groups of pupils. For instance, management is unable to talk authoritatively, or back up its views with facts, about the relative achievement of different groups of pupils. This means that it cannot be sure that boys and girls are achieving equally, nor that pupils of differing ethnicity are achieving as well as each other. Equally importantly, the school cannot quantify its success in working with pupils with different degrees and types of special educational need.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

*Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	654000	Balance from previous year	145000
Total expenditure	649000	Balance carried forward to the next	150000
Expenditure per pupil	16200		

**As far as is possible, these figures reflect the school's finances before addition or deduction of privately raised funds. The substantial carry forward is earmarked for radical improvements to the school's grounds*

25. The success of the financial management and fund-raising efforts have meant that major improvements to building development have been possible, and these are ongoing in order to maintain the high quality ethos of the school, its environment and its resources.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **very good**. As the department is small, separate judgements on provision and teaching for each area of learning have not been made.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and children make very good progress in lessons.
- Teamwork among staff is very smooth and effective.
- Co-ordination at the Foundation Stage is underdeveloped.

Commentary

26. During the inspection the complexity of needs meant that numbers varied widely in different lessons for the two classes according to curriculum groups, and therapy session taking place at the same time. However, overall, children's achievement is very good, and this is a very good improvement since the previous inspection.

27. Teachers demonstrate a clear understanding of children's needs, and the planning for every lesson is very good indeed, containing clearly set out targets for each child. Teachers are very good at selecting interesting and stimulating resources. Their questioning is skilful, using signing or other communication means appropriately for every child. Timing for changes of activity is also exemplary. Teachers' capability for engaging every pupil individually within group or whole class lessons is extremely effective and well advanced. The teamwork and communication between all staff members is virtually seamless, and provides very good quality one-to-one provision in developing knowledge and understanding. Leadership is good, as is management. There is, however, a specific weakness in management in that the gathering of information about children's progress and record keeping about their achievements is not being sufficiently well used to ease children's transfer to the Year 1 and 2 class.

28. The confidence and independence in children's behaviour reflects very good **personal and social development**. Children amply demonstrate this in their concern for each other and their friendship toward people, even the most profoundly disabled children responding positively in this way. Provision for developing **communication, language and literacy** is also very good. Children are always encouraged to choose and decide for themselves, and plans are very carefully written in this respect according to pupil objectives, and also pupil/staff objectives, so that consistency is achieved to maximise communication. Children respond with enthusiasm during story times aimed at promoting language, and at others the teacher creates an atmosphere for quiet listening to a story. **Mathematical development** is promoted by use of rhythm and song involving counting numbers, and concepts such as big and little, long and short are built up through play activities, helping children to learn the general meanings of such words. **Knowledge and understanding of the world** is developed in a cross-curricular way. An excellent example was a lesson based on the festival of Holi, where children were cooking the coconut cake associated with the festival, using their mathematical learning to measure out ingredients, and becoming fully engaged in taking control of their own learning to produce the result they wanted. At all times, staff are seeking ways to ensure plenty of opportunities for children's **creative development**. A very good music lesson was seen which helped pupils to discriminate between different sounds, and develop their own taste and choices. Teachers use big books and stories to encourage children in role-play, imitating the sounds made by characters in a song or story. Children respond very well to music, and they smile or gesture their likes and dislikes in response to the universal language of sound and rhythm. **Physical development** is carefully planned, and teachers make good use of the hall, soft play room, and other facilities according to individual skills and abilities. This enables the more mobile children to develop their physical skills in PE to the full, as well as maximising confidence in movement for children who are very restricted in this respect. The hydrotherapy pool is a great

favourite with children, and the physiotherapist in the team leads these programmes. All the therapy and support assistance is very well planned to ensure consistency and promote learning in all the children.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because the curriculum is of very high quality and the quality of teaching is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to their learning are very good.
- Support assistants make a good contribution to the quality of teaching and learning.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Pupils do not use the library routinely for research or reading for pleasure.

Commentary

29. The school's very clear and detailed curriculum for teaching English is very well understood by all teachers and support assistants. Very detailed curriculum planning provides a very clear basis for teachers to plan for lessons. Pupils' subject IEP targets, which are updated every half term, are of very high quality and comprehensively cover speaking and listening, reading and handwriting. For more capable pupils, teachers devise additional targets for phonics, spelling and writing. A very appropriate emphasis is placed on the development of speaking and listening skills. As a result, pupils' speaking and listening targets within their IEP's are extremely precise and detailed. The school is now admitting more pupils whose speaking and listening skills are less well developed, such as those with autism and speech and language difficulties. Additional communication strategies, such as 'PECS' and 'Sign Along' are increasingly used to help these individuals. The school places a good emphasis on total communication to enhance pupils' learning.

30. Teaching is good overall and occasionally very good or better. The three classes for pupils of primary school age have been divided into four literacy groups and this system works well, allowing teachers to plan relevant lessons for each ability group. A very effective lesson structure has been adopted where, following an introductory session, pupils work in small groups, taught by either a teacher or support assistant. Pupils understand these routines and respond exceptionally well to them. Therefore, as teachers adopt the same routine, pupils settle quickly into their groups. Teachers and support assistants set very high, but realistic, expectations of their pupils. They are able to do this because activities are based on a very good knowledge of pupils' capabilities. These are developed from very effective assessment and record keeping systems. Group work, within lessons, is very well planned and always covers a very good range of speaking and listening, reading and writing activities. These activities are directly related to pupils' individual IEPs.

31. Support assistants are very well guided, know their pupils very well and use their skills to maintain very high expectations of pupils throughout lessons. They adapt and adjust activities to meet individual pupils' needs well. Very detailed records of pupils' achievements within their teaching groups are kept. These records are used when the school reviews the pupils' IEPs.

32. Pupils arrive in lessons promptly and settle down quickly. They are very keen to find out about what they are going to learn in each lesson. Staff always insist that pupils behave well. On occasion, individuals find it very difficult to behave in a manner that encourages learning. These pupils are quickly withdrawn and appropriately guided and supported until their personal crisis is over and then they are reintroduced to the class as quickly as possible. This allows other pupils to carry on learning with the minimum of disruption. Pupils concentrate for long periods and respond

extremely positively to the wide range of very appropriate learning activities. Personal development is encouraged as older and more capable pupils are given opportunities to work together for short periods.

33. Leadership and management are very good. There is a very clear plan for improving the subject and the co-ordinator works very effectively, and with commitment, to achieve her objectives. Very good whole-school approaches exist which provide consistency in the teaching of the subject. There has been satisfactory improvement in provision since the last inspection. At present the library is not used appropriately for research or reading for pleasure. However, the subject co-ordinator has very clear plans for its future development.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

34. Teachers and support assistants are very skilled at ensuring that the school's emphasis on developing pupils' communication, language and literacy skills is very well taught in all subjects. There are very many opportunities for pupils' development of speaking and listening skills, and an increasing focus on the promotion of key words to be taught in all subjects.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is very well led and closely monitored.
- Pupils are achieving well.
- Lessons are exceptionally well planned and support is very well used.

Commentary

35. There has been good improvement in mathematics since the previous inspection, when achievement and teaching were judged to be satisfactory. This has come about through better, more focussed teaching and much improved leadership, both of which are now good. When they arrive in school, most pupils are at the very earliest stage of mathematical development. They are quickly set targets for improvement. These are set in consultation with parents, and are demanding, reflecting the high expectations of teachers. When teachers are monitored the first checks are that individual targets are being followed through and that the lesson planning makes very clear exactly what the mathematical content of the lesson is. A close check is also made that the most able pupils are being suitably challenged. This is very important, as there is a wide range of ability, varying from p1 to National Curriculum Level 1 or 2.

36. The result of this attention to detail is that pupils are achieving well in relation to their individual targets. The lowest attainers are identifying and sorting common shapes, such as squares and squares and circles. Imaginative methods are used to reinforce pupils' understanding of shape, for instance by getting pupils to try to stack spheres to build a wall or trying to roll cubes. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, many of the highest attaining pupils are successfully working out answers to sums involving tens and units and counting up to 100. These pupils are using exercise books in which, as an indication of their growing maturity, they set out their sums very neatly and work with precision.

37. Teaching is good overall and occasionally very good. Lessons are immaculately planned, with very good attention being given to the needs of individuals. The deployment of support staff is carefully considered, sometimes helping the least able, sometimes the most able and also helping those pupils who have the greatest degree of difficulty in concentrating and behaving. Support staff bring considerable skill to all of their duties. There is a very good mix of activities in each lesson, some involving individual work whilst others involve pupils working in pairs or small groups, thus promoting personal development as well as mathematical skills. A newly acquired 'smartboard' is

well used in lessons. This helps to keep pupils involved and allows those with limited communication skills to demonstrate their achievement and understanding. One good lesson for Year 4, 5 and 6 pupils also made very good use of simple and amusing commercial computer software to help pupils with their counting. A good pace is kept up for the most part of lessons but occasionally, towards the end, this pace slips and time is less efficiently used.

Mathematics across the curriculum

38. Mathematics is well promoted across the curriculum. The subject leader is always looking for possible ways of increasing pupils' numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics. In RE lessons, for instance, when pupils are preparing traditional festive dishes, the importance of weighing and measuring ingredients accurately is stressed; during playtimes spatial awareness is promoted. In music, pupils count beats and look at the patterns of rhythms.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers work closely with the co-ordinator.
- Pupils enjoy their science lessons.
- The monitoring and planning of science teaching is being extended.

Commentary

39. Because of the timing of the inspection there were few opportunities to observe science lessons during the inspection. Nevertheless, on the evidence available, teaching is good. In one lesson seen, a class of Year 1-3 pupils were thoroughly enjoying and participating in exploration of plants and their seeds. The review of the previous lesson revealed that most pupils had remembered things about plants that they had learned in a previous lesson, recognising the different parts of a plant. The lesson was planned in a practical and interesting way, and there were good links with number, food technology and art, both in this lesson and on the interesting wall displays. For example, pupils had painted Van Gogh's sunflowers, and conversations revealed that they had remembered growing sunflowers themselves the previous year. Indeed, the discussion became animated and lively as others joined in, showing consolidation of their learning not just about sunflowers, but about height, colour, and the sheer enjoyment in their good achievements.

40. Good progress has been made in the science curriculum since the last inspection and leadership and management is good. Records of achievement in science, and analysis of pupils' work, show that achievement is good. Lesson plans accurately reflect individual needs and targets. The science schemes of work record individual science targets well matched to the National Curriculum. The monitoring of science teaching is being extended to include more observations of lessons and other ways of gathering information so that weaknesses in pupils' learning can be addressed. There is very good teamwork between the co-ordinator and other teachers in planning and teaching science, and pupils' learning is further enhanced by local trips and outings, including visits to a science museum.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The development of the subject is being effectively monitored.
- Pupils enjoy using **computers**.
- Computers are not used routinely throughout the school.

Commentary

41. Very little active use of computers was seen during the inspection but there are several good examples of how computers have been used to enhance learning in previous lessons. Teaching overall is satisfactory. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection, and there are now computers in every classroom, with more in the library area. The monitoring exercise recently carried out by the co-ordinator and a school governor together has provided a useful audit of the current provision. It exposed the under-use of the two whiteboards and the need for technical support. Both weaknesses are now being effectively addressed. The co-ordinator is now focussing on developing more appropriate schemes of work and staff development needs to promote more confident and effective teaching of the subject. Leadership and management are good.

42. Pupils' work files indicate that achievement is satisfactory overall and that many achieve well in improving their use of computers. Pupils take real pride in the work they have done. Many type word lists, match their own writing to a printed word, and read their printed names. Work on display by some Year 4 – 6 pupils shows good development of sentence structure and word processing skills in exercises involving pupils writing about themselves. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the Internet or accessing their favourite games and programmes. Resources are satisfactory, although they are not always easily available and ready to maximise their use for learning. The use of modern technology aids for facilitating communication are not greatly in evidence, and are under-used by a few pupils.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

43. The use of computers in other lessons is satisfactory. There is plenty of evidence that ICT skills are increasingly effectively being used to support reading and writing and other subjects. Pupils can describe clicking on the whiteboard, which they enjoy using whenever the opportunity arises. A very attractive display about Egypt and hieroglyphics provided further evidence of using computers to enhance learning and the curriculum, and teachers make very good use of other schools' websites to access further interesting and stimulating curriculum materials for pupils' learning.

HUMANITIES

44. *No geography or history lessons were timetabled during the inspection so no teaching was seen. Interviews were held with the co-ordinators and a good sample of pupils' past work and records of achievement were analysed.*

Geography

45. Following criticism in the last inspection the school quickly improved geography provision by developing a proper scheme of work. This has been adapted and improved over the years and is being effectively used by teachers to develop their lesson planning. New assessment criteria have been identified but at present the assessment system is not developed sufficiently to provide information that would help improve pupils' learning. To support their learning, pupils make occasional visits to local features such as the park and shops but the programme is not extensive and the co-ordinator recognises that this is a weakness. There are many good examples of pupils' work around the school including, for instance, studies of how the weather in different parts of the world varies and how this dictates the types of clothing and shelter in those countries. Pupils have also made a good model of an island, identifying features such as houses and the sea. By the time they leave, a few of the most able pupils are approaching Level 1 of the National Curriculum.

History

46. Rapid improvement was made following criticism by the previous inspection. A new scheme of work was chosen. Work is now carefully planned to ensure that no pupils are repeating topics when they move class. Resources were acquired and these are now good. One resource that is underused is the locality. Pupils have, in the past, visited the Royal Armoury and enjoyed a visiting theatre group, whose performance related to Tudor times, but these were isolated events and have not been repeated in recent years. This is a weakness. Pupils have learned about what life was like in the past, making comparisons with the present day about experiences such as shopping and playing. When studying the Victorian era, pupils have successfully placed a series of events in the correct order, thus showing an understanding of a 'time line'. A particularly stimulating and memorable topic for pupils was about the Vikings, part of which involved pupils dressing up and staging a mock raid on the school. This was a good, but all too rare, example of good enrichment of the curriculum. Computers have been well used by one class in their study of the Egyptians. Pupils used the Internet to help them research the nature of the country and how the Ancient Egyptians wrote using hieroglyphics. Their work has been well displayed and this acts as good encouragement for future topics.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in the subject.
- The assessment of pupils' work and the evaluation of teaching are not well enough developed to help improve pupils' learning.

Commentary

47. The lessons observed during the inspection, together with the displays and examples of pupils' work indicate that the subject is well taught and achievement is good. Teachers build well on pupils' past learning to interpret religious ideas in a way that is meaningful to pupils' own lives. Well-chosen resources are used in a practical way when learning about different religious festivals, such as Holi or Divali. Both festivals have inspired activities which, by promoting the gathering of information through the senses of touch, taste and smell as well as seeing and hearing, have brought the subject alive and held the attention of the pupils.

48. The school has placed a good emphasis on extending pupils' knowledge and understanding of world religions and cultures. The celebration of different festivals is interpreted through pupils making their own versions of the main elements in a variety of interesting ways. These include cooking, art and dressing up, and this is extended through occasional visitors to the school, outings, and contributions from parents and other local people.

49. Leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator is currently building up the management systems for the subject, and is exploring ways of developing new schemes that are based on the locally agreed syllabus, and are appropriate for the range of needs of all the pupils. Monitoring of the subject is at an early stage, and assessment procedures need formalising further, linking these clearly to pupils' individual education plans. Nevertheless, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

50. *Only one lesson each of design and technology and music was observed and no art. As a result, no overall judgement of provision is made for any of these subjects.*

Art and design

51. There are many stimulating displays of pupils' artwork around the school. There is good attention to helping pupils learn about famous artists and different styles of painting. Class 5 pupils have learned about the life of famous artists, such as Van Gogh, and have painted good versions of his famous still life of a vase of flowers. Class 4 pupils have produced a vivid mural inspired by Monet's paintings of waterlilies. Pupils have also taken photographs of the locality; winning a book token, presented by the Mayor, for their good work. Computers have been used well, enabling pupils to create patterns on the 'smartboard'. In this exercise pupils have shown their ability to select colours from a menu. Art is particularly well used in support of other subjects and pupils clearly enjoy the subject. They have created vivid displays, incorporating textured papers and spices in a very good sensory activity linked to the celebration of Divali and also experimented with icing sugar and food dyes to create patterns linked to the Hindu festival of Holi.

Design and technology

52. The quality of curriculum documentation is high with very detailed planning containing topics appropriate for each year group. There is a highly appropriate emphasis throughout the documentation on the importance of health and safety within lessons. Resources for teaching design technology are good. The lesson observed was with a small group of PMLD pupils. Pupils were being taught how to fold paper, decorate it and make a boat with it. The preparation for the lesson was meticulous with appropriate resources easily accessible; as a result the pace sustained pupils' interest throughout the session. The very good displays around the school are a clear indication of the outcome of the planning, stimulating teaching and commitment of all the staff of the school.

Music

53. From the evidence available, and from general observations, it is clear that music provides a strong element within the school. The lesson seen was very good, with well-chosen material helping to promote both enjoyment and good achievement in each pupil, and they clearly enjoyed the experience. The music co-ordinator is enthusiastic, and sees her subject as a priority for development. Resources of musical instruments are adequate. Music is an important part of the ethos of the school, from the quiet and pleasant musical accompaniment to pupils' arrival to the spontaneous singing to be heard in almost every classroom, using music and rhythm to enhance learning in other subjects.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is very well structured and relevant to pupils' needs.
- Accommodation and learning resources are very good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- There is a good emphasis on health and safety in lessons.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.

Commentary

54. The provision of a wide range and highly appropriate activities makes a significant contribution to the physical development of pupils. The timetable ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to go swimming or, as appropriate, attend hydrotherapy lessons. Therefore the good provision reported in the previous report has been maintained.

55. The subject co-ordinator has been instrumental in developing the subject. She has worked effectively to produce very clear policy and planning to guide staff. The curriculum is adapted well from the National Curriculum Key Stage 1 programme of studies and takes good account of pupils' special educational needs. Pupils' IEP records indicate that teachers use the curriculum materials well to create detailed individual targets. These show that pupils make good progress over time.

56. There are good links with a local primary school. A group of Highbury pupils joins a class from that school for a weekly PE lesson. This positive initiative benefits pupils from both schools. Pupils are taught well. A particular feature of lessons is the very high, and appropriate, emphasis placed on health and safety. Teachers follow extremely clear guidance on risk assessment procedures and they always emphasise the need to be careful. Pupils are very well managed and their attitudes and behaviour are very good. Two good lessons were observed with groups of PMLD pupils. Good planning with varying activities stimulated the pupils' interest. The support assistants make a significant contribution to teaching and learning by working with individual pupils with complex learning difficulties.

57. Accommodation for physical education is good. The hall is of a good size and is well equipped. The outside area provides an opportunity for the pupils to play various sporting activities. Resources are good, of high quality and very well organised in large, accessible stores.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL HEALTH AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Provision in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is **good** and has some very good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The co-ordinator is developing very good policies and programmes to guide teachers in planning their lessons.
- It is taught as a separate subject as well as in all other subjects as a programme to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils' attitude to the subject is consistently very good.
- Pupils achieve well in the subject in relation to their individual targets.

Commentary

58. Teaching and learning are good and pupils achieve well. A good lesson for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 succeeded, partially because it was very well planned but also because the very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils led them to participate with great enthusiasm as they practiced the skills of listening to each other and taking turns. Pupils of all ages achieve well in meeting their personal targets. These targets are precise and all staff contribute to monitoring and recording pupils' successes.

59. The subject is taught as a separate subject, but close attention to promoting pupils' personal development in every activity throughout the day makes a huge contribution to pupils' overall achievement. The school has developed good programmes to guide teachers in planning individual PSHCE lessons. Planning covers the environment and healthy living as well as the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the pupils to lead a confident and independent life. Good quality resources support learning.

60. The PSHCE programme focuses on pupils' attitudes, behaviour and other elements of personal and social development in every aspect of their school lives. School assemblies make a significant contribution in this respect. Pupils know that they are part of a caring community, where their views are valued; they are given many opportunities to explore and discuss moral issues. They understand the importance of respecting each other's feelings and of caring for one another; staff take every opportunity to reinforce in pupils an understanding of the consequences of their actions, and to remind them of inappropriate actions. The school also participates in various initiatives to promote pupils' development, such as the LEA's 'Healthy Living' project.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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